ABSTRACT

Title of Document: INVESTIGATING THE INVESTIGATORS: EXAMINING THE ATTITUDES, PERCEPTIONS, AND EXPERIENCES OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS IN THE INTERNET AGE

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This study examines how ownership type affects newsroom support, job satisfaction, and commitment to field by investigative journalists. It also explores agenda-building theory, asking if journalists' belief in their ability to reform the system through their work is a major predictor of job satisfaction. More broadly, the study examines the state of investigative journalism today by probing the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of investigative journalists working for newspapers, and how these have changed compared with two decades ago.

The study found that ownership type does not seem to affect newsroom support, job satisfaction, or commitment to field. Whether at public, private, or family newspapers, journalists across the board expressed great job satisfaction, fierce devotion to their field, and high levels of support in their own newsrooms, irrespective of ownership type.

Regarding agenda-building, most watchdog reporters believe their work has substantial influence on reforming policy. Belief that one's work has significant impact has some predictive value for job satisfaction, but not for commitment to field. Investigative journalists today are more likely to contact policymakers to follow up the impact of their stories than journalists were two decades ago, yet still strongly believe the public plays a crucial role in changing policy—despite most empirical studies casting strong doubts on that.

This research project found deep ambivalence about the Internet and its impact on the field. Highly experienced journalists tend to worry about the Internet and its effects on the journalistic process. Considerable skepticism exists among reporters concerning the role nonprofits may play in future investigative journalism.

This dissertation uncovered a sharp dichotomy between how journalists view their own newsrooms versus how they view the industry at large. It also found that watchdog reporters today estimate they devote more time to investigative journalism than five years ago. Today's journalists still cite the very same factors that motivated journalists to excel almost 20 years ago.

INVESTIGATING THE INVESTIGATORS: EXAMINING THE ATTITUDES, PERCEPTIONS, AND EXPERIENCES OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS IN THE INTERNET AGE

By

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Dedication

To my parents, Eileen and Jack Kaplan, for all their love and support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Importance of Investigative Journalism

Investigative reporting is a special kind of journalism. It provides accountability to people in power, whether in government, business, military, or nonprofit organizations. Watchdog reporting also holds institutions accountable when wrongdoing has been committed and tolerated. There are other means of oversight that society provides. Congress has oversight of federal departments, while state legislatures oversee state agencies. Consumer affairs divisions try to protect customers from fraudulent activities. While these safeguards may help, they are hardly enough. *New York Times* reporter Walter Bogdanich, the 2008 winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting, noted in a personal interview that the 109th Congress (spanning the years 2005 – 2007) held extremely few hearings that provided oversight. According to reporter Lyndsey Layton (2006), Mondays and Fridays were almost never used to conduct federal business, while only a part of Tuesday and Thursday were: "For much of this election year [2006], the legislative week started late Tuesday and ended by Thursday afternoon -- and that was during the relatively few weeks the House wasn't in recess" (Layton, 2006, A1).

Bogdanich also noted that under the Bush Administration, Inspector Generals, who are charged with investigating wrongdoing in government agencies, have become politicized. In many states, legislators meet a few months in the year, while in states such as Texas, they assemble on alternating years. Again, it is hard to imagine considerable oversight occurring if lawmakers do not meet. This is why investigative reporting is essential to the well-being of society. Exposés have the potential to uncover malfeasance,

corruption, scandal, and many other kinds of wrongdoing, which might otherwise go unchecked.

Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2007) in *The Elements of Journalism* write that reporters serving as an independent monitor of power is one of journalism's most important contributions to society. The authors also believe that investigative reporting is one of the principles that sets journalism apart from other means of communication: "It was the watchdog role that made journalism, in James Madison's phrase, 'a bulwark of liberty'" (p. 142). In addition to monitoring powerful people and institutions, investigative journalism also gives a voice to the downtrodden. The history of investigative reporting is rich with journalists examining the unseen parts of society, then reporting their plight to the outer world. This kind of reporting can sometimes produce substantial change in the system. They also reveal the humanity of their subjects.

Leonard Downie and Robert Kaiser (2002) argue that investigative journalism makes an indispensable contribution to society:

> Exposures of incompetence and corruption in government can change misbegotten policies, save taxpayers money and end the careers of misbehaving public officials. Revelations of unethical business practices can save consumers money or their health. Exploration of the growing reach of computer databases can protect privacy. Disclosure of environmental, health, food, and product dangers can save lives. Examination of the ways society cares for the poor, homeless, imprisoned, abused, mentally ill, and retarded can give voice to the voiceless. (p. 4 - 5)

Downie and Kaiser (2002) also emphasize the importance of accountability to make our democracy function. They call accountability the "crucial aspect of our national ideology, which was based on the rejection of tyranny, defined by the founders as the unjust use of power" (p. 8). They state that good journalism is an essential instrument to make accountability occur, yet lament that it is in short supply: "Much that ought to be publicly known remains secret. Countless abuses and injustices remain unexamined and uncorrected" (p. 31). They believe this is the case because good accountability reporting can be extremely difficult: "It is usually tedious, time-consuming and exasperating for journalists, and expensive and risky for news organizations" (p.31).

Although time consuming and difficult, investigative reporting is for Gene Roberts, former executive editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, a kind of litmus test of how seriously the news organization takes its responsibility to inform the public. "A newsroom that doesn't dig deep for some of its news is saying, in effect, that all the important news is at or near the surface. This, of course, defies logic and common sense as surely as it fails our citizenry" (quoted in Greenwald & Bernt, 2003, p. vii).

While investigative reports may help bring about needed reform in a corrupt political or business system, provide accountability to those in power, or give a voice to the voiceless, they can be expensive to produce. Some projects which require deep probing might take months to complete. Many story leads may seem promising at the outset but produce wild goose chases (Downie & Kaiser, 2002). To undertake effective investigative reporting that uncovers layers of wrongdoing, which others are trying their best to conceal, requires a strong commitment from the news organization. In some cases, the newspaper must reassign reporters who cover another beat to an investigative story

that may or may not materialize. In other cases, reporters might spend several months filing FOIA requests, tracking down leads, or talking to reluctant officials and not necessarily come up with a story. The news organization must also brace for possible legal action against them (Downie & Kaiser, 2002). Juries, as demonstrated by the Food Lion vs. *ABC News* case, can rule decisively against media[1] organizations with very large judgments, even when the journalists get the story right.

These factors have created a precarious state of affairs for investigative journalism. While news organizations recognize its importance, many are reluctant to commit the resources – whether staff or budget – to pursue it. Author and investigative reporter Bruce Shapiro (2003) has written that the Bush administration is more hostile to journalistic inquiry than any in recent memory: "The George W. Bush presidency may be transient, but it has bred a culture of secrecy – and specific measures, including squelching of the Freedom of Information Act – that will outlive it and sooner or later, spread beyond the beltway to the states, making reporters' jobs at every level more difficult" (p. xxiii).

Yet critics (e.g., McChesney, 1999; Bagdikian, 2004; Shapiro, 2003) argue that an even more insidious threat exists against investigative journalism. This is the increased concentration of media ownership into an ever shrinking group of large corporations that are highly focused on shareholder value and profit maximization. This threat can affect the budget, autonomy, and resources required to conduct watchdog reporting. This trend toward corporate conglomeration might also affect how willing corporate news managers

[1] For this study, I treated the word "media" as a singular entity, since I am referring to the news media as a collective group, not as individual properties.

are to hire journalists who might disturb the status quo. (Shapiro, 2003). This point will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Shapiro (2003) contends, however, that the history of investigative reporting shows that ownership is not the final word in content. Instead, there exists a back and forth between media owners' interests and the stubborn persistence of reporters to subvert them. He believes it is a mistake to underestimate the capacity of reporters working even in large conglomerations to document wrongdoing. While this present study does not evaluate content per se, it examines the attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of investigative journalists and asks if these differ by type of ownership.

Study Purpose and Justification

There are several reasons this study is important. First, in the scholarly literature, there is a dearth of research on investigative journalism. The studies that have been conducted tend to focus largely on investigative techniques or public perceptions of investigative reporting (e.g., Opt & Delaney, 2000; Willnat & Weaver, 1998). Those studies that probe the attitudes and perceptions of investigative journalists tend to be outdated; for example, the research conducted by David Protess and colleagues (1991) is nearly 17 years old and does not consider the developments of the Internet age. Author Bruce Shapiro (2003) observed that the work of investigative reporters has historically so profoundly threatened the accepted order that many journalists were jailed, beaten, indicted, or threatened for their exposés. "Yet the role of investigative writers remains, curiously, the subject of relatively little scholarship" (p. xix).

Secondly, this study can make important theoretical contributions. The issue of ownership is important in journalism, as media properties often change hands, whether

from private interests to a publicly owned chain or from a publicly owned paper to a private one. The key question is what influence, if any, does ownership type have on the attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of investigative journalists working for these papers. Although many studies explore ownership influence on content, I am not aware of any that have examined how ownership affects the attitudes of investigative journalists themselves.

This dissertation will also make a contribution to the theory of agenda-building. Most studies on agenda-building have explored how agenda-building occurs, asking why certain issues become salient to policymakers or the news media while other issues languish, and what is the role of journalism in this process. Yet this study explores a different facet of agenda-building. It asks how investigative journalists perceive agenda-building to occur, and what is their role in the process? It also probes whether journalists' belief in agenda-building is a major predictor of job satisfaction and commitment to the field.

Third, this study can be valuable to the practice of journalism, through shedding light on which conditions best serve investigative journalists. The research attempts to uncover, for instance, which type of ownership tends to promote the most organizational support, and which the least; why some investigative journalists are more committed to the field than others. Given investigative journalism's purpose of providing accountability and exposing wrongdoing in government and business, these are important insights. This is especially so, considering how difficult and discouraging this kind of work can sometimes be. Thus, the results of the surveys and interviews might help inform

newsrooms as to the attitudes of working investigative journalists, and how these might improve to achieve excellence in reporting.

Defining Investigative Journalism

Before proceeding further, it is important to be clear about how we are defining investigative journalism. Defining investigative reporting has long been a thorny issue. Many journalists (including investigative journalists interviewed for this study) assert that all journalism is investigative. Some dismiss the notion that there should even be a separate category designated as "investigative" since this should be the hallmark to all good reporting. However, when pressed, journalists often concede that given the daily demands of deadlines and shortages of staff, many stories lack an investigative angle. Moreover, if "investigative reporting" involves the uncovering of wrongdoing which others wish to keep hidden, the great majority of stories are not investigative. Indeed, the most recent definition of investigative reporting by the IRE (Investigative Reporters and Editors) supports this definition: "The reporting, through one's own initiative and work product, of matters of importance to readers, viewers or listeners. In many cases, the subjects of the reporting wish the matters under scrutiny to remain undisclosed" (IRE website, 2008).

For this study, I will use the definition put forth by Aucoin (2005): He writes that investigative reporting has five distinct components: "1) exposure of information 2) about an important public issue 3) that someone or some organization does not want reported 4) that is revealed through the original, time-consuming "digging" of the reporter 5) for the purpose of inspiring reform" (p. 91).

Aucion (2005) emphasizes that there is an important distinction between serious investigative journalism and tabloid investigations. He defines serious investigative journalism as taking "a comprehensive, exhaustive look at issues that have significant impact on the lives of the audience" (p. 2) as opposed to projects that utilize undercover cameras and other controversial investigative techniques to look at issues of limited impact on the public, which he believes is driven by entertainment, not journalistic values. Although entertainment-oriented exposés have become increasingly common (particularly in broadcast), this study will focus on investigative projects in the first category.

To further refine the definition, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) identify three forms of investigative journalism: original investigative reporting; interpretative investigative reporting; and reporting on investigations. Original investigative reporting involves reporters themselves probing and documenting wrongdoing that was previously unknown to the public. It may involve public record searches, use of informants, filing FOIA requests, and even undercover work. Some of the best known examples of investigative journalism fall in this category, whether Lincoln Steffens' 1904 series *Shame of the Cities*, documenting widespread corruption in local government or Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, revealing the harmful effects of pesticide poisoning. In contemporary original investigative reporting, the power of computer computations sometimes assumes the dominant role. Indeed, many influential investigative series are made possible by computer assisted reporting (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007).

The second category they term "interpretative investigative reporting," which differs from original investigative reporting in that the latter uncovers information *not*

previously gathered in order to inform the public. Interpretative investigative reporting uses information that has already been gathered but through careful analysis and the pursuit of facts, a deeper understanding is reached. Perhaps the most famous example is the *New York Times*' publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1971. The information used was previously gathered, but journalists interpreted and organized the documents into a powerful exposé of public deception.

The third investigative category involves reporting on investigations undertaken by others, most often a government agency. This kind of reporting might develop from a leak of information from an investigation already under way or in preparation. Although this type is increasingly common, the present study will define investigative journalism as involving only the first two categories.

Financial Struggle of Newspapers

Serious investigative reporting has always been arduous to conduct but now news organizations are struggling. Newspapers are confronting a barrage of problems including declining circulation, loss of classified ad revenue, and the migration of advertisers to the Internet (Farhi, 2008). Although newspapers are gaining some advertising revenue through their websites, it is not compensating for the loss of print advertising revenue. The main problem is that advertisers are not convinced of the effectiveness of online advertising, and they have many choices online as to where to place their ad. These two factors help exert downward pressure on online advertising prices. Newspapers can often charge 8 – 10 times the amount for print ads than online banners (Farhi, 2008). The result

is that many newsrooms face budget cutbacks, reduced staff, and shrinking news holes (Fahri, 2008).

Eric Alterman (2008), writing in *The New Yorker,* asserts that "few believe that newspapers in their current printed form will survive. Newspaper companies are losing advertisers, readers, market value, and, in some cases, their sense of mission at a pace that would have been barely imaginable just four years ago" (p.48). He cites Bill Keller, the executive editor of the *New York Times* as saying in a recent speech: "At places where editors and publishers gather, the mood these days is funeral. Editors ask one another, 'How are you?' in that sober tone one employs with friends who have just emerged from rehab or a messy divorce" (p. 48). Alterman (2008) notes that publicly traded, independent U.S. newspapers have lost 42% of their market value in the past three years. Wall Street has shown little faith in newspaper companies. For example, investors have punished the McClatchy Company, who took over the Knight-Ridder chain, sending its stocks down 80% since the purchase. The stock price of the *New York Times Company* has declined 54% since 2004.

Whereas newspapers operated as virtual monopolies with very high profit margins for decades, in the Internet age publishers have not figured out a viable business model to save the ailing newspaper. Much of the industry reaction to the problem has been to initiate a spiral of budget cuts, layoffs, buyouts, and a shrinking newshole. In the past 18 years, while the U.S. population has grown significantly, one-quarter of all American newspapers jobs have been eliminated (Alterman, 2008).

As many newspapers have cut back their news coverage and slashed various features, they have made the product less interesting to readers. This may contribute to a

downward spiral in which fewer Americans are buying newspapers and spending less time with it, as there is less material to attract them (Alterman, 2008).

"Ironic Injustice"

The statistics for the future of newspapers look even more daunting when one considers that the average age of the newspaper reader is 55 and rising, while a mere 19% of Americans 18 – 34 years old even look at a daily newspaper (Alterman, 2008). The cruel irony for newspapers, however, is that when readers seek political information on the Internet, they nearly always visit a site that is merely aggregating journalistic work originated by newspaper reporters. Thus, in a sense, newspaper companies have sown the seeds of their own demise by supplying an almost unlimited number of websites with daily content and stories. While this may expose newspaper stories to more people, this trend has not increased papers' stock values or saved journalists' jobs (Alterman, 2008).

The fundamental problem, of course, is that original reporting and especially investigative reporting, is expensive, while commentary and aggregation are cheap. Yet who will be paying for the original reporting and investigative work in the future?

Troubling economic news for newspaper companies may be accelerating. In the first quarter of 2008, for example, The *New York Times* experienced one of the worst periods seen, posting a $335,000 loss. The company's primary revenue source, newspaper advertising in print and online, declined 10.6%, which Richard Perez-Peña (2008) characterized as "the sharpest drop in memory." According to the Newspaper Association of America, newspaper ad revenue, both print and online, fell nearly 8% last year, the second-worst decline in 50 years (Peña, 2008).

Charles Lewis (2007), the founder of the Center of Public Integrity, the largest non-profit investigative journalism organization, summarized the situation this way:

> In the past couple of years alone, everything but a piano has fallen on the head of the serious press: Rupert Murdoch bought Dow Jones and *The Wall Street Journal*; Knight-Ridder, the nation's most Pulitzer-honored newspaper chain was dismantled; the McClatchy Company sold the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* to a private equity firm for less than *half* of its purchase price eight years earlier [the private equity firm recently wrote down 75% of the Star Tribune's value]; and hundreds of reporters and editors accepted buyout offers at…many newspapers. (p. 32).

Lewis further noted:

> Four dailies that have produced inspiring international coverage in the past – The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Boston Globe*, *Newsday*, and the *Baltimore Sun* – closed their remaining overseas bureaus…a quarter century ago CBS News had 24 foreign bureaus and stringers in 44 countries; today, there are six bureaus, none of them in Africa or Latin America…*Time* eliminated 650 jobs in early 2006, including…two of the nation's preeminent investigative journalists. (p. 32)

As the fortunes of newspapers decline, restive shareholders are demanding more control of newspaper companies. Critics charge that these shareholders are concerned with the stock price and care little for public service. In perhaps the clearest example of the growing power of shareholders in newspaper companies, Bruce Sherman, a money manager, forced Knight-Ridder to sell itself on the auction block in 2006. Sherman, whose investment fund owned about 19% of Knight-Ridder, demanded the company be

sold as a way that he might recoup losses he incurred when the company's stock price declined (Layton, 2006). One observer described Sherman's antics as a way to "bully the company into putting itself up for sale" (Layton, 2006, p. 20). Such was the ignominious end to the owner of 32 daily papers, which had won 60 Pulitzers over 30 years.

The Tribune Company, owner of one of the largest newspaper chains in the United States by circulation, also found itself at the mercy of shareholders. For several years, Tribune shareholders demanded constant cutbacks in newsrooms to increase the bottom line. Newsrooms such as the *Los Angeles Times* lost much of its staff, including two highly regarded editors of the paper, John Carroll and Dean Baquet. As Smolkin (2007) observes, Carroll left because he could not make deeper cuts and Baquet was ousted when he refused further cutbacks. Yet even this was not enough for Tribune shareholders. In time, they succeeded in putting the company up for sale, when it was bought by real estate investor Sam Zell and taken private in December, 2007 (Carpenter, 2007). Of course, all of this has implications for investigative journalism.

In some respects, newspapers are victims of their own success. For years, newspapers consistently returned 20% profit margins to investors. Newspapers were the major advertiser in the locality and could command relatively high fees. Wall Street investors soon grew accustomed to 20% profit margins; that is, for every dollar the newspaper company brought in, 20 cents was kept as profit. As Farhi (2006) points out, this is a spectacular margin when compared to other industries. Fortune 500 companies typically muster about a 10% profit margin. Yet should newspapers deliver 15% profit margins, this fails to impress Wall Street. In the past few years it is clear that Wall Street analysts are helping to drag down newspaper companies' stock prices because they do

not perceive growth in the industry and they have come to demand unrealistically high profit margins. Conrad Fink, a professor of newspaper management and strategy at the University of Georgia put it this way: "We've been hugely profitable in the past, and Wall Street only knows one mantra: 'More please, more'" **(**Smolkin, 2006, p. 20**).**

Are Public Companies More Vulnerable to Cuts?

According to critics such as Paul Farhi (2006), the harshest cuts have mainly come at newspaper companies owned by public shareholders, such as Knight-Ridder and Tribune, while those with family control have been more benign, although still incurring cutbacks. He explains that the publicly held companies "must satisfy the demands of thousands of shareholders, whose foremost concern isn't the number of Pulitzers won or foreign bureaus opened but rising profits and stock profits" (p. 30). This assumption that public companies are worse for newspapers is widely held. Newspaper analyst John Morton (2006) noted that the crisis engulfing Knight-Ridder demonstrates that "public ownership of newspaper companies is not good for journalism" (p. 68). He explains:

> A fundamental problem is that institutional investors, who inevitably wind up owning the vast majority of shares in publicly traded companies, have goals that are basically inimical to the journalistic mission of newspaper publishing….That newspaper companies might have some objective other than enriching shareholders – say, publishing excellent newspapers – is incidental to the concerns of institutional investors, if it is given any consideration at all. (p. 68)

While this statement may have some truth, this dissertation uncovers that investigative reporters, who perhaps stand the most to lose when a company no longer

privileges public service, do not experience more job satisfaction in family or privately held companies than public. Moreover, the level of perceived organizational support does not seem to depend on type of ownership. More will be said about this in later chapters.

One overriding question this dissertation asks is, given these constraints, and during a time when many journalists simply offer commentary on news without any real digging into the truth, is there a place for investigative reporting in America's newsrooms in the 21st century? What is the state of investigative journalism as it confronts the Internet age, according to those who practice it? And what motivates these news workers to do this often tedious and painstaking work?

Brief Historical Overview of Investigative Journalism

The past is always with us, as historians often point out. This certainly applies to investigative journalism in which investigative reporters from the past are continually influencing those in the present. Even the Investigative Reporters and Editors' main journal recently featured an article emphasizing that Ida Tarbell's work (from the early 20th century) is still a model for modern muckrakers (Brady, 2008).

Investigative journalism in America is as old as newspapers. In 1690 Benjamin Harris published *Publick Occurences* – the first newspaper in America – which featured an exposé concerning French soldiers tortured by the Indian allies of the British Army, in the midst of the French and Indian War. The official reaction was harsh. Harris' printing license was revoked by the British authorities (printing licenses were obligatory until around 1720) and Harris was forced to cease further publication. This harsh reaction had

the effect of squashing Colonial-era investigations for the next 30 years (Protess, et al., 1991).

In the early 18th century, James Franklin (Benjamin Franklin's brother) published an exposé on Puritan church authorities for initiating a smallpox inoculation he thought did more harm than good (Armaeo, 2000). Some historians, such as Armaeo, regard this episode as the start of press skepticism toward authority. Franklin was jailed for his account.

In one of the most famous cases in journalism history, John Peter Zenger in 1735 published reports of corruption in the Royal Governor of New York's administration. Zenger was taken to court for seditious libel. His lawyer, Andrew Hamilton**,** offered a novel defense. He argued to the jury that nobody can be held for libel, if his account is true. He won the case, and an important legal precedent was set: truth was a viable defense against charges of libel.

During the 1790s, the government fell into two factions, the Federalist and Republican. The competition and rhetoric between them was fierce and newspapers were used as weapons in their political skirmishes (Armaeo, 2000). As newspapers during this time were sponsored by political parties, its stories had a highly partisan tone, including exposés of wrongdoing by members of the opposing party.

A kind of revolution occurred in the 1830s when, spurred on by advances in printing, cheap paper, and a more education citizenry, the penny press began to dominate journalism. Beginning with Benjamin Day's *New York Sun* in 1833 which sold for one penny, newspapers gradually broke away from political parties as they were able to support themselves through advertising and circulation to the general public. This freed

newspapers to print what they wished, and publishers such as William Randolph Hearst, E.W. Scripps, and Joseph Pulitzer, were often attracted to investigative-type stories to boost circulation and, perhaps, their own influence. While most publishers may have been far more interested in selling papers than pursuing justice, many important investigative pieces were written during this time. The *New York Times* in the 1870s published accounts of the Tammany Hall corruption in New York City and the harm Boss Tweed had inflicted upon the city. This investigation was so compelling that it helped loosen Tammany Hall's grip on the city's politics and made Boss Tweed a villain (most famously caricaturized by Thomas Nast). Another famous example during this era was Nellie Bly, working for Pulitzer's *New York World*, in which she entered an insane asylum undercover to report on its atrocious conditions. Her report was called "Ten Days in a Madhouse."

The Golden Age of Muckrakers

Around the turn of the 20th century, journalism experienced a golden age in investigative reporting. Journals like *McClure's* published exposés by such legendary journalists as Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, and Roy Stannard Baker. The January 1903 issue, for instance, offered an installment of Ida Tarbell's exposé of the Standard Oil company; a Lincoln Steffens report on political corruption plaguing cities, "The Shame of Minneapolis"; and an examination of labor racketeering by Ray Stannard Baker. These pioneers blazed a path many would follow. A substantial number of these accounts led to real reforms. For example, Ida Tarbell's series *The History of the Standard Oil Company* ultimately led to the Supreme Court breaking up the company in 1911, when Standard Oil was divided into smaller entities such as Exxon and Mobil (Brady, 2008).

Yet, contrary to popular myth, muckrakers were not always highminded in why they chose certain stories. In the case of Tarbell's famous series, she and her editors had an eye on gaining more readers to purchase their magazine. In a letter written to author Alice Rice many years later, Tarbell wrote: "Anyone who thought we sat around with our brow screwed together tightly trying to reform the world was far from the truth. We were after…interesting reading material and if it contributed to the general good, so much the better" (Brady, 2008, p. 12).

The muckrakers' work still resonates powerfully today. According to author Steve Weinberg (2008), Tarbell, through the methods she used to expose Rockefeller and his Standard Oil Company, invented what would become investigative reporting. He explains that while exposés were written before 1900, they were often superficially researched. To write the narrative of the Standard Oil Company, Tarbell tracked down lawsuits, court opinions, hearings, studies, business correspondence, among many other kinds of data. She even interviewed former and current people from within the company.

By 1912, magazines and newspapers nationwide offered nearly 2,000 investigative reports on topics such as egregious conditions in tenements; bank fraud; abuse of minorities; and unsafe practices in the meat-packing industry (Armaeo, 2000). This was also a time when the Progressive movement was very strong and such investigative work helped create massive legislative reform, whether in child labor laws, regulation of business, election reform, or pharmaceutical drugs.

Period of Relative Quiet

Yet, this flowering of investigative reporting did not last. With the advent of World War I came a period of relative quiet. There were several factors at play.

Magazines were losing money, somewhat due to mismanagement, and many went out of business. Advertisers threatened to stop supporting magazines that published exposés. The social conditions that gave rise to muckraking eased (Armaeo, 2000). World War I also generated fierce patriotism throughout the country and ardent support for the government. This was not a hospitable environment for investigative reporting to flourish, and it largely retreated from the national stage to the local. The period between WWI and 1960 is seen by many as a relatively quiet time, albeit one that included important investigative work (Armaeo, 2000; Protess, et al., 1991; Aucoin, 2005). This common viewpoint is disputed by Shapiro (2003), however, who argues that this perspective owes much to the influential historic accounts of the historian Richard Hofstadter and to the muckrakers who left prolific memoirs.

Nevertheless, critical investigations were conducted during the period between 1917 and 1960. This included the 1922 examination by the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* into the Teapot Dome scandal, implicating President Harding's secretary of the interior. Another influential work was Carey McWilliams' exposés on race relations and farm labor in the 1930s and 1940s for *The Nation*. Drew Pearson, famed syndicated columnist of "The Washington Merry-Go-Round" began his investigative reporting in 1931 and continued for decades, succeeded by his protégé Jack Anderson. Edward R. Murrow's examination into the accusations of Senator Joseph McCarthy in 1954 or the plight of migrant workers in "Harvest of Shame" in 1960 were two of many investigative pieces on "See It Now" from *CBS News* (Shapiro, 2003).

One of the best known investigative journalists during this time period was I.F. Stone whose self-published *I.F. Stone Weekly* influenced other journalists and 70,000

readers from 1953 – 1971 (the last three years as a biweekly publication). This muckraking newsletter was a four-page pamphlet that held official Washington accountable, especially the Pentagon. Through carefully documented sources, the newsletter would show how official Washington was misleading the news media and the public (Shapiro, 2003).

Although the post World War 2 period was a period of relative quiet, it produced two astonishing and highly influential works that came in the form of books, yet met the test of any investigative work. The first was *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson in 1962 that exposed the dangers of pesticide and eventually led to the ban of DDT. Her work has been credited with initiating the environmental movement. Ralph Nader published *Unsafe at Any Speed* in 1965, a highly critical look at the auto industry and the unsafe designs they used for some of their cars. Bruce Shapiro (2003, p. xviii) noted that these books "explicitly define environmental depradation and auto-company profiteering not just as dangers to the public but as fundamental usurpations of democracy."

In the late 1960s and 1970s, investigative journalism flourished. Armao (2000) credits this to a number of factors including the political upheaval of the time, media competition, and the advent of enterprising reporters. Seymour Hersh's account of U.S. Army atrocities in the village of My Lai in Vietnam in 1969 is often seen as emblematic of investigative journalism's rebirth (Shapiro, 2003; Armao, 2000; Protess et al., 1991). Hersch described in his exposé that in March, 1968, U.S. soldiers in the Charlie Company massacred 567 villagers. Hersh's reveleation was a pivotal moment in the history of investigative journalism , as it ushered into war reporting the atrocities of civilians (Shapiro, 2003). Reporters in Vietnam who had witnessed but not written about atrocities

began to acknowledge that the killings of civilians should be counted as news. For Shapiro, Hersh's exposé teaches an important lesson that one compelling investigative account can significantly change the terms of public discourse for years to come.

The impact of investigative reporters began to accelerate when defense analyst Daniel Ellsberg leaked classified Defense Department documents on the history of the Vietnam War to reporters from the *New York Times*. After carefully analyzing the documents, the *Times* published its Pentagon Papers series in June, 1971 that demonstrated how government leaders had consistently lied to the public in explaining the intervention in Vietnam.

In regard to broadcast journalism, one of the most influential shows in investigative journalism began in 1968 as a brainchild of legendary producer Don Hewitt of *CBS News*. When "60 Minutes" was born, through the talents of Mike Wallace and Harry Reasoner, it soon captured the nation's attention with its hard-hitting reports and tightly produced stories. For decades, 60 Minutes has remained in television's top ten most watched programs, and remains popular to this day.

Of course, the most famous investigative reports were penned by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of the *Washington Post* as they methodically broke the Watergate story. As is known throughout the world, these two reporters helped expose the illegal activities of the Nixon Administration and the attempts to cover up their wrongdoing. Their persistent digging into election dirty tricks, campaign finance violations, and criminal activity including obstruction of justice was a major factor in bringing about Nixon's downfall. Yet, it also had a profound impact on journalism. Young people were inspired to join the ranks of investigative journalism and journalism schools experienced

a surge in applicants. Watergate also inspired a generation of reporters who often used the scandal as a justification for journalistic intrusion, and may have allowed the news media, at least for a time, to gain the balance of power from government. Yet some critics have argued that the aftermath of Watergate may have made some reporters overly cynical about government, assuming every politician and institution to be corrupt or immoral (Armao, 2000). Such reporting may have contributed to a cynical public that became less active in politics (Patterson, 1993).

In the 1980s, the luminaries of investigative reporting moved from individuals, such as Hersh, Woodward, and Berstein, to news organizations. In particular, two newspapers stand out for their outstanding investigative reporting: the *Philadelphia Inquirer* under Eugene Roberts and the Atlanta *Journal-Constitution* under Bill Kovach. Both editors were strongly committed to investigative reporting, assembled highly talented teams of enterprising reporters, and uncovered many acts of wrongdoing. Under Roberts, the *Inquirer* probed the U.S. tax code, the fraudulent operation of kidney dialysis machines, city police, and world oil. Under Kovach, many outstanding projects were undertaken, including an early computer assisted reporting project that demonstrated how banks were discriminating against African Americans in offering loans (Armaeo, 2000).

Despite impressive accomplishments, both editors left their papers at the end of the decade, attributing their departure to transformations in the newspaper industry that increasingly emphasized profits over content. Yet, does this attitude that corporate media and newspaper chains are unsupportive to investigative journalism, prevail today among investigative editors and reports? This dissertation sheds light on this question. Some

observers, such as Charles Lewis, even suggest that investigative journalism has entered a new era in which nonprofit organizations will carry the lionshare of investigative reporting (Armao, 2000). Yet do many investigative journalists today hold this opinion and how comfortable are they in partnering with nonprofit groups? This question will be addressed in later chapters.

Chapter 2: Theory and Literature Review

This study has its theoretical roots in theories of ownership and content as well as agenda-building. The literature review will first summarize the key arguments made by Robert McChesney and Ben Bagdikian on ownership's impact on media content. It then will cite other studies examining ownership and content. The review will next discuss agenda-building, as described by David Protess and colleagues, and related studies. Finally, it will cite articles assessing the state of investigative journalism, public support, and perceptions of investigative journalists.

Theoretical Review: Influence of Ownership on Content

In the past century, many writers and scholars have analyzed how ownership affects the news industry and journalistic content. As early as 1919, Upton Sinclair wrote *The Brass Check,* an exposé on the inner workings of the news industry. His insights about ownership and the press are prescient and still relevant today. Sinclair argues that business has a stranglehold on the allegedly free press: "The methods by which the 'Empire of Business' maintains its control over Journalism are four: First, ownership of the papers; second, ownership of the owners; third, advertising subsidies; and fourth, direct bribery. By these methods there exists in America a control of news and of current comment more absolute than any monopoly in any other industry" (p. 241). In Sinclair's view, this ownership of the press has dramatically shaped coverage. For example, he asserts that the press is strongly biased against the labor movement and has even lied about it: "Whenever it comes to a 'show-down' between labor and capital, the press is

openly or secretly for capital – and this no matter how 'liberal' this press may pretend to be" (p.346).

One of the pioneers in the study of political communication is Dallas Smythe (1991). His scholarship focuses on the agenda-setting power of mass media, viewed culturally, not in the more narrow empirical sense. He believes the relationship between mass media and audience is best understood in the political-economic context in which the content was produced. Smythe emphasizes that the mass media's main product is the audience, not the message.

Herbert Schiller (1971) in *The Mind Managers* discusses how the power centers of society –government, business, or mass media – manipulate the public as a means of social control. He writes that "the means of manipulation are many, but, clearly, control of the informational and ideational apparatus at all levels is essential. This is secured by the operation of a simple rule of the market economy. Ownership and control of the mass media…is available [only] to those with capital" (p. 4). He charges that there are several central myths that allow such "mind management" to flourish. One of these myths holds that the media is diverse, spawning a marketplace of ideas, when in fact it is not: "most Americans are basically, though unconsciously, trapped in what amounts to a no-choice informational bind" (p. 10).

Altschull (1995) argues that the press, far from being autonomous, is an agent of the powerful. He contends that there exists a widely held belief, among journalists and the public, of "the heroic press fighting the overwhelming power of the mighty and corrupt in the interests of the grateful citizen" (p. 60). The belief is unfounded, however, as the press is controlled by elites, who seek to conceal their relationship with the press.

Altschull believes that "viewing the media as agents of power rather than as wielders of power brings us close to actuality" (p. 77).

In advocating that media economics should be at the center of communications study, Compaine and Gomery (2000) believe that Marxist critical studies, such as the ones described above, are limited as they "analyze a subject when they already 'know' a predetermined answer" (p. 507). They contend that this 'critical analysis' offers a "simplistic, incomplete and narrow discussion" (p. 507). Arguments advanced by conservative free market advocates are also flawed because they place the highest value on efficiency for any enterprise, even one, such as journalism, that is critical to a flourishing democracy. Instead, the authors call for media economics to make as its focus the study of performance, not only who owns the media, but "how well the mass media perform in modern society" (Compaine & Gomery, p. 508).

Although many scholars have written about ownership and media, this dissertation will focus on the theories of Robert McChesney and Ben Bagdikian.

Robert McChesney's View of Corporate Media

Media theorists such as Robert McChesney (1999) and Ben Bagdikian (2004) argue that the news media have not done enough watchdog reporting and as a result, the system has become more corrosive. They believe that media consolidation – the merging of many independent newspapers into a common entity owned by the same company – has created news behemoths interested only in share price and profit, and not concerned with their democratic role in society including investigative reporting. In fact, one of McChesney's (1999) main arguments is that an inherent contradiction exists between a for-profit, highly concentrated, advertising-reliant media system and the communication

needs of a democratic society. Yet how true is this contradiction? If McChesney's argument is correct, (which partially underlies his call for media reform), we should expect to find those investigative journalists working for newspapers as part of large public chains (particularly, conglomerations such as Gannet which has interests in other media and businesses) as perhaps being the least satisfied with their work and perceiving the least organizational support for investigative work. Yet, as later chapters will show, this is not the case.

McChesney (1999) also charges local commercial media, including daily newspapers, as consistently reluctant to conduct critical investigations of the most powerful local commercial interests. He argues there has been a kind of "Eleventh Commandment" in which the local media do not cover big local companies critically, as this might alienate advertisers. He notes there are political pitfalls to such investigative pieces because media owners and managers often interact with major shareholders and executives of powerful local companies. McChesney further observes that this phenomenon is especially true in an age when investigative journalism of any kind is generally bemoaned as too costly and bad for the bottom line. Yet how do these arguments compare to the attitudes of investigative journalists? Do they report that their news organization is reluctant to probe potential wrongdoing of local powerful interests? Do they report receiving internal pressure (from within the newsroom) as to which stories they write?

McChesney's theory is that as the news media has become a more integral part of large corporations, the "corporate sector is increasingly exempt from any sustained critical examination from a public interest perspective" (p. 58) and there has even been a

hostility toward investigative reporting itself. While the threat of libel may explain some of commercial media's reluctance to investigate wealthy corporations, he argues this alone cannot explain the hostility. He also contends that the corporate news media holds a double standard in how they investigative government: those agencies that primarily serve elite interests – the CIA, military, State department-- are overlooked whereas those agencies that serve mainly the poor or middle class, such as welfare and public education, are subject to considerable scrutiny. He cites the near blackout of media coverage of the CIA and the defense budget as two examples.

McChesney also asserts that investigative journalism suffers from a lack of follow-up from other media outlets. He believes that for journalism to be effective, an individual reporter or story cannot solely be the extent of an issue's treatment. While the initial report might open an area of inquiry, other journalists need to probe a story further to create a deeper impact. He believes such follow-up reporting by other media is rarely the case in contemporary journalism, particularly when a powerful corporation is the story's target. This weakens the impact investigative journalism can have: "The 1998 incidents also highlight something perhaps even more insidious, the lack of any follow-up for critical investigative journalism. For journalism to be effective, a single reporter or story cannot be the extent of treatment of an issue" (p. 61).

Ben Bagdikian's Media Monopoly Argument

Many of Ben Bagdikian's arguments dovetail with McChesney's. Bagdikian has chronicled the increasing media conglomeration through a series of books entitled *The Media Monopoly*, with each successive edition reporting fewer media owners than the one before. Whereas in 1983, he reported that 50 mass media corporations dominated

American audiences, by 2004, this number had shrunk to five: Time Warner, Disney, News Corporation, Viacom and Bertelsmann.

Writing in *The New Media Monopoly* (2004), Bagdikian argues that the major news media offer the public incomplete news because they largely "take their news from governmental and private power centers and shun important contrary information because it is considered "too liberal" or "left" (p. 85). Bagdikian cites several historical examples including Joseph McCarthy's several years of national hysteria. For example, he argues that soon after Edward R. Murrow broadcast episodes of *See It Now* that challenged the senator, the show was scaled back in programming, with Murrow largely left to conduct innocuous interviews with celebrities. Bagdikian also contends that the main media failed to report the tragedy of the Vietnam War for 13 years until *The New Yorker* began publishing articles by autonomous observers. However, even this coverage cost the magazine significant advertising support. He notes the media's silence during the run-up to the current Iraq war.

Bagdikian believes that sources on the Left are rarely acknowledged, with the names of think tanks or publications often not appearing as the original source, whereas those on the right, The Heritage Foundation, American Enterprise Institute, or publications like the *Weekly Standard* are frequently used "prominently, unapologetically, and by name" (p. XI). The question, for this dissertation, is to what extent do investigative journalists believe these assertions to be true? Do those journalists working for large publicly held companies express less organizational support for their work (including investigative projects that might be considered "to the left") than those working for private or family owners?

Bagdikian (2004) also argues that as the media has become part of large conglomerations, it has become sympathetic to profit maximization, by whatever method, among corporations. He believes this sympathy allowed corruption to continue unchecked in such corporations such as Enron, Tyco, and WorldCom. He observes that the principal watchdog of American corporate life, the Securities and Exchange Commission, has "become a toothless watchdog unable or unwilling to bark at large corporations, thanks to conservatives who had cut its budget" (p. 103). However, the major media also turned a blind eye to the corruption. He writes that while every metropolitan newspaper in the country has a section devoted to business and corporate affairs, for decades most of the space and energy was devoted to celebrating top corporate executives as heroes, ignoring evidence of wrongdoing in "left of center" journals or watchdog group reports. He asks where the mainstream press was when vast fraud and theft was occurring in some of the largest banks and corporations of 2002 – 2003. (He might ask the same of the subprime mortgage catastrophe the country is now facing.)

He also suggests that news of American involvement with other countries has been greatly sanitized by the U.S. news media. He argues:

> The intelligentsia and many foreign populations have more accurate information about undemocratic and often cruel acts by the United States than does the average American. The main U.S. news services generally have reported the official Washington version of events without independent investigations in the field, so most Americans assume that their country did not condone the use of torture or subversive revolutions in other countries. They believe that all official

behavior abroad has been fighting for freedom and democracy in the world. (p. 98)

One example he gives to support his point is the *New York Times* account of Chilean dictator Pinochet in an extensive story about international pressure to hold him accountable for his crimes. Bagdikian notes that the *Times* and the mainstream media consistently failed to note that Pinochet had been assisted in his crimes by U.S. agents and had the support of Washington during his tortuous regime.

Other Studies on Ownership and Content

Cho, Thorson, and Lacy (2004) explore the relationship between content and circulation, asking when newspaper companies invest more resources in their content, does this increase circulation. Comparing 27 U.S. dailies identified by *Editor and Publisher* as having improved newspaper quality against a national representative sample of 98 dailies, they found that, even in the age of the Internet and cable, a strong relationship exists. Those newspapers which improved their content had a significantly higher increase in circulation than other newspapers. The study also found that greater investment in larger newsroom staffs, enhanced local coverage, and more in-depth reporting correlated the most with higher circulations. This study supports the notion that when newspaper owners, responding to declining circulation numbers, cut back staff and coverage, they enter a downward spiral, as more readers will abandon them. Conversely, if owners invest more in papers to combat declining circulation, they may reverse the trend.

Another study examined what happens to news content when a large newspaper chain like Gannett takes over a family-owned paper. It is an important question because

in the past few decades, many independently owned newspapers have been bought by chains. Coulson and Hansen (1995) reviewed the news content of the Louisville *Courier-Journal* both before and after Gannett purchased it. They found that the news hole actually increased fairly dramatically once Gannett was the owner, increasing 29%. New ownership brought a 46% increase in the number of news stories the *Courier-Journal* published during the week, however, the average news story decreased from 15 to 12 inches. They also discovered that the newspaper contained considerably more soft news after Gannett took over, with the average number of features doubling from 13 to 28. There was also a greater reliance on news wire stories after the acquisition.

Other studies that explore the effects of ownership on news content found very few differences between group and independent newspapers (Busterna, 1988; Olien, Tichenor, & Donohue, 1988), although the literature is mixed on this point. For example, Coulson (1994) found that journalists working for independent newspapers were more likely to rate as excellent their newspapers' commitment to quality news coverage.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) in *Mediating the Message* explore which factors influence media content. Their model is one of hierarchal concentric circles, with each influence enveloping the previous one. The most narrow influence is from individual workers themselves, their personal attitudes and professional ethics; next, are media routines and how they shape the news agenda; third are organizational influences, such as economic goals of organizations and changes in corporate ownership; the fourth influence concerns interest groups, advertisers, and competition who help shape the news; ideology is the final influence, which envelops all the others. The authors write that while media routines powerfully constrain the individual media worker, "ultimately,

however, routines are carried out within the boundaries of specific organizations, which hire, fire, and promote workers and pay their salaries" (p. 139). They point out that "specific policies issued from the top of the organization can overrule lower-level routines" (p. 140).

Shoemaker and Reese emphasize that type of ownership affects governance:

> When a company is privately owned, the owners can operate the business as they see fit. But most large media firms are owned by stockholders. This form of ownership intensifies the purely economic objectives of the company. Managers of publicly traded companies can be replaced if they fail in their responsibility to the stockholders to maximize profit. The stock market cares little for public service if it means sacrificing profitability. (p. 145)

Yet some empirical research disputes their claim. While it is undeniable that publicly held companies must respond to shareholders, it is not clear that publicly owned newspapers offer inferior quality to privately owned papers, which often face similar daunting financial pressures.

Doug Underwood (1993b) in *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom* decries the influence that profit pressures and corporate MBAs are bringing to the newsroom. He observes "critics of MBA-style journalism say they see a clear pattern when the marketers gain control of a newspaper. Not only does the substance of the newspaper become secondary to the planning, prettifying, and promoting of the newspaper, but newspaper executives often must institute tough newsroom management systems in order to bring along newsworkers reluctant to buy into the philosophy of market-oriented journalism" (p. 27).

Echoing Bagdikian's argument, Underwood (1993b, p. 37) writes that the MBA newsroom changes the character of investigations. "It is increasingly difficult, they say, to question authority out in the world when they themselves are being pressured to become loyal corporate soldiers inside their organizations."

Agenda-Building

Whereas agenda setting focuses on the media's influence on issues most important to the public, agenda-building broadens the focus to the complex interplay among the press, government, and public to better understand how some issues receive serious attention (and may become law) while others may languish. As Maxwell McCombs (1998) wrote, "Agenda-setting, the creation of awareness and the arousal of public concern, is but one aspect of the larger process of agenda-building, a collective process in which media, government, and the public reciprocally influence each other" (p. 221, quoted in Perloff, 1998).

Some studies on agenda-building have focused on *media agenda-building*, how the media agenda is constructed – who sets the media agenda – while others have explored *policy agenda-building*, the role that policymakers, the media, and the public play in the construction of policy agendas. This dissertation will focus on the latter, exploring the degree to which investigative journalists believe they influence the policy agenda through their exposés, how they perceive the agenda-building process to occur, and what the public's role is in this process.

Findings of David Protess and Colleagues

David Protess and colleagues (1991) acknowledge how difficult it is for social problems to land on policymakers' agendas and produce reform, as the problems that

policymakers might address is very large, each vying for their interest. Policymakers must decide which issues will receive special attention. One of the researchers' main questions is, how does investigative journalism affect this policy-building process? To address this, they studied six cases of reporters working on investigative stories. The researchers studied the stories from journalistic conception through publication and what agenda-building impact they may have had. They also conducted a survey with over 900 members of Investigative Reporters and Editors (the largest association of investigative reporters) to understand journalistic attitudes. For these case studies, they wanted to know in what ways, and how, the exposés changed policy or public opinion, and in what ways did they not.

They found that the Mobilization Model – whereby the investigative report stirs the public to demand reform from officials -- rarely happens. Yet, this is the process that most investigative journalists believed to occur. However, when policy reform occurred, it was mainly through a symbiotic relationship between the reporters and elites, with the public playing a passive role.

The authors identify three aspects of agenda-building: priority, pace and particularity. Priority occurs when the problem raised by an investigative story moves onto the policymaking agenda. The issue will then compete with other issues for action. Pace indicates the relative speed that policymakers address the issue. The third aspect of agenda-building is particularity, which the authors explain is "the effect of investigative reporting on the particular content of the policy initiatives" (p. 239).

Protess and colleagues (1991) further identify three types of possible *policy* outcomes: deliberative, individualistic, and substantive. They explain it this way:

> Deliberative results occur when policymakers hold formal discussions of policy problems and their solutions, such as legislative hearings or executive commissions. Individualistic outcomes occur when policy makers apply sanctions against particular persons or entities, including prosecutions, firings, and demotions. Finally, substantive results include regulatory, legislative, and/or administrative changes. (p. 240)

Using this model, the authors note that their case studies of investigative pieces triggered all three types of agenda-building: deliberative, individualistic, and substantive, although some stories may only have triggered one of these outcomes. What factors must be in play for agenda-building to occur? The authors identify three key factors: (1) recognition by policymakers that a real problem exists; (2) the availability of policy alternatives to help solve the problem; (3) the presence of a supportive political climate.

For all six of the case studies examined, Protess and colleagues (1991) found that policymakers perceived legitimate problems were raised and that the news media played an important role by helping draw policymakers' attention to the issues. The authors note: "Because of this [exposés], the *pace* of reform was accelerated in each of the cases, and the underlying problems became *priority* items in five of the six cases" (p. 242).

Mobilization Model Questioned

Protess and colleagues (1991) argue that the Mobilization Model is largely a myth. The Mobilization Model, which is the conventional wisdom of journalists, holds that the general public, outraged at the disclosures the story produced, responds by insisting on reform. If this were true, however, the results in the six case studies examined should vary based on the degree of public reaction to the exposé. Instead, the

researchers noted: “The policy developments that we found clearly occurred independently of either manifest changes in public opinion or interest group pressures” (p. 245). They note that in most of the cases examined, reform proposals were announced before the investigative report was fully published. Further, the researchers observe that the tone of policymakers seemed inconsistent with the Mobilization Model. Instead, they treated the exposés as opportunities to exhibit leadership traits. “Rather than risk being portrayed as part of the problem, in the conventional terms of adversary journalism, they took steps that allowed them to be described as part of the solution” (p. 245). The authors found that in many of the cases studied, “journalists and policymakers collaborated to set policy-making agendas *prior* [italics added] to the public dissemination of the investigative findings” (p. 246). Protess and colleagues termed such symbiotic alliances ”coalition journalism.” This finding is rather startling, given that investigative journalism is almost universally perceived as adversarial, and one that needs public outrage to achieve reform.

In short, the authors put it this way:

> We find that policy-making agendas are catalyzed by the formal transactions between journalists and officials more than by the direct influence of the public or interest groups. Further, those transactional relationships seem more important than the actual publication or broadcast of an investigative series in influencing the agenda-building process. Finally, the character of the policy outcomes – the reforms – may be affected significantly by collaboration among journalists and officials. (p. 246)

Of course, the authors do not dismiss the public's role altogether. They emphasize that the public mood, which may be spurred by an exposé, can affect the possibility of reform.

Other Studies on Agenda-building

Raphael, Tokunaga, and Wai (2004) examined agenda-building from a different perspective. They analyzed elite print reaction to two exposés that were legally challenged by their targets: ABC's report on Food Lion supermarkets and NBC's story on General Motors' trucks. The authors found that how the news media responds to investigative reporting affects the press' ability to act as a watchdog. They explain: "Both NBC and ABC revealed significant threats to public wellbeing posed by large corporations. Yet media response helped weaken the networks' ability to fulfill their watchdog role by turning journalists' attention overwhelmingly toward issues of journalism ethics, privileging corporate target sources… (p. 174). The authors also supported the conclusion of Protess and colleagues, that investigative reporters seldom work independently to write reports or spark reforms, but instead interact with interest group and government agencies that were largely responsible for the reforms that took place.

Patricia Curtain (1999) tackled the idea of public relations and how it may affect agenda-building. Some authors (McManus, 1994; Underwood, 1993b) believe that the news media are relying more on public relations "information subsidies" to cut costs associated with original reporting and increase the bottom line. It was thought that should such an increase reliance on information subsidies be occurring, this would strongly influence the media agenda, and ultimately the public agenda. However, through depth

interviews and a national survey, the author found that budget tightening has led to an increased use of public relations materials only in particular instances that usually do not support the sponsoring organization's agenda-building objectives. Thus, Curtain's conclusion is that information subsidies are a relatively weak factor in accounting for what media issues became prioritized.

Johnson, Wanta, and Boudreau (2004) examined the presidencies of Nixon, Carter, Reagan, and George H.W. Bush to find out to what extent they influenced both media and public concern for the issue of drugs. They discovered that "the president plays an equal or greater role than the media in the agenda-building process" (p. 177). In particular, presidential statements were found to influence public approval more than the media influenced the public. The authors identify four factors that can help or hurt a president's capacity to influence news coverage or public concern about similar issues to drugs. These are "the nature of issue, the president's general rhetorical ability, how much he stresses an issue to influence media coverage, and real-world events that may draw attention to or away…from the issue" (p.180).

Dan Berkowitz and Douglas Adams (1990) examined the subsidized information from public relations officials to an Indianapolis television station over a four week period. They wanted to know how much of the subsidized information made it into the broadcasts. This concept of "information subsidy" is important, they argue, because it concerns the attempts of news sources to purposely shape the media agenda by decreasing journalists' costs of newsgathering. Studying information subsidies, they assert, is tantamount to evaluating the power of news sources and their ability to shape one particular social reality. They found that news workers retained 22% of the subsidies

for the first filter (not all these subsidies would make it on air). While previous studies reported that news organizations tend to retain more government originated subsidies, these researchers found a greater percentage was retained from interest groups, in spite of the greater volume of government and business subsidies.

Wanta (1991) examined how the agendas of the president, press, and public interact with one another. Using a content analysis of the president's weekly summary documents and Gallup Poll data over 18 years, he found that the president can interfere with the relationship between the press and public by addressing an agenda of issues that are substantially different from the press' agenda. He discovered that the president and news media basically compete for the public's attention, and when the president's public approval rating is high, he is more likely to win.

Review of Literature on State of Investigative Journalism

The literature on investigative journalism (including both scholarly and trade) finds this kind of reporting in some peril in America's newsrooms. While many news organizations are still pursuing investigative journalism, even in the face of budget cuts, the quality of the journalism has often been trivialized, particularly for local broadcast news.

In an article for *Columbia Journalism Review*, Marion Just, Rosalind Levine, and Kathleen Regan (2002) found in their survey that 75% of newsrooms report that they conduct investigative reporting. However, only 25% of these stations had full-time investigative units, and one quarter of news stations acknowledged they conducted no investigative work whatsoever. This suggests that most newsrooms are not willing to commit substantial resources to watchdog journalism. The study also found a downward

trend: over five years, the level of watchdog journalism declined sharply. Whereas in 1998, one of every 60 stories was a station-initiated investigation, by 2002 only one in 150 stories was a station-initiated exposé. Moreover, when the researchers conducted a content analysis of these investigative stories, they found that one-third of the stories were trivial or even titillating, such as recycling outdated hard drives or an investigation of parties where women illegally injected silicone.

Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2007) point out in *The Elements of Journalism* that a study of prime time newsmagazines in 1997 had a similar finding, reporting that "fewer than one in 10 stories concerned such topics as education, economics, foreign affairs, the military, national security, politics, or social welfare – or any of the areas where most public money is spent" (p. 151). Instead, more than half the stories focused on consumerism, celebrity entertainment, lifestyle and other such topics.

The authors believe that investigative reporting is one of the important principles that separates journalism from other means of communication with the public. They lament, however, that the watchdog principle is threatened by overuse and pandering to audiences instead of serving the public. Echoing McChesney and Bagdikian, they cite as even more threatening, the increasing corporate conglomeration, which "effectively may destroy the independence required of the press to perform their monitoring role" (p. 141). Moreover, they believe under the Bush Administration, investigative journalism encountered a new threat as unprecedented efforts were made to "withhold government information from the public and even to criminalize the efforts by the press to publish" (p. 142).

Some media critics, such as Aaron Swartz (2008), decry that one of investigative journalism's techniques, going under cover, has lost favor among many journalists. Swartz believes that some of the best exposés would not be possible without this technique. He cites a recent *Harper's* investigation from July 2007, in which the authors go undercover, pretending to represent the highly oppressive regime Turkmenistan, a country with many political prisoners. Wishing to improve the country's image, they approached two lobbying firms, who enthusiastically bid for their business. One firm proposed "laundering money through academic groups to fund congressional delegations…as well as hiring think tank experts who would say 'On the one hand this and the other hand that,' writing pieces for these experts to sign and placing them as op-eds in major newspapers" (p. 28). Swartz expresses great surprise that the journalistic community shunned the *Harper's* article, believing that undercover work in some way undermined the exposé. Swartz found that undercover reporting was a rarity in mainstream news, and this may partially be due to the court case involving Food Lion versus ABC, which had a chilling effect on the industry. An op-ed that Ken Silverstein, the author of the undercover article for *Harper's*, offers another reason (quoted in Swartz, 2008):

> The decline of undercover reporting – and of investigative reporting in general – reflects, in part, the increasing conservatism and cautiousness of the media, especially the smug, high-end Washington press corps. As reporters have grown more socially prominent during the last several decades, they've become part of the very power structure that they're supposed to be tracking and scrutinizing. (p. 30)

If undercover reporting is becoming more of a rarity, how much credibility with the public does computer assisted reporting have? Justin Mayo and Glenn Leshner (2000) found that stories using computer-assisted reporting are as credible to the public as stories founded on authoritative sources or anecdotal evidence. The investigators conducted a within-subjects experiment in which participants read three newspaper articles: one with anecdotal data, one with computer assisted reporting, and one with official or expert data. They found that, although the perceived credibility and newsworthiness of computer assisted reporting were not significantly different from more traditional forms of evidence, computer assisted reporting articles were generally disliked and evaluated as lower in quality than articles relying on anecdotal or authoritative evidence.

Another important topic in investigative journalism involves state shield laws. Many reporters use anonymous sources to gain information from sources who are unwilling to reveal themselves to the public. However, granting anonymity to sources, potentially makes reporters vulnerable to trial attorneys who may subpoena them. Some reporters have faced contempt of court and jail time for refusing to divulge their sources. However, anecdotal evidence aside, how large is the impact of state shield laws on investigative reporting? Through a national survey, Eileen Wirth (1995) found that state shield laws seem to encourage investigative reporting and these same shield laws deter many subpoenas. She also found that city editors in states with a shield law regarded this law as far more important to encouraging investigative journalism than editors working in non-shield states.

In discussing the state of investigative journalism, much of the literature is downbeat in its assessment. Yet, the literature also contains stories highlighting how new

forms of journalism are pursuing watchdog journalism. For example, David Glenn (2007) wrote an upbeat profile for *Columbia Journalism Review* that discussed a blogger's contribution to investigative journalism. In writing about Josh Marshall and his *Talking Points Memo* blog, the author points out that this blogger was most single-handedly responsible for raising the story of the fired U.S. attorneys to a national level, which ultimately led to the resignation of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, among other top government officials. The site draws about 400,000 page views on most weekdays. There is a section, TPM Muckraker, which is dedicated to investigating politics. This website was also responsible for breaking the story of a suspicious land deal involving Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski, and partly responsible for raising to prominence Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott's segregationist comments, which led to his downfall as a party leader. Glenn does point out, however, that most blogs are mainly commentary, producing relatively little original reporting or serious investigative journalism. Whether *Talking Points Memo* reflects much future journalism or will be remembered as something like *I.F. Stone's Weekly* remains to be seen.

Other authors, such as Charles Lewis (2007), believe nonprofit journalism is best positioned to support investigative reporting in the future. He writes:

> Never has there been a greater need for independent, original, credible information about our complex society and the world at large. Never has technology better enabled the instantaneous global transmission of pictures, sounds, and words to communicate such reporting. But all this is occurring in a time of absentee owners, harvested investments, hollowed-out newsrooms, and thus a diminished capacity to adequately find and tell the stories. (p. 32)

Lewis (2007) believes that there are fewer and fewer professional journalists monitoring society. As more newspapers transform themselves into a hybrid of print and web, online advertising revenue must support editorial payrolls, yet at present it does not come close. This, he writes, has produced a significant decrease in volume and quality of serious news stories, especially among small and mid-size newspapers. What kind of journalism can help salvage the situation? For Lewis, it is nonprofit journalism: "In this light, other economic models that can produce substantive journalism suddenly look more interesting and relevant to a profession under siege. And while much has been written of late about the dire state of commercial journalism, very little has been said about various independent, noncommercial initiatives specially designed to produce that kind of substance" (p. 33). One of the topics this dissertation will explore is to what extent investigative journalists are comfortable partnering with such non-profit groups.

Public Support of Investigative Journalism

Another way to evaluate the state of investigative journalism is through public support. Andrew Kohut (2001), director of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, found that fewer Americans support watchdog journalism compared to the mid-1980s. The percentage of Americans believing that media criticism impedes political leaders from carrying out their jobs increased from 17% in 1985 to 25% in 2001. Those valuing the press' watchdog role decreased from 67% to 60%. Instead "many Americans see an ill-mannered watchdog that barks too often – one that is driven by its own interests rather than by a desire to protect the public interest" (p. 52). Moreover, the public is uncertain whether the press protects or hurts democracy, 45% believing it helps, 38%

believing it hurts. In 1985, Americans perceived the news media as a guardian of democratic values by a margin of two to one.

Lars Willnat and David Weaver (1998) conducted a nationwide survey in 1997 to measure public attitudes and support of investigative journalism. Their findings are encouraging to investigative journalists. They reported that the percentage of respondents who approve of investigative journalism climbed to 84%, indicating that a significant majority of the public still favors a news media that reports on corruption and fraud. In fact, as of 1997, this support was increasing, not diminishing, over time. The researchers also discovered that public approval for investigative reporting remains far higher than public approval for specific investigative techniques. For example, only one-third of respondents approved of reporters going undercover. About half (46%) approved of hidden cameras or microphones. Their findings indicate that the best predictor for approval of investigative reporting is one's general attitude toward the news media's role in society.

Susan Opt and Timothy Delaney (2000) reviewed public perceptions of investigative reporting by evaluating a number of surveys over the past couple of decades and jury decisions. What they found is a mixed picture: on the one hand, the public does by and large support investigative journalism, but people have are become more willing to find media organizations guilty in court; for example, the infamous Food Lion case against ABC, in which the jury found ABC guilty for trespassing, fraud, and misrepresentation.

The researchers also discovered that while people support investigative reports, they often have difficulty identifying or remembering them. Their findings indicate that

age is associated with approval, so that those 60 and older were less likely to approve of investigative journalism than younger participants. Also, public opinion toward watchdog reporting may vary depending on the medium: broadcast journalism received a 44% approval rating compared to a 66% approval rating, when all media are considered (Opt & Delaney, 2000). Perhaps this shows that local news is paying the price for cheapening the investigative label with trivial or merely titillating stories. In addition, women were more likely than men to disapprove of hidden cameras or microphones, while older respondents were more likely to disapprove of reporters going undercover, citing unnamed sources, or using hidden microphones.

Stone, O'Donnell, and Banning (1997) investigated how the public viewed the watchdog role of newspapers. Through their survey, they found that the public more believed in newspapers' watchdog role than did journalists themselves. In fact, they found that the "public's endorsement of the watchdog role is three times greater than that of journalists" (p. 96). Against expectation, they discovered that the strongest watchdog advocates did not read newspapers more frequently; however, they were younger and more highly educated. Through focus groups, the researchers found that views of small town residents concerning the proper watchdog role of the press were virtually identical to metropolitan residents.

In exploring the public's expectations of news, Heider, McCombs, and Poindexter (2005) found that "overwhelming majorities said that accuracy (94%) and unbiased reporting (84%) are extremely important, but two major tenets of traditional journalism did not receive strong endorsements" (p. 958). These included the norms of closely monitoring government and powerful people (49%) and speed (35%). Instead, more

people were supportive of journalistic norms associated with public journalism, with 51% ranking "offering solutions to community problems" and 49% ranking "providing a forum for community views" (p. 959) as extremely important. Minorities, women, and adults with less education and income were particularly inclined to endorse the role of offering solutions.

Journalists' Perceptions of Investigative Reporting

Some scholars have concluded that a fair number of journalists seem lukewarm about watchdog reporting. In a recent study, Weaver and colleagues (2007) found in their extensive survey of U.S. journalists, that reporters tend to see their professional roles as: "interpretative (62.6%)," "disseminator (15.6%)," "adversarial (18.6%)," or "populist mobilizer (10.4%)." The question that arises is why do so many journalists perceive their role as interpretive (e.g., providing analysis and interpretation of complex problems, discussing national policy, etc.) but far less adversarial? It is important to point out that respondents could have chosen more than one role. The researchers were puzzled by the low percentage of journalists identifying with the adversarial mission: "We had anticipated that in the wake of dozens of scandals involving leaders of large corporations, the adversarial function would experience a surge" (Weaver et al., 2007, p. 143).

James Ettema and Theodore Glasser (1998) take another angle in studying investigative journalism. In *Custodians of Conscience*, they conducted in-depth interviews to explore the inherent tension all investigative journalists face between maintaining a disinterested objectivity and the moral outrage that necessarily comes through their work. Ettema and Glasser observe that the "work of these reporters calls us, as a society, to decide what is, and what is not, an outrage to our sense of moral order and

to consider our expectations for our officials, our institutions, and ultimately ourselves. In this way investigative journalists are custodians of public conscience" (p. 3). They note these journalists lack subpoena power or the needed legal machinery for civic reform. Instead, they are the keepers of a societal conscience – a morally engaged voice.

Do print journalists differ from online journalists in how they perceive their professional role? William Cassidy (2005) discovered that print reporters perceived the Interpretive/Investigative role as significantly more important than online reporters, whereas online journalists placed greater value in disseminating information to the public as soon as possible. As much of journalism migrates online, it remains to be seen what the impact of these two groups' preferences will be.

Although atheoretical, Leonard Downie and Robert Kaiser (2002) offer valuable insights on investigative reporting from the standpoint of two editors at the *Washington Post*. They argue passionately why investigative reporting is important to help correct abuses and injustices but explain why this kind of reporting is in peril in many newsrooms. Their description invites the reader into a highly prestigious newsroom to observe how the investigative process unfolds.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

The dissertation will explore these hypotheses and research questions through a survey and in-depth interviews with investigative journalists working in newspapers. These questions will address two key theoretical questions: (1) How important is type of ownership in affecting investigative journalists' job satisfaction, commitment to the field, and perceived newsroom support and constraint? (2) How well does the theory of agenda-building predict investigative journalists' job satisfaction and how has their

understanding of agenda-building changed over time? Specifically, the hypotheses/research questions for the survey are:

H1: The more investigative journalists' believe their work influences policy, the less likely they are to consider leaving the field within ten years.

H2: The more experience investigative journalists have, the more detrimental they find the Internet for investigative reporting.

H3: Investigative journalists at smaller papers are more comfortable partnering with nonprofit news operations in conducting investigations than those at larger papers.

RQ1: Does investigative journalists' belief in the impact of their work predict job satisfaction?

RQ2: Which factors best predict job satisfaction?

RQ3: Are journalists working for family or private newspapers more satisfied with their jobs than those working for public papers?

RQ4: How much organizational support do investigative journalists believe they are receiving to do the best kind of work? Does this depend on type of ownership?

RQ5: Compared to five years ago, what are investigative journalists' experiences in the newsroom? Is there an association with ownership?

RQ6: Do those working for public companies experience greater organizational constraints than those at family or private companies?

RQ7: How have journalists' motivations to conduct "successful" investigative projects changed over 20 years?

RQ8: How have journalistic practices concerning agenda-building and attitudes toward the public changed over two decades?

RQ9: What are journalistic attitudes toward the Internet and its impact on investigative reporting?

RQ10: Are there any investigative techniques for which many reporters would not use due to ethical concerns? Does gender play a role?

RQ11: What two resources do journalists believe would best equip them to produce excellence in their work?

The research questions guiding the in-depth interviews are as follows:

RQ1: What do investigative journalists think of the field today, its future, and the support of their newsroom?

RQ2: How satisfied are investigative journalists and what motivates them to pursue such a difficult profession?

RQ3: What are investigative journalists' attitudes about the Internet and its impact on investigative reporting?

RQ4: What role do watchdog reporters believe nonprofits will play in the future of investigative journalism? How comfortable are they in partnering with nonprofits?

RQ5: How influential do investigative journalists perceive their work in changing policy and what role do they see the public playing in the agenda-building process?

RQ6: Do investigative journalists perceive government as more likely to be the target of an investigation, and why might this be the case?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Rationale for Methodological Approach

This dissertation consists of two methods: survey and depth interviews. The survey offers a breadth of understanding, with 281 print investigative journalists participating. It provides a snap-shot of the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of investigative journalists working today. It allows the researcher to explore relationships among variables, and in doing so, increase our understanding of the phenomena in question. The depth interviews fill in where the survey cannot. The interviews probe respondents to elicit more meaningful answers, asking semi-structured, open-ended questions enabling respondents to better express their attitudes and perceptions. Depth interviewing is particularly important for a study such as this one, as McCracken (1988) writes: "For certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing. The method can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world…." (p. 9).

Taken together, each method compensates for the other's shortcoming -- the survey offers breadth but may lack depth. The interviews possess considerable depth but are not generalizable. Moreover, combining these two methods allows for triangulation, making the data more credible (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) and helping to give us a better understanding of the state of investigative journalism, as seen by investigative journalists in the Internet age.

Surveys and interviews are appropriate methods for this study because I am examining the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of investigative journalists in *their*

own words. The best way to learn what these are, is to ask directly, whether through a survey or interviews.

Surveys are an efficient way of better understanding the attitudes and perceptions of the investigative journalist community. For this study, this includes the impact of type of ownership on journalistic attitudes or how one's belief in agenda-building might predict job satisfaction. Yet surveys alone cannot tell the whole story because the researcher does not have the opportunity to probe the respondent or ask follow-up questions. Most of the questions are close-ended (see Appendix D for survey questions) and do not give participants an opportunity to fully express themselves. Interviews were conducted to fill this gap. Yet they were also used to provide some explanation of puzzling data obtained from the surveys. For this reason, the survey was conducted first; responses were analyzed; and the more surprising data generated interview questions.

Depth interviews are an indispensable way to probe phenomena such as journalistic attitudes and perceptions, as Marshall and Rossman (1999) note: "one cannot understand human actions without understanding the meaning that participants attribute to those actions – their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive words; the researcher, therefore, needs to understand the deeper perspectives captured through face-to-face interaction" (p. 57). Berger (2000) suggests that interviews are "unique in allowing researchers to get inside the minds of people and to gain access to material of considerable importance" (p. 125). McCracken (1988) adds, "The long interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory" (p. 9).

Survey

The Sample

The sample for this study consisted of investigative journalists (writers, editors, project managers, etc.) who have worked on an investigative reporting project for a newspaper within the past two years. For smaller papers, it may be common for journalists to report on a specific beat for a significant amount of time before participating on an investigative project – thus, a time period of less than two years was thought to exclude them from the sample.

Although a non-probability sample, the sample emulated the population of newspaper investigative journalists as much as possible by:

(1) Geographic diversity – investigative journalists from every region of the country participated in the survey.

(2) Circulation size diversity – investigative journalists from the smallest (under 50,000) to the largest (over 2 million readers) newspapers were included in the sample.

(3) Purity of sample – the survey had a filter question at the very beginning which asked participants if they had worked on an investigative project within the past two years. Participants were required to answer this question, and those who marked "no" were not able to continue.

(4) The population (investigative journalists working for U.S. newspapers in the past two years) is fairly small. Thus, the sample of 281 investigative journalists produced a reasonably accurate snapshot of the population.

Sample Size

There are two interrelated factors the researcher needs to address before proceeding with the sample size: level of confidence and confidence interval (Rea & Parker, 2005). The standard level of confidence in most media studies is 95 percent and

that is the level I used. The confidence interval I originally strove for was +/- 10, which is a workable margin of error (Rea & Parker, 2005). With a population of several thousand print investigative journalists, this would indicate a sample size of 96. However, through a variety of recruiting methods, I was able to include 281 investigative journalists in the sample, producing a confidence interval of approximately +/- 6, assuming a population of approximately 2,500. Of course, non-probability samples such as this one cannot be generalized to the population with such precision. Yet this sample says something very meaningful about the population and offers a valuable snapshot of working print investigative journalists today.

Finding the Sample

Finding investigative journalists working in print who fit the criteria for the study was a major challenge. Investigative journalists can be hard to track down and may be reluctant to participate in the survey. To find the sample, I employed a variety of methods:

(1) Having the Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) send out an email, on my behalf, asking its members if they would like to participate in the survey. This was the most successful method.

(2) Posting invitations in several discussion forums on the Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) website. These discussion forums were frequented by investigative journalists who were posting or responding to an item. This method proved highly successful.

(3) Sponsoring an ad for the Investigative Reporters and Editors e-newsletter "Quick Hits." Journalists could click on the ad to come directly to the survey site. This method was moderately successful.

(4) Snowball technique – each person who took the survey was asked if they knew of others who might be willing to participate and their contact information. After taking the survey, many investigative journalists recommended one to three journalists who may be willing to participate. This method proved successful.

(5) Using websites from top 100 newspapers (by circulation) to collect email addresses of investigative journalists and inviting them to participate in the survey. This method only produced a handful of survey responses.

(6) Offering monetary incentives for participating. Participants had the option of entering a drawing, which for anonymity reasons was based on a different site. There were three drawings: first place, $200; second place, $100; third place, $50 gift card to Border's bookstore. In addition, participants were offered a report emailed to them, highlighting the study's main findings. This method likely increased the response rate.

Response Rate and Incentives

Due to the methods used to recruit participants, it is not possible to calculate a response rate because there was a not a definitive sampling frame from which the sample was based and it is not clear how many investigative journalists knew of the study. In all, 353 participants began the survey; 281 answered the first 12 questions (and thus, counted in the data analysis); and 243 completed the survey. Thus, the completion rate was 68.8%.

Respondents were offered incentives for participating. In addition to monetary incentives, respondents were given the opportunity to receive an emailed report highlighting the study's important findings. In all, 147 participants entered the drawing, and 145 of 147 respondents (98.6%) asked for the emailed report. On this same page, I asked respondents if they were willing to be interviewed. In all, about half agreed (73 of 147).

Pretesting Survey Instrument

Before going out to the field, I pretested the survey using a handful of graduate students and investigative journalists. Participants were asked to take the online survey and note any questions or answers that were not clear, along with any other feedback. This pretest identified poorly worded questions, refined the quality of the survey instrument, and indicated how long the survey took to complete. Only when the feedback from the pretest was incorporated into the survey, were actual respondents invited to participate.

Advantages to Online Survey

The survey was administered online and took about 20 minutes to complete. Rea and Parker (2005) observe web-based surveys have many advantages over alternatives (such as mail-out techniques and phone surveys), although the method also has weaknesses.

One important advantage they cite is convenience. Respondents can receive the questionnaire and complete it in the privacy of their office. A second advantage is rapid data collection, as data can be collected and processed in a matter of days. They also note web-surveys are cost-effective as there is no need for postage or paper supplies and the

respondent has ample time to answer questions (as opposed to phone surveys). This is especially important in open-ended questions, of which this survey had several. Respondents' personal or sensitive information was protected through a secure server, which may have helped elicit more revealing answers. Rea and Parker (2005) are especially sanguine about using web surveys to reach specialized or well-identified populations whose email addresses are readily available. The population of this study fits such a definition.

Disadvantages of Online Survey

The online survey also has disadvantages. The first is that online surveys are limited to populations that have access to email and a computer, and assume a minimal level of computer proficiency. However, with the population as investigative journalists working for print, this is not a concern. Rea and Parker (2005) also point out that there is a potential self-selection problem as those who do not use email or are uncomfortable with online projects may exclude themselves as may those who do not speak fluent English. However, with this study, this should also not be a concern. A third potential problem is the lack of interviewer involvement in the online survey, so that unclear questions cannot be explained. However, I helped alleviate this problem by: (1) posting my telephone number and email address should the respondent wish to contact me for clarification of a question; (2) through pre-testing, I corrected poorly worded or unclear questions.

Depth Interviews

In-depths interviews are important because they allow the researcher to probe respondents with follow-up questions that can elicit more insightful answers. Interviews

allow respondents to speak at length and not merely choose answers from a list of options. As I am interested in finding out what investigative journalists think – *in their own words* – one primary data-gathering technique consisted of depth interviews. McCracken (1988) argues: "The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (p. 9).

Marshall and Rossman (1999) refer to in-depth interviewing as "conversation with a purpose" that allows the researcher to obtain a large amount of data quickly and immediately ask follow-up questions. However, as in-depth interviewing leads to a large volume of data, the study limited the pool of participants to a manageable size. While McCracken (1988) suggests that long interviews be limited to 8 participants, my interview pool consisted of 10 investigative journalists. This number was both manageable and offered enough data for the detection of patterns and themes. It was also the point at which I reached theoretical saturation, as ideas, concepts, and themes began to repeat themselves.

Approach to Interviews: McCracken's Long Interview and Responsive Interviewing

The approach I used for in-depth interviews is grounded in both McCracken's (1988) long interview technique and the responsive interviewing described by Rubin and Rubin (2005). McCracken's approach involves probing interviews with a relatively small group of participants, which explore how respondents make meaning of the phenomenon under investigation. While a series of common questions guides each interview, the researcher is encouraged to tailor the interview in response to the unique situation of the participant. The interview is regarded as organic, it grows and changes based on previous responses and what unique insights the subject may have.

In this study, for example, in interviewing an investigative reporter from *USA Today*, I asked questions about the unique situation of writing for a national newspaper, without being connected to a local community. In another interview, I asked an investigative reporter from the *New Orleans Times Picayune* to describe covering a horrific natural disaster and its aftermath. For the *New York Times* reporter, I asked how investigative journalism for an agenda-setting paper like the *Times* might differ from other papers. McCracken also emphasizes the use of probes during interviews, to be used when the participant is tentative or not fully responding. Accordingly, I incorporated a series of probes into the interview questionnaire [please see Appendix B for interview questions].

Rubin and Rubin (2005) in their responsive interviewing model underscore that the interviewer and interviewee form a relationship during the interview that places ethical obligations on the interviewer. They emphasize that the objective of qualitative research is to create depth of understanding, not breadth; and that the research design, (including interview questions) remain flexible throughout the study. Thus, the long interview of McCracken and the responsive interviewing technique of Rubin and Rubin guided the interviewing process from generating appropriate questions, conducting the interviews, to analyzing the data.

Purposive Sampling

I selected participants for this study through purposive sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I recruited participants by asking journalists who had completed the survey, if they were willing to be interviewed. All investigative journalists in the purposive sample had to have at least four years of investigative journalism experience to ensure

they achieved a certain amount of perspective, although most participants had between 10 and 30 years.

In finding interview participants, McCracken suggests that "the first principle is that 'less is more.' It is more important to work longer, and with greater care, with a few people than more superficially with many of them. For many research projects, eight respondents will be perfectly sufficient" (p. 17). The author also recommends that researchers create a "contrast" in the pool of respondents. Such contrasts might be of gender, education, age, occupation, or other attributes.

For this purposive sample, I created contrast in the respondent pool by having about half the respondents work for a publicly held company, and about half working for a private or family-owned company. Privately held and family owned companies were grouped together because both are insulated, to some extent, from the demands of the market and Wall Street.

TABLE 1

Newspapers by Ownership

Public	*USA Today*	*Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*	*L.A. Times*[2]	*Long Island Newsday*		
Private or Family Owned	*New Orleans Times-Picayune*	*Columbus Dispatch*	*The New York Times*	*Minneapolis Star Tribune*	*Alburquerque Journal*	*Newspaper in northwest part of country*

[2] The *L.A. Times*, owned by the Tribune Company, went private on December 20, 2007. However, I regarded this newspaper as public because the reporter I interviewed spent several decades at the *Times* when it was a publicly held company and barely two months as privately held. Therefore, the journalist's insights pertained far more to a public company than a private one.

A second way I created contrast in the sample was that half the respondents were from larger papers (defined as 250,000 and higher circulation) and half were from smaller papers (less than 250,000 circulation).

TABLE 2

Newspapers by Circulation Size

Larger Papers (250,000+)	*USA Today*	*New York Times*	*L.A. Times*	*Minneapolis Star Tribune*	*Long Island Newsday*
Smaller Papers (Less than 250,000)	*New Orleans Times-Picayune*	*Columbus Dispatch*	*Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*	*Alburquerque Journal*	*Newspaper in northwest part of country (asked for anonymity)*

Finally, I sought journalists who were from a diversity of geographic areas.

Interview Protocol and Mechanics

Appendix B contains a list of questions used for each interview. The questions were designed to elicit data from which themes might be detected. However, corresponding to the responsive interview approach of Rubin and Rubin (2005), questions were subject to change based on analysis of responses from other interviews. In addition, these interviews were semi-structured. While offering some focus and direction, there was considerable latitude for participants to express their thoughts.

Interviews were conducted in person and by phone throughout the spring of 2008. For example, I visited the newsrooms of the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and the *Los Angeles Time'* Washington DC bureau, whereas I contacted the journalists from the *Albuquerque Journal* and *Minnesota Star Tribune* by phone. Interviews lasted about an

hour, occurring in the journalists' office or a conference room. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed by a third party.

Reliability and Validity

As Marshall and Rossman (1999) point out, qualitative research has its own way of achieving reliability and validity, which is different from quantitative research, but just as important. Although qualitative research is not meant to fulfill the requirements of quantitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), one way of establishing internal validity is triangulation, which in this dissertation means that both the survey and depth interviews triangulate to corroborate the other's findings. While qualitative research is not generalizable, the insights can be *transferable* (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) to other investigative journalists in similar situations. Using "thick description" is one way of assuring transferability, which in this study means using many quotations from the interviewees and allowing them to explain phenomena in their own terms. Citing extensive quotations also allows readers to evaluate the validity of my interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting a survey and depth interviews, it is important to consider the ethical obligations. The main ethical concern for this study was the issue of confidentiality. For the survey, all responses were strictly confidential. There was no identifying information in the survey questions. After participants completed the survey, they entered an optional "drawing" page that was intentionally kept separate from the survey, located on a different server. In this separate section, they identified their name and email address, if they wanted to enter the drawing. They also gave names of other investigative journalists who might be interested in participating and if they would like to be interviewed.

However, this brief questionnaire was completely independent from the survey site, so the identities given could never be matched with responses given in the survey. In the consent form each participant signed, approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland, they were informed that all responses were anonymous and data would be analyzed in the aggregate.

I asked for their permission to tape record the interviews, and all agreed. At the beginning of each interview, I also asked the subject if they would go on the record with their comments, or if they preferred anonymity. Nine of the ten journalists were comfortable speaking on the record in which I could use their name and affiliation. One journalist asked to be anonymous. I have given her a pseudonym when discussing the interview findings, and her newspaper is simply described as a small newspaper in the Northwest.

Another ethical issue concerns reciprocity. People who take part in a study are giving their time to assist the researcher who should give back in return (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). To address this issue, I offered an opportunity to win one of several monetary prizes. I also offered to email a report to each participant highlighting the study's main findings that might help investigative journalists in their own work.

In regard to voluntary participation, I emphasized to all participants that taking part in the study was strictly voluntary, and they could withdraw whenever they wished.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the survey data, I imported all the responses into SPSS to allow for relationships among variables to be explored, and research questions and hypotheses to be addressed.

In analyzing the interview data, I drew upon several resources including Rubin and Rubin (2005) and Marshall and Rossman (1999). First, the tapes were transcribed, resulting in 10 interview transcripts and approximately 200 pages of data. I closely read and re-read the transcripts and then coded the data. The guiding research questions and several interview questions suggested initial categories, yet others emerged as the coding process unfolded. Using a "cut and paste" method on the computer, I combined all the data for each category and, as Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest, saved it under separate files. I then analyzed what respondents said in each category, looking for dominant themes and subthemes that emerged.

Having discussed the methodologies used, the following chapter will address many of the study's hypotheses and research questions by analyzing survey data.

Chapter 4: Survey Findings

INTRODUCTION

In analyzing the survey responses of 281 investigative journalists working for newspapers, this chapter will offer a snapshot of the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of investigative reporters toward the field. In comparing these three kinds of ownership – public, private, and family – are there differences in how satisfied and committed investigative journalists are to their job and field? Which type of ownership do journalists perceive as the most supportive of investigative reporting? The least supportive? Which ownership tends to promote investigative stories that take longer than three months to produce?

The chapter will also probe how investigative reporters perceive the impact of their own work. Do they believe their work inspires reform in the system, and if so, how do they perceive this change comes about? Do journalists' belief in the impact of their work correlate with job satisfaction, even when other factors, such as age, education, and gender are accounted for? Finally, the chapter will examine which factors best predict job satisfaction.

In examining the following hypotheses and research questions, we should consider that in some newsrooms, investigative journalists enjoy considerable prestige, better pay, and greater status than many other kinds of journalists. Indeed, general newsroom practice is that more seasoned reporters tend to become investigative journalists. Thus, in considering the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of investigative journalists in print newsrooms across the country, we should understand that

these findings may apply to a specific group but not necessarily the overall population of journalists.

Demographics of Sample

Before addressing the hypotheses and research questions, it is important to discuss who made up the survey sample. In the first place, there were more than twice as many males as females (68.6% male, 31.4% female). This predominance of males, however, likely resembles the population of investigative journalists today, as other surveys of investigative journalists, even with far greater samples, also had twice as many men than women (see, for example, Protess, et al., 1991). In regard to ethnicity, nearly all respondents were Caucasian (89.1%). Other ethnicities, such as African-American, Asian American, Hispanic, and Native American, each made up a little over 1% of the sample, while 6.8% chose to respond as "Other." These statistics also match the samples of other surveys. For example, in the survey conducted by Protess and colleagues (1991), using a sample of 927 investigative reporters and editors, 97% of the participants were Caucasian.

In terms of age, as might be expected, most journalists in the sample fell somewhere in the middle. Only 6% were young (18-24 years of age) while just 1.1% were 65 or older. Those between 25 and 34 made up 23.6% of the sample, while those 35-44 made up 28.1%. The highest age category was 45-54 consisting of nearly one-third of the sample (31.1%). Those journalists aged 55 – 64 made up 10.1%. These statistics, with over 70% of participants aged 35 or older, suggest that investigative journalists, as a group, tend to be quite seasoned. The breakdown of journalists by experience confirms this, as nearly half the sample (44.1%) had 10 or more years experience in investigative

journalism. Specifically, about one-third of the sample (32.4%) had four years or less of investigative experience; 23.5% had 5 – 9 years; 25.6% had 10 – 19 years; and nearly one-fifth of the sample (18.5%) had 20 years or more.

Sample participants were also highly educated. Over 90% (90.8%) had either a bachelor's or master's degree. Less than 1% (.4%) had only a high school degree or less, while 7.7% had some college. 53.7% had bachelor's degrees while 37.1% had master's degrees. In addition, just over 1% had a doctoral degree.

In terms of newspaper demographics, about half the newspapers (45.7%) that survey participants worked for fell in the mid-range of Sunday circulation size (100,000 to 500,000). Over one-third (37.7%) were smaller papers (less than 50,000 to 100,000 readers). The smallest category was large newspapers with Sunday circulations from 500,000 to over a million. Only 16.1% of the sample fell in this category. Over half the newspapers (52.2%) in the sample were privately owned; one-third (33.6%) were publicly owned; and 14.2% were family owned.

H1: The more investigative journalists' believe their work influences policy, the less likely they are to consider leaving the field within ten years.

This hypothesis is not supported. It was hypothesized that pride in reforming the system would significantly boost levels of commitment. What this study discovered, however, is that investigative journalists are as a group extremely committed to their field, irrespective of other factors. Over 91% indicated they planned to conduct investigative projects within the next 10 years. Given how painstakingly difficult this work can be, and the limitations imposed by the new media environment, this is an

extraordinarily high number. Only 1.1%, or 3 respondents out of 251, who answered this question, indicated they would not conduct investigative projects in the next 10 years and 7.6% were not sure.

These numbers are much higher than what David Weaver and colleagues (2007) found when they interviewed a wide variety of journalists in their 2002 national survey for *The American Journalist in the 21st Century*. Their survey found that about 77% of journalists said they anticipated continuing to work for the news media in *the next five years*. Another 17% reported they believed they would be working in another occupation while 5% planned to retire or were unsure of their plans. In contrast, over 91% of investigative reporters planned to stay in the field *over the next 10 years*. Instead of the 17% of the general journalism population planning to work elsewhere in the next five years, only 1% of investigative journalists believed they would work elsewhere in the next ten. This is a critical difference.

Among journalists believing their work has great impact in reforming the system, the level of commitment to the field was not significantly higher than those who believed their work had little impact. For those journalists believing their work had "little impact" in reforming the system, 89.9% indicated they wanted to continue with investigative work in the next 10 years, only 1.3% indicated they would not. For those who believed their work had a "great impact" on reform, the numbers are virtually the same: 93% wished to continue over next 10 years, while 1.8% did not. The numbers were virtually the same for those believing their work had "some impact" with 92.4% wishing to continue and less than 1% (.8%) not continuing. The numbers clearly show there is no

significance in the relationship and the chi square analysis bears this out: $\chi^2_{(6)} = 4.58$, $p = .598$.

This data shows that investigative journalists are not only extremely committed to their work and field, but also that this commitment does not at all depend on how influential they perceive their work to be. Perhaps this shows that investigative journalists are very devoted to the process of investigative journalism – the ferreting out of secret information, the exposure of wrongdoing – more than the actual results, and these factors keep them in the field. This lends more evidence that investigative journalism is a very strong calling, and one not reliant on story outcomes.

This finding came as a surprise. It would seem that investigations are conducted to affect reform in the system. If journalists believe their work has little impact, it seems this would sap them of their morale. Perhaps this speaks to how if journalism is a calling, investigative journalism is a calling within a calling.

H2: The more experience investigative journalists have, the more detrimental they find the Internet for investigative reporting.

This hypothesis is supported. Even when such factors as gender, age, education, type of ownership, and job satisfaction are controlled for, a negative association exists between amount of experience and perception of Internet's impact on field. This association is modestly strong (-.252) and is significant at the .01 level. This means that the more experienced investigative journalists are, the less likely they are to view the Internet in a favorable light. Conversely, the less experienced investigative journalists tend to be more sanguine about the Internet and its prospects for the field.

It may be that the less experienced journalists simply do not have an earlier time with which to compare, as the Internet began making inroads in newsrooms in the mid 1990s. Perhaps the more experienced journalists look back to the pre-Internet era with a certain amount of wistfulness, as websites did not need to be constantly updated and newspapers profited handsomely from advertisers. In the open-ended responses to this question (discussed later in this chapter), it seems likely that the more inexperienced journalists focused on the Internet's unique ability to amass public records and other data, saving a great deal of time, whereas the more experienced journalists lamented the loss of advertising revenue, time-consuming multimedia elements, and constant updates that news websites require.

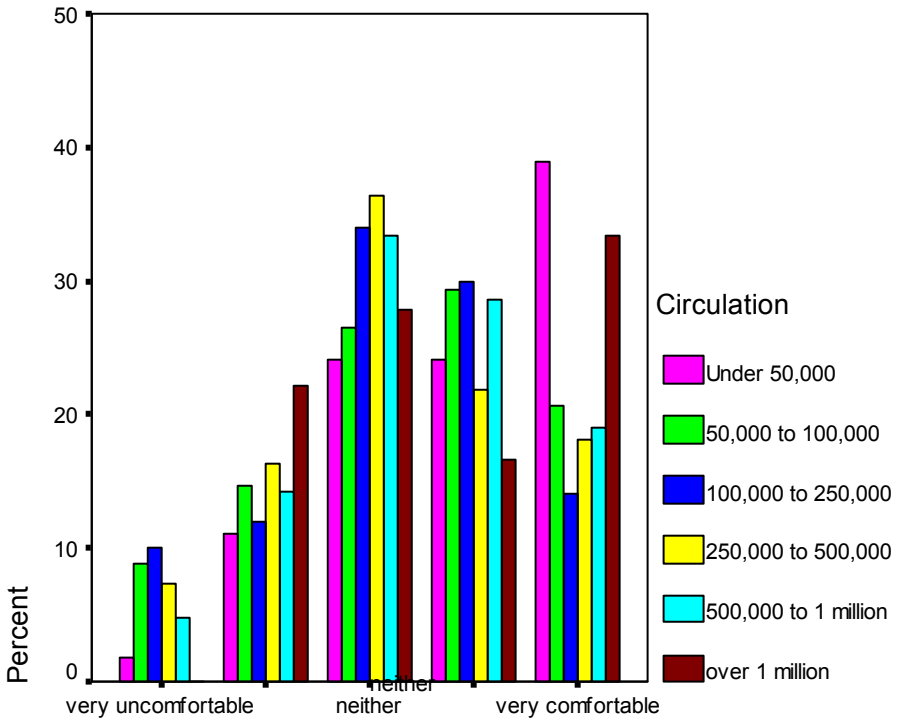
H3: Investigative journalists at smaller papers are more comfortable partnering with nonprofit news operations in conducting investigations than those at larger papers.

It was hypothesized that investigative journalists working at smaller papers are more comfortable partnering with nonprofit news operations to conduct investigations because smaller papers may have less bureaucracy and fewer operating procedures than larger papers. Consequently, journalists may have more autonomy to make these kinds of decisions. On a tactical level, smaller papers do not have a large staff and may need the help of an outside organization, particularly as it concerns conducting investigations, which frequently require great commitments of labor and time. If smaller papers recognize the need for investigative journalism but lack the resources to carry it through, partnering with non-profits may pose a welcome relief.

This hypothesis, however, was not supported. It is clear that most investigative journalists are comfortable partnering with nonprofit groups. Exactly one-half the sample or 50%, reported that they would be "somewhat" or "very comfortable" in this partnership. In contrast, just over 20% (20.7%) were either "somewhat" or "very uncomfortable" with this arrangement. Size of paper did not have a significant correlation with comfort level in partnering with nonprofits. A Spearman's Rho test was conducted (p =.102 with a very weak correlation coefficient, - .103) and a chi square test confirmed this finding, $\chi^2_{(20)} = .18.498$, $p = .555$.

Graph 1

Comfort in Partnering with Nonprofits, by Circulation Size



Nevertheless, while the relationship is not significant, the data reveals that those from the smallest paper (less than 50,000 circulation) expressed the most comfort in partnering with nonprofit organizations. As the graph above demonstrates, of the 55

respondents indicating they were "very comfortable" in partnering, 38.2% were from the smallest papers, a percentage considerably higher than the other circulation sizes.

RQ1: Does investigative journalists' belief in the impact of their work predict job satisfaction?

To address the issue of prediction, I ran a linear regression and found that journalists' belief of impact of their work (as the independent variable) accounts for 6% (R^2 = .061) of the variance in job satisfaction.

The ANOVA summary tells us this linear regression is significant: $F(1,272) = 17.809$, $p < .001$.

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.542	1	20.542	17.809	.000[a]
	Residual	313.753	272	1.154		
	Total	334.296	273			

a. Predictors: (Constant), how much impact have your stories had?

b. Dependent Variable: How would you rate your job satisfaction as an IJ?

Respondents' predicted job satisfaction is: 1.45 + .355(perceived impact of story) as measured from 1 to 4. Thus, participants' average job satisfaction (from 1 to 5) increased .355 for each increased level of belief in impact. This means that if an investigative journalist believed that their investigative pieces had no impact on reforms ("1"), their predicted job satisfaction would be 3.12. If they believed their stories had a great impact on reform ("4"), the predicted job satisfaction jumps to 4.18 between "somewhat satisfied" and "very satisfied." Overall, it is safe to say that an increased

belief in the impact of work predicts increased job satisfaction.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.768	.249		11.095	.000
	how much impact have your stories had?	.355	.084	.248	4.220	.000

a. Dependent Variable: How would you rate your job satisfaction as an IJ?

In exploring agenda-building, most studies examine how much impact news stories have on changing policy. As discussed in chapter two, Protess and colleagues (1991) identified the three policy outcomes of deliberative, individualistic, and substantive. Other studies on agenda-building examine what influences the media agenda.

In this study, we turn the theory of agenda-building toward the journalists themselves, asking how well can this theory predict job satisfaction. We have shown that belief in impact of one's work is a significant predictor of job satisfaction, but is it among the best predictors? This leads to the next research question:

RQ2: Which factors best predict job satisfaction?

In challenging circumstances, such as those that confront the news media with shrinking budgets and fewer staff, it follows that in many newsrooms morale may be low. Job satisfaction is important to measure, and predict, because when investigative journalists feel very satisfied with their job, they are highly committed to the field. Consider that in this study, for those who reported they were "very satisfied" in their job, 73 out of 75 (97.3%) indicated they planned to conduct investigative projects in the next 10 years. This is an extremely high percentage and is significant at the .001 level. Thus,

understanding what creates high job satisfaction can help forge commitment to the field. For investigative journalism to flourish, its needs experienced practitioners.

In conducting a stepwise multi-regression with all the factors possibly contributing to job satisfaction, four factors emerge as the best predictors of job satisfaction. Together, these four factors account for over one-third of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = .338$) and they have a significant regression equation $F(4,177) = 22.611$ $p < .001$. The strongest predictor was "how supportive journalists perceived their newsroom." Even when the other three factors were considered, the level of support journalists believed they received from their newsroom accounted for 22.6% of the variance of job satisfaction (standard error of estimate was 1.02). This factor of newsroom support has significant predictive power.

The second strongest predictor was the "time journalists spent on investigative journalism compared to five years ago." This is essentially another aspect of newsroom support. Those newsrooms valuing and supporting investigative journalism most likely allowed their reporters to spend more time conducting investigations. This also suggests how devoted investigative journalists are to their work, that one of the strongest predictors is simply how often they get to do it.

The third factor "how meaningful investigative journalists find their work" suggests that what motivates these journalists are not material things such as salary or recognition but the meaning they bring to their work. This finding suggests that investigative journalism is a calling for people, more than an occupation. More will be said about this later.

The fourth strongest predictor was "how much impact journalists believed their work had in reforming the system." This predictor speaks to the theory of agenda-building. It suggests agenda building has some predictive power in job satisfaction of investigative journalists, but not as strong as newsroom support or the meaning they bring to the job.

Together, these four factors account for more than one-third of the variance of job satisfaction. Clearly, these factors have very strong predictive power.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.475[a]	.226	.221	1.02
2	.533[b]	.284	.276	.98
3	.564[c]	.318	.306	.96
4	.582[d]	.338	.323	.95

a. Predictors: (Constant), how supportive is your newsroom to IJ?

b. Predictors: (Constant), how supportive is your newsroom to IJ?, Time spent on IJ compared to other journalism

c. Predictors: (Constant), how supportive is your newsroom to IJ?, Time spent on IJ compared to other journalism, the investigative work you do is meaningful

d. Predictors: (Constant), how supportive is your newsroom to IJ?, Time spent on IJ compared to other journalism, the investigative work you do is meaningful, how much impact have your stories had?

RQ3: Are journalists working for family or private newspapers more satisfied with their jobs than those working for public papers?

This study clearly shows that type of ownership with this group of journalists is not related to job satisfaction. Contrary to arguments often voiced by media critics such as McChesney and Bagdikian, those working for private or family papers have virtually the same level of job satisfaction as those working for public ones. The mean scores of all

three are strikingly similar: for public, mean = 3.76, s.d. = 1.10; for private, mean = 3.80, s.d = 1.12; family, mean = 3.80, s.d. = 1.13. The one-way ANOVA analysis is striking for how *non-significant* ownership is to job satisfaction at .962.

This raises an interesting question. If public companies are under so much pressure to perform for Wall Street, to maximize quarterly earnings to appease shareholders who likely care little for investigative journalism, and if private and family newspapers are more shielded from this pressure, what accounts for virtually identical levels of job satisfaction? The answer may lie with how supportive these journalists feel their newsroom is, as suggested by research question two, which showed perceived newsroom support to be the best predictor of job satisfaction. Contrary to the arguments of McChesney and Bagdikian, it is not a given that public companies are less supportive than private or family ones. This leads us into the next research question.

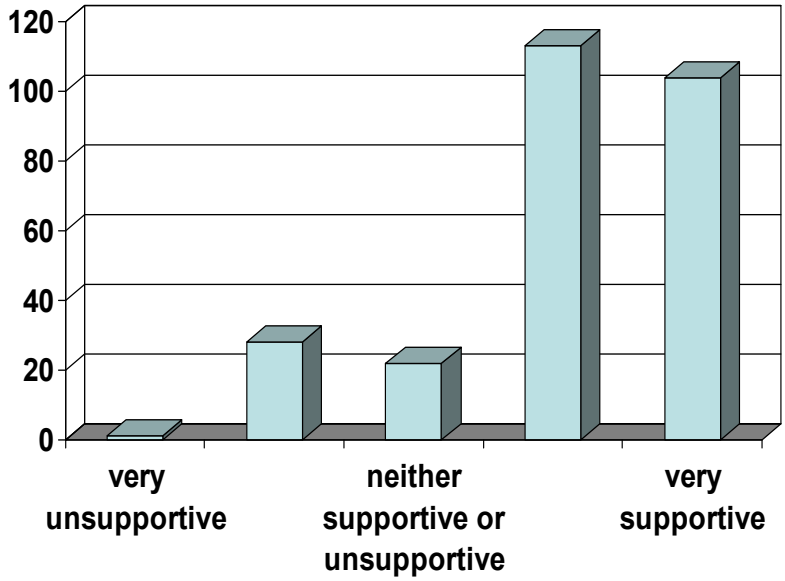
RQ4: How much organizational support do investigative journalists believe they are receiving to do the best kind of work? Does this depend on type of ownership?

One of the most remarkable findings of this study is how supportive investigative journalists believe their newsroom to be. Given the highly challenging times for the news industry as a whole and how many newspapers are forced to make staff cuts and shrink newsholes, investigative journalists report their newsrooms are very supportive. As the graph below shows, 1 investigative journalist out of 268, reported that their newsroom was "very unsupportive." This is a truly amazing finding, that far less than 1% would feel this way. Moreover, only 10.4% of investigative journalists found their newsrooms "somewhat unsupportive." Together, less than 11% found their newsroom either "very" or "somewhat unsupportive." The overwhelming majority, 81%, found their newsrooms

"somewhat supportive" or "very supportive" even when given the option of choosing "neutral." The mean was 4.09 with a standard deviation of .96.

Graph 2

Newsroom Support for Investigative Journalism

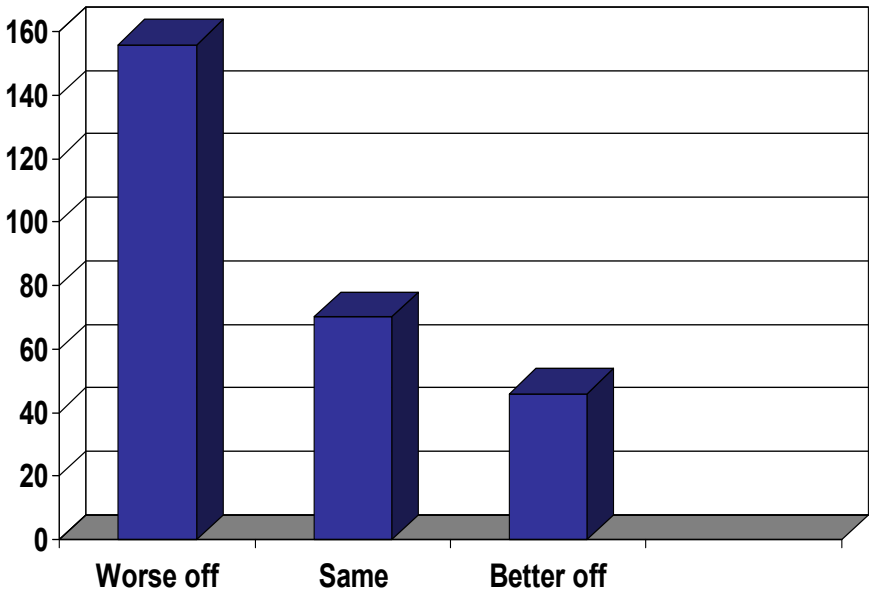


Dichotomy Between Industry and One's Newsroom

Perceived newsroom support is important because out of all the variables in this study, this was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction. What this study uncovers is a dichotomy between what investigative journalists think of the news industry, or the state of investigative journalism in the abstract sense, and feelings about their own newsroom. While there may be apprehension about the industry and how other journalists are affected, the overwhelming majority of investigative journalists feel they receive solid support from their newsroom. The contrast is startling. Consider that the majority of investigative journalists today believe investigative journalism is worse off than 10 years

ago, with only 16.9% believing it is better off. Yet, 81% of these same journalists believed their own newsroom was either "very supportive" or "somewhat supportive" towards investigative journalism.

Graph 3
State of Investigative Journalism
(Compared to 10 Years Ago)



What might account for this stark difference? One possibility is that investigative journalists are often reading about industry woes in trade publications or in newspaper accounts. The topic of how newspapers are struggling in the Internet age is a subject that has been discussed extensively in books, magazines, newspapers, websites, blogs, and television. Nearly all the reporting on the subject is downbeat: journalism is in peril, reporters are demoralized, etc. Yet for journalists' own newsroom, their own perception is not challenged by what they might read.

Another explanation for the difference may relate to the "third person effect," first proposed by W. Phillips Davison (1983), which states that people generally do not recognize media effects on themselves but acknowledge effects on others This tendency to assume that media messages affect others much more than oneself has been extensively tested and documented (McQuail, 2005). There could be a similar phenomenon occurring in that investigative journalists believe "industry effects," (e.g., the challenges the news industry is facing) influence others more than themselves.

A third explanation for this disparity comes from social psychology. Leon Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, first proposed in 1957, posits that human beings are driven to maintain internal consistency. When one's actions and thoughts conflict, people feel great inner turmoil and are highly motivated to make these two consistent (Gleitman, 1986). Thus, investigative journalists working in a newsroom may through the course of their work internalize the values and practices of their environment. Over time, their beliefs and perceptions transform to support their actions, in order to maintain internal consistency and flourish in the environment. Thus, through the process of cognitive dissonance, journalists may come to perceive their newsroom as more supportive than the industry as a whole.

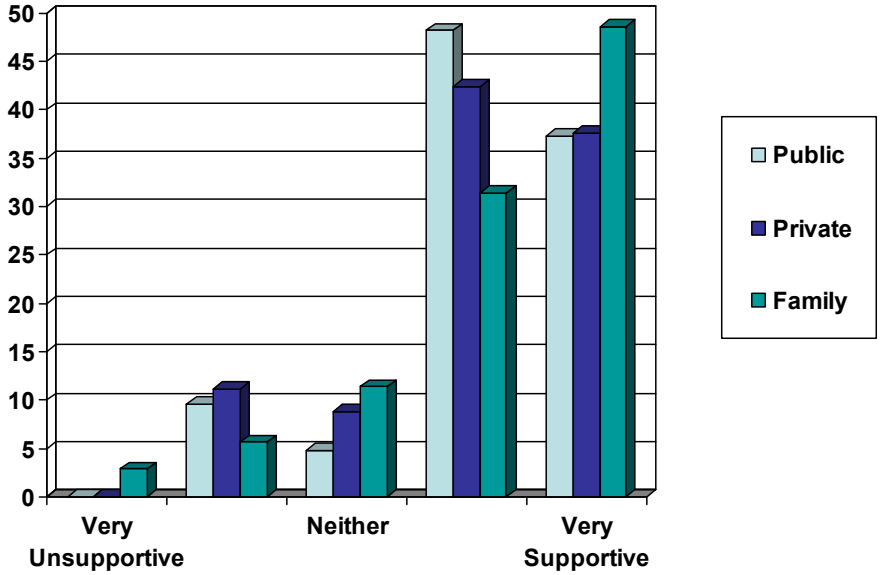
A final explanation is that those journalists who perceived low newsroom support (and, consequently, had relatively low job satisfaction) may have quit and moved to a more supportive newsroom.

Ownership and newsroom support

Is there a difference in perceived newsroom support depending on ownership? The arguments Robert McChesney and Ben Bagdikian make would suggest that those

working for a public company would receive less support than a family owned paper, but is this true?

Graph 4
Type of Ownership and Newsroom Support
(by percentage)

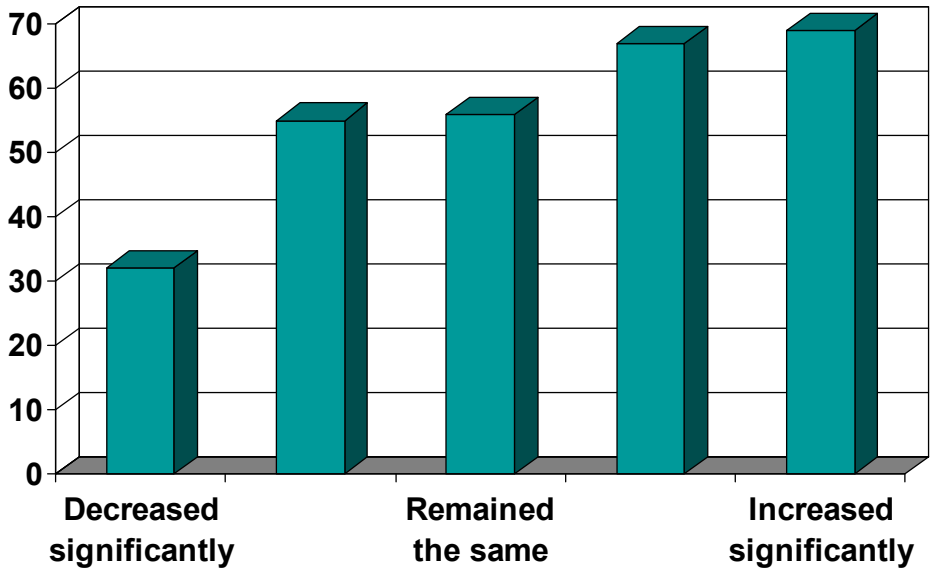


This study clearly shows that ownership does not have an affect on newsroom support. In fact, if anything, those journalists working for a publicly held company reported slightly higher newsroom support (mean = 4.13, s.d. = .89) than those working for a privately held one (mean = 4.06, s.d = .96), but this relationship is not significant. It is worth noting that not a single journalist at a publicly held company described their newsroom support as "very unsupportive." Those working for a family newspaper reported virtually the same level of newsroom support (mean = 4.17, s.d. = 1.04) as those in public ones. A one-way ANOVA clearly shows the difference between the three groups' means is .789, very far from significant. $F(2) = .237$ $p = .789$.

RQ5: Compared to five years ago, what are investigative journalists' experiences in the newsroom? Is there an association with ownership?

One of the surprising findings of this study was that investigative journalists believed that compared to five years ago, they are actually spending *more time* on investigative journalism than other kinds of reporting. Nearly half the sample (48.7%) reported that they were spending more time on watchdog reporting, with about one-quarter of the sample (24.7%) reporting this time had increased significantly. Only 11.5% journalists believed the time spent on investigative projects had decreased significantly with 19.7% believing it has decreased somewhat. Still, more than twice as many journalists reported time spent on watchdog reporting increased significantly (69 responses) as those believing it had decreased significantly (32) in the past five years. In fact, as the table below demonstrates, the highest number of journalists believed it had increased significantly. The fewest chose "decreased significantly" in explaining the change.

GRAPH 5
Time Spent on Investigative Projects
(Compared to 5 years ago)



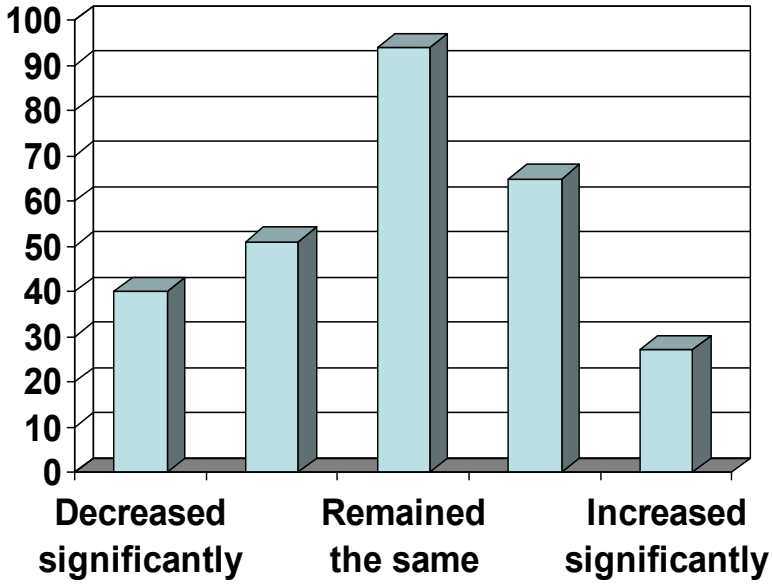
Another way to evaluate the experiences of investigative journalists in newsrooms over several years is to find out if investigative reports taking longer than three months were more frequent now. This is an important question because in trying to find out how committed newsrooms are to investigative reporting in the Internet age, allowing reporters considerable time (three months or greater) clearly shows commitment, as this means the reporter would have less time to complete other projects or daily stories. What this study found is that over the past five years, investigative journalists were evenly split as to whether reports taking longer than three months had increased, decreased or stayed the same. About 1/3 of respondents found that such reports had decreased; 1/3 reported they remained the same, and 1/3 found they increased. As the graph below makes clear, there is an almost perfect bell curve. This finding is also surprising. Given the budget and staff cutbacks over the past five years, one would have expected a noticeable decrease in

the amount of longer investigations. This would seem the first place managers would cut, as reporters are covering more beats to make up for staff shortfalls.

GRAPH 6

Number of Investigative Reports Taking Longer than 3 Months

(Compared to 5 years ago)



Following the model of Protess and colleagues (1991), a third way this study measured journalists' changing experiences in the newsroom is to compare how many reporters/editors are assigned to investigative projects today compared to five years ago. These results were somewhat different in that nearly half of respondents (45.4%) reported this had decreased (either somewhat or significantly), while only a quarter (24.5%) reported this to have increased (either somewhat or significantly). Thus, twice as many journalists believed the number of reporters assigned to projects had declined than those who believed the number increased. Still, these figures show that over half the

respondents believed the number of reporters assigned either remained the same or actually increased, which is still surprising given the considerable layoff and buyouts that have occurred during the five years.

What these results show are that investigative journalists' newsroom experiences have been relatively positive, especially given the difficult circumstances the news media faces. A majority of journalists reported they actually spent more time on investigative work over five years ago, and the sample was evenly split as to whether the number of reports taking longer than three months to prepare increased, remained the same, or decreased.

Do these findings relate to ownership? There does not seem to be a connection between ownership and a newsroom's commitment to investigative journalism, contrary to the arguments of many media critics (McChesney, 1999; Bagdikian, 2004; Morton, 2006). The means of those working for publicly, privately, or family held companies did not differ significantly for any of the three measures. What these measures tell us, is that, according to those who practice watchdog journalism, a family-owned newsroom is no more likely to be supportive to investigative journalism as those in publicly or privately held newsrooms.

RQ6: Do those working for public companies experience greater organizational constraints than those at family or private companies?

Less than one-third of the sample (30%) reported feeling pressure from inside the newspaper (e.g., publishers, managers, editors) to not pursue or kill a particular story. More than half the sample (56%) experienced pressure from outside the paper (e.g.,

advertisers, interest groups, sources, companies, government agencies) to not pursue or kill a particular story. Only about one-third (30.6%) reported that they experienced no pressure whether from outside or inside newsroom.

Are such reported organizational constraints related to ownership? Do those in public companies report more organizational constraints? It is clear from the data that no such relationship exists. The type of ownership does not have much to do with organizational constraints, beyond differences we would expect from chance. While those in family-owned newspapers may report slightly higher levels of internal pressure and lower levels of outside pressure than those at public or privately held companies, the chi square shows this is not significant: $\chi^2_{(6)} = 2.580$ $p = .859$.

RQ7: How have journalists' motivations to conduct "successful" investigative projects changed over 20 years?

In a word, they haven't. The findings from this study are remarkably consistent with the study from nearly 20 years ago. When David Protess and colleagues (1991) asked in their survey (conducted in 1989) for respondents to rank from 1 to 5, in order of importance, the "rewards that sometimes result from doing 'successful' investigative pieces," they found that the majority of journalists (56.1%) chose "reformer in you satisfied" as being the most important reward. "Increased freedom over time or assignments" was chosen as the second most important by 34.5%. Investigative journalists most often chose "personal recognition" as third (30.2%) and "journalism awards or prizes" as fourth.

In this same survey, journalists chose "monetary (bonus or salary increase)" as the least important. These figures indicate that investigative journalists were very idealistic, motivated most by reforming wrongdoing, and least by financial gains.

This present study, conducted nearly 20 years later, found the exact same priorities expressed by today's investigative journalists:

TABLE 3

Importance of Rewards from Successful Exposés

Importance of rewards that may result from successful exposés.	**1989 Survey**	**Percentage of respondents choosing category**	**Present Study (2008)**	**Percentage of respondents choosing each category**
Most important	Reformer in you satisfied	56.1%	Reformer in you satisfied	67.5%
Second most important	Increased freedom over time or assignments	34.5%	Increased freedom over time or assignments	42%
Third most important	Personal recognition	30.2%	Personal recognition	32.5%
Fourth most important	Journalism awards or prizes	32.4%	Journalism awards or prizes	31.2%
Fifth most important	Monetary (bonus or salary increase)	48.8%	Monetary (bonus or salary increase)	53.6%

Given that nearly 20 years have passed and the news industry has changed dramatically, the rewards that investigative journalists most value in the Internet age are nearly identical to those from an earlier era in journalism. As the above table makes clear, the idealistic drive to reform is what most motivates investigative journalists, and this appears even more the case today. Over two-thirds of the respondents ranked "reformer in you satisfied" as the most important reward for conducting successful pieces. The

present study had an 11% increase in this category. Monetary rewards were ranked last in both surveys, and about 5% more respondents in the present study selected this as the least important.

It is also clear from the data that journalists have the strongest agreement in what is the most important motivator and what is the least. "Reformer in you satisfied" had a much higher percentage than any of the other categories and "monetary" had a much higher percentage than the other categories. Given this fact, and that the data has remained consistent over 20 years, these findings suggest investigative journalists receive most of their motivation internally "reformer in you satisfied" as opposed to externally such as monetary or journalism awards.

RQ8: How have journalistic practices concerning agenda-building and attitudes toward the public changed over 19 years?

Journalists today are somewhat more apt to contact poliymakers to discuss policy reforms that might result from their investigative piece. About 20 years ago, about half the respondents, 49.6%, reported contacting policymakers to discuss reforms either "very" or "somewhat frequently." By 2008, this percentage had risen about 14 points, when 63.7% of investigative journalists reported they contacted policymakers to discuss reforms. Whereas slightly more than half (50.4%) responded in the 1989 survey that they "somewhat" or "very infrequently" contacted policymakers, by 2008 this percentage had dropped to 36.3%. These are substantial differences and through a chi square analysis, is significant. $\chi^2_{(3)} = 20.64,\ p < .05$

Why are journalists today more apt to contact policymakers to discuss reforms? One possibility is that with investigative journalism in peril in many newsrooms, there may be greater pressure to achieve measurable results that might persuade management to continue investigations. Also, with far more media competition today than 19 years ago, newspapers are seeking a way to distinguish themselves from websites, bloggers, and other newcomers to the scene. Helping to achieve reforms through investigative reporting is one such distinction that newspapers can still lay claim to. Thus, there may be a greater incentive for newspapers to demonstrate, and publish, the impact of their story.

TABLE 4

Historical Comparison Over 19 Years

A. How often journalists contacted policymakers:	**1989 Survey**	**Current Study (2008)**
Very / somewhat frequently	49%	63%
Somewhat / very infrequently:	50%	36%
B. The general public is becoming increasingly indifferent toward investigative reporting?		
Agree strongly/ somewhat	49%	47%
Disagree strongly / somewhat	52%	53%
C. The general public is becoming increasingly antagonistic toward investigative reporting?		
Agree strongly/ somewhat	49%	33%
Disagree strongly / somewhat	52%	67%
D. There is more investigative reporting done today by television stations than newspapers.		

Agree strongly/ somewhat	18%	23%
Disagree strongly / somewhat	82%	77%

There is virtually no difference between how investigative journalists view the indifference of the general public toward investigative reporting. In each study, about half the respondents agreed that the public was becoming more indifferent, while about half disagreed. However, there is a sizable difference between the 1989 and current study in journalists' view of the antagonism of the general public toward investigative reporting. In 1989, this was virtually split in half between those who believed the general public was growing increasingly antagonistic toward watchdog reporting and those who disagreed. In the current study, however, far more investigative journalists disagreed with this notion than those who agreed, by a 2:1 ratio. This was a very surprising finding when one considers that the trade journals and media accounts constantly discuss the public's growing disapproval of the news media. For example, the Project for Excellence in Journalism (2008) found declining support for journalism over the years, and these findings are widely published. Yet, in spite of the considerable attention to journalism's diminishment in the public eye, investigative journalists today, unlike 19 years ago, do not believe the public is becoming increasingly antagonistic toward their work.

What might explain the difference, indicated in the table above? It can be said that investigative journalists take great pride in their work and find considerable meaning in it, yet this would be the case in both groups. What is different about today? One possibility may be that journalism today is far more interactive allowing readers to email reporters or post comments online for many stories. Nineteen years ago, reader feedback

was limited largely to letters to the editor. Thus, reporters are in a greater position today to view positive comments from readers.

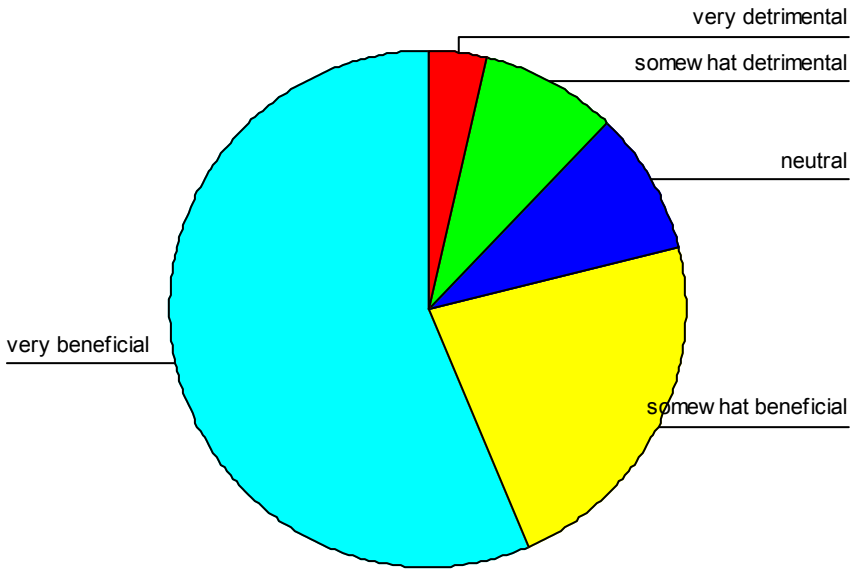
While newspaper journalists bemoan newsroom cuts and the challenging environment confronting investigative journalism, they still adamantly believe that the lionshare of investigative reporting is conducted by newspapers and not television stations. Whereas in 1989, 82% of journalists either somewhat or strongly disagreed that there is more investigative reporting being done by television stations than newspapers, this number held steady, with 77% also disagreeing with this statement. Perhaps these sizable numbers point to the great meaning and pride investigative journalists take in their work. While they acknowledge industry woes and how this may be affecting investigative reporting, newspaper writers still believe that they are upholding the traditions of watchdog journalism.

RQ9: What are journalistic attitudes toward the Internet and its impact on investigative reporting?

In one sense, investigative journalists find the Internet highly beneficial. When asked to consider the Internet in the broadest sense, including its financial and informational aspects, investigative journalists overwhelmingly found the Internet to be either "somewhat" or "very beneficial" (about 80%). In fact, *more than half* the respondents, 56.4%, considered the Internet to be "very beneficial." Only 12% had a negative view of the Internet, regarding it as either "very detrimental" (3.7%) or "somewhat detrimental" (8.4%). As the pie graph below demonstrates, journalistic attitudes towards to the Internet are very positive:

GRAPH 7:

Journalistic Views of Internet's Impact on Investigative Reporting



Yet, the open-ended responses tell a different story, one that suggests investigative journalists are far more ambivalent about this new technology and its impact on the field. When asked to explain why they answered as they did, the responses seemed fairly evenly divided between positive, negative, and ambivalent. In fact, the most common answer expressed ambivalence by acknowledging how much easier the Internet has made research, yet lamenting the resources and advertising revenue that it has diverted from traditional newspapers. Perhaps this is best summarized by one reporter who wrote: "Boy, this is a loaded question. The Internet makes it much easier to do my job...but will my job be around in 10 years because of Internet competition? I'm not so sure. What a strange trade."

Positive View of Internet

Some of the viewpoints expressed were positive about the Internet. Many such responses cited the ease of finding information and people affected by the story. As one respondent put it: "Reporters can access more public records via the Internet than before the Internet age. It can also be easier to find people affected by the issues you are writing about, by searching blogs, community posting sites, and other online forums." Other responses were more emphatic: "Critical data are more accessible now than ever before. Not sure how we ever functioned before the Internet" and "Flood of easily acessible [*sic*] information that was painstaking to gather before the Internet."

Other responses cited the vastly wider audience that the Internet makes possible and the greater accountability brought to journalism. One respondent wrote: "Many more people are exposed to the investigative work that is done even by small newspapers. Readers have responded to my stories from all over the world." Another participant noted: "Far greater access to information and sources; greater accountability for work produced; can reach a wider audience with less or no interference from gatekeepers."

Other journalists considered the Internet's limitless newshole, which allow for "documents, databases, photos, and other records [to] be published without regard for page space, and also can involve the reader as a participant. Extremely useful for research, also, of course." Some journalists lauded the Internet's ability to generate story ideas for investigative projects: "The Internet is crucial as a reporting tool. I'm too young to remember how reporters even functioned without the Internet! It's also an endless source of story ideas."

Another benefit commonly cited was the use for multimedia, "which allows for storytelling on several platforms; interactive aspects (reader comments)." Also, the computer assisted reporting the Internet has facilitated: "The ability to access information quickly is at the highest level ever. Computer-assisted reporting allows for larger studies based on huge data sets that previously would have been impossible. Financial data, personal and public records, government contracts, land ownership...all of this is at our laptop fingertips."

Ambivalent View of Internet

Not all views were so sanguine, however. The most common response was marked by ambivalence, recognizing the technology's benefits but also its pitfalls. One journalist lamented the confusion over "real journalism" the Internet has caused: "I answered as I did because the Internet hurts investigative journalism as much as it helps it. Yes, it sometimes makes my job easier to be able to readily look up with my computer what's known or generally thought about a subject, who its key players are, what its history is, etc. But the Internet's abundance of self-made 'reporters' and pundits--some of whom are doing great work, but some of whom are doing nothing that I would call real journalism--confuse the public about what journalism actually is and weaken their respect and regard for the work journalists do."

Other reporters acknowledged the technology's ability to accelerate data collection, but decried how published reports sometimes get co-opted by other websites: "The Internet can enable you to find contacts and sources quicker and easier than without the Internet. It also saves considerably on long distance phone calls, faxes, mail, etc. But it can also send you off on wrong leads, or provide information without any contacts. It's

really a two-edged sword from the investigation standpoint, but when it comes to one's work being published, it's a sword - period. I'm sick of finding my hard work on sites where it's not supposed to be, without payment to me, or sometimes, even acknowledgement." Another reporter expressed his or her ambivalence this way: "Many data-gathering tasks that once took weeks now take minutes due to online resources. However, the net's high noise value makes it difficult for good investigative reporting to stand out."

Some reporters decried the Internet's constant need for updates and how this affects in-depth reporting: "The Internet allows reporters to access a tremendous amount of information quickly, from background information to actual documents to even a simple phone number. However, because of the negative revenue implications for newspapers because of the Internet, newsroom budget are much smaller and that reduces the overall hours devoted to investigative work as opposed to 'feeding the beast.'" Another journalist agreed: "In many cases speeds access to information, reviewing the work of other media and allows citizens to more readily provide tips and leads. However, producing daily copy for the Web is a new and growing newsroom pressure that has not been accompanied by an increase in staff to produce or edit."

Finally, another source of ambivalence stems from the belief that the Internet has diminished the practice of shoe leather reporting and that its need for multimedia diverts resources: "Obviously, you have much more research tools at your fingertips (provided you practice the necessary caution). You also have many more ways to engage a reader, with video, online databases, etc. I would answer very beneficial except for what I see to be a few drawbacks: one, I think too many younger reporters aren't quite as versed at old-

fashioned shoe leather reporting because so much can be done at a desk, and two (especially this one) the work needed to build the multi-media components into an investigative project adds much more to the necessary time (and is rarely factored in by editors)."

Perhaps the most commonly cited reason for ambivalence was the Internet's financial implications for newspapers, as one reporter succinctly wrote: "The research capabilities are fantastic. What bothers me is the impact the Internet is having on newspapers, which drives down circulation and affects my ability to report."

Negative View of Internet

Some reporters were quite downbeat in their assessment of the Internet. One theme, echoed by many participants, is the notion that the Internet has "allowed all sorts of shoddy reporting and rumor mongering to be passed off as 'investigative' journalism." There was much concern that the Internet had changed the priority of newspapers where speed was more valued than quality. As one participant put it: "newspapers are more interested in the number of stories that are posted and how quickly they can be posted than in the quality of the story. At newspapers, speed is valued. Quality is not."

There were journalists who questioned the credibility of many stories arising on the Internet: "I just don't buy into the thought that the Internet is a completely reliable source for information when seeking the truth. Check and double check." Another reporter wondered about the Internet's diminishment of critical thinking skills: "The Internet is a dangerous cacophony, distracting and diminishing people's critical thinking."

Perhaps the most common lament, however, pertained to the financial implications of the Internet. One reporter put it this way: "Investigative reporting takes time and money. Since the Internet is largely (but not solely) responsible for the sad financial shape of newspapers, it's therefore directly responsible for the decline of investigative reporting. Very few blogs do investigative reporting but even those do more aggregating of news from traditional news media sources than original reporting."

RQ10: Are there any investigative techniques for which many reporters would not use due to ethical concerns? Does gender play a role?

Investigative reporters are careful about which techniques they use. Only 20% were willing to use any technique to write the story. The most controversial technique, by far, was using deception in order to write the story. Fully two thirds of the sample (67.3%) indicated they would not feel comfortable using this method, even if it meant missing an important element in the story. This finding confirms what Swartz (2008) noted in his piece about the dearth of undercover reporting. The topic is controversial. Some journalists, such as Howard Kurtz (quoted in Swartz, 2008), believe using any deception undermines the story. Juries have shown little sympathy to reporters who used this method. Indeed, the famous Food Lion case versus *ABC News* may have had a chilling effect. Yet, some journalists defend the method, believing in some cases, it is the only way to get the essential element of the story, and that the end justifies the means. For them, the public's right to know outweighs the use of deception.

Interestingly, when asked if reporters would go undercover to pursue a story, the numbers reversed. Two-thirds (67%) of the journalists indicated they would use this

technique. This raises an important point. The public may regard deception and going undercover as a distinction without a difference. Yet to journalists, there is a marked contrast, and clearly twice as many are only comfortable with undercover reporting. The difference between the two may be that one can go undercover without using any deception. For example, journalists can simply show up at a scene but not announce that they are reporters, or they can identify themselves with a generic term, such as "citizen," without necessarily revealing they are a reporter. In contrast, using deception, reporters intentionally mislead the target of the investigation, often by lying or misrepresentation. Interestingly, of all the controversial techniques cited in the survey question, going undercover was the most accepted by reporters.

Many reporters were also uncomfortable using a hidden camera or microphone. 42.7% would not use a hidden camera; 44.1% would not use a hidden microphone. It is possible that surveying broadcast journalists might indicate considerably higher support for these methods. It may be that print journalists are not as comfortable with these investigative tools, as they have traditionally not used them, although this is changing with the Internet, as many online stories have a multimedia component.

Opt and Delaney (2000) found a difference between men and women in their acceptance of these techniques. Women were less likely to approve of using hidden cameras or microphones than men. This study asked whether this gender difference carried over to investigative journalists themselves. It did not. It is clear from the data that men and women did not differ in their degree of acceptance of these techniques, other than what would be expected given the 2:1 ratio of men to women in the sample.

However, there did seem to be one gender difference that was significant. For the 20% of respondents who would be willing to use *any* of the listed controversial techniques (e.g., going undercover, using deception, hidden camera, or hidden microphone), it appeared that men were more likely to choose this option over women. Only 10 female journalists responded they would be comfortable with any of these techniques, while 44 men indicated they would be. Thus, of those journalists, 81.5% were men, 18.5% were women. The sample itself had about 68% men and 32% women, so the differences expressed are significant. A chi square test confirms this: $\chi^2_{(1)} = 4.10,\ p < .05$.

RQ11: What two resources do journalists believe would best equip them to produce excellence in their work?

When journalists were asked to rank which resources a newsroom can offer to create excellence in investigative reporting, "more staff" and "more time to complete projects" were ranked highest. Roughly the same number of journalists selected "more staff" (102 respondents) as the most important resource as chose "more time to complete projects" (101 respondents). Over 72% of investigative journalists chose one of these two as the most important resource a newsroom could offer.

On the opposite side of the scale, only 5.7% (16 respondents) chose "higher salaries" and 2.1% (6 responses) chose "greater recognition." Occupying the middle ground was "higher budget," selected as the most important resource by 16.7% or 47 journalists.

When journalists ranked the second most important resource, it seemed to confirm the results of the first. The ranking of the five resources was the same as the first. "More staff" was chosen by 32% (90 respondents) as the second most important resource, while "more time to complete projects" was chosen by 28.8% (81 respondents.) "Higher budgets" was again ranked third, with 47 respondents (16.7%) and "higher salaries" (8.9%) and "greater recognition" (2.8%) were again ranked near the bottom.

TABLE 5

Ranking of Most Important Resources

Ranking	Most Important Resource	%	Second Most Important Resource	%
First	More staff	36.3%	More staff	32%
Second	More time to complete projects	35.9%	More time to complete projects	28.8%
Third	Higher budget	16.7%	Higher budget	20.6%
Fourth	Higher salaries	5.7%	Higher salaries	8.9%
Fifth	Greater recognition	2.1%	Greater recognition	2.8%

The interesting aspect to these findings is that money is not the essential element in producing excellence in investigative journalism, according to those who practice it. Those resources directly related to money ranked third (higher budget) and fourth (higher salaries). What ranked much higher was how management allocates its present resources, not necessarily adding more money. Most journalists believe having more staff assigned to investigative projects and more time to complete projects would lead to greater excellence. This is not to suggest these two resources are devoid of money. Certainly assigning staff to work on investigative projects might leave holes in coverage for other areas of the paper.

However, these survey findings suggest that money is a secondary consideration in pursuing excellence, and that newsroom managers cannot justify lower quality investigative reporting due to less revenue generated by the newspaper. Whereas revenue may be somewhat out of a newsroom manager's control, staff allocation of resources is certainly not. Thus, even the hardest-hit financially newspapers can still be in a position to pursue excellence.

These survey findings offer a snapshot into the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of today's newspaper investigative journalists. Yet, as journalists were analyzed in the aggregate, and not able to speak in their own words, important insights may have been missed. Through a thematic analysis of in-depth interviews, the next chapter delves further into the research questions to gain a deeper understanding.

Chapter 5: Interview Findings

INTRODUCTION

The interview chapter summarizes and synthesizes what a purposive sample of 10 investigative journalists think about their field as it confronts the Internet age and what they see as its future. The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on several of the more puzzling survey responses and to give journalists an opportunity to express why they believe what they do. As discussed in the methodology chapter, this purposive sample consists of investigative journalists who met the following conditions:

- At least four years of investigative journalism experience, although 9 of the 10 journalists interviewed had over 12 years of investigative journalism experience. Several had over 25 years experience.
- Geographic diversity – journalists represent a variety of geographic regions in the country.
- To create differences in the sample, about half the journalists are from publicly owned companies, while the other half are from privately or family owned newspapers. In addition, half the journalists are from larger papers (250,000 + circulation) while half are from smaller ones (less than 250,000). This ensures that journalists are working in a variety of environments.
- All journalists in the sample work full-time for a newspaper and regularly participate in investigative projects as a reporter.

The following are the investigative reporters in the purposive sample: (Note: Sunday circulation figures are reported, since important investigative stories are often on the front page of Sunday editions.)

Reporters from Larger Papers

Walter Bogdanich: an investigative reporter for the *New York Times* with over 30 years of experience. In his career, Bogdanich also worked for *The Wall Street Journal* and *60 Minutes*. Bogdanich is the recipient of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting. It was his third Pulitzer Prize. The newspaper is family owned with a Sunday circulation of approximately 1.5 million.

Dan Browning: a reporter for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* with 18 years of investigative reporting experience. This newspaper is privately-owned with approximately 534,000 Sunday circulation.

Bob Davis: an investigative reporter for *USA Today* for 16 years, specializing in medical-related stories. *USA Today* is publicly owned by Gannett and has the nation's highest circulation of 2.2 million.

Bob Drogin: a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* with over 25 years of investigative experience, specializing in national security issues. Although the *Times* has been privately owned since December, 2007, the newspaper for this study was counted as public because Drogin had spent nearly his entire career at the Times when it was a publicly owned paper. Its Sunday circulation is approximately 1.1 million.

Thomas Maier: investigative reporter for *Long Island Newsday* with 25 years experience. Briefly privately owned, the paper is again part of a publicly held company (Cablevision, which purchased it in May, 2008). Sunday circulation is about 441,000.

Reporters from Smaller Papers

Barbara Adams: This is a pseudonym as the reporter wished to remain anonymous. Adams works on investigations for a small newspaper in the Upper

Northwest part of the country with 12 years of investigative experience. Her newspaper is family-owned.

Thomas Cole: investigative reporter with 13 years experience at the *Albuquerque Journal*. The newspaper is family-owned with a Sunday circulation of about 137,000.

Gary Craig: reporter for the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* with 25 years of investigative experience. The newspaper is publicly owned with a Sunday circulation of about 200,000.

Jill Riepenhoff: a reporter on the investigations team for the *Columbus Dispatch* with four years of investigative reporting experience. Her newspaper is privately-owned with about 200,000 daily circulation.

Mark Schlepstein: reporter for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* with over 24 years of experience. His specialty is investigative environmental reporting and he has focused on Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, particularly the rebuilding of the levies. The newspaper is family-owned and has a Sunday circulation of about 200,000.

Research Questions

The interviews analysis is guided by six research questions. To best address these, I will use appropriate categories to analyze the interviews. I will also discuss dominant themes and subthemes that are present. Such themes encapsulate and lend insight into what many, although not all, interviewees have said about a particular topic.

RQ1: What do investigative journalists think of the field today, its future, and the support of their newsroom?

State of Investigative Journalism

This was the dominant theme emerging from the interviews, which expressed the ambivalence many felt about the state of investigative reporting:

Huge storm rolling over journalism, creating transition period.

The image of a storm passing through journalism was used by a couple of reporters to indicate the difficulties the industry faced as it braced with changes brought on by the Internet and declining readership. Many reporters used the phrase "transition period" to describe where investigative journalism stands today.

Bob Davis, reporter for *USA Toda*y, expressed his ambivalence this way: "It's hard to answer what the state is of newsrooms because it's almost like we are in the middle of a storm. It's almost like this huge hurricane is rolling over journalism right now and it's pretty scary but we are really going to have to let things clear and go out and see what the damage is before we really know." Echoing this theme of transition period, *New York Times* reporter Walter Bogdanich stated, "Well, I think we are in a period of transition as newspapers adapt to this economic reality." Jill Riepenhoff of the *Columbus Dispatch* declared: "We're certainly in a transition period trying to figure out what our niche in the market is." Yet, contrary to other reporters, Riepenhoff also saw a possible silver lining in the transition period: "Looking at what is happening in our own backyards and taking a hard look at it. I think in some ways it's making us return to our grassroots."

Ambivalence over State of Journalism

Many journalists expressed ambivalence over the current state of investigative journalism. Mark Schlepstein of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* expressed this subtheme of ambivalence when he stated that "reports of the demise of investigative reporting are way overblown." He believes that while many investigations are being

conducted, they are under new time constraints due to industry pressure to cut costs. However, he notes that with the Internet, the "methods have changed enough that we are able to get over the time constraint problems." Thus, the Internet offers a trade-off: it is much faster to conduct investigations with the new technology, but less time is also available.

Bogdanich expressed ambivalence concerning the state of investigative reporting by noting increased sophistication but decreased overall output. There exists "the best education group in the country…we in the investigative community share techniques, share what we've learned, pitfalls to watch out for…right down to the details of which public records we got." He notes that young reporters today could call up IRE and receive a listing of ten news organizations that conducted similar investigations and how they did it. Yet, he recognizes the field "has suffered to some degree…in the sense that fewer newspapers are doing it" even those newspapers, such as the *Philadelphia Inquir*er and the *Miami Herald* that were once known for excellence in investigative reporting.

Deteriorating State of Investigative Journalism

An equal number of other reporters were considerably downbeat in their assessment. Barbara Adams, reporter for a newspaper in the Upper Northwest, lamented newsrooms that don't allow reporters adequate time to dig into stories, which translates into "the worst of press release journalism." Using the imagery of combat, she added "there is literally this feeling that we are fighting for our lives and fighting for the life of journalism as we knew it when we came into the business."

Dan Browning of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* asserted that newspapers don't do much investigative journalism anymore because "it's expensive and time-consuming and

they just can't afford it. The industry is falling apart." He wonders as newspapers fade away, "who will step up and do this?"

Gary Craig, of the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, blamed diminished investigations partially on newspapers' willingness to cut costs and scale back coverage, even when they were making significant profits. He believes that newspapers are dispensable today because over time newspapers made themselves "a lot more easy to ignore and forget about. We kept giving people less and less cause for years to read us, even when the newspaper had lots of money – instead of investing that to make a deeper product, and a better product…We basically left the profit margin of Wall Street dictate what we did."

Thus, there is no clear picture that emerges on how journalists view the state of investigative reporting. Positive, negative, and ambivalent assessments had about equal recipients. In this way, the interview responses confirm the survey findings that the journalism community is deeply divided on this issue.

Difficulties with Bush Administration

How journalists perceive the state of investigative journalism also involves their experiences with the Bush Administration, if they cover national issues. Interestingly, there was some disagreement on this matter. On the one hand, Walter Bogdanich of the *New York Times* found the Bush Administration difficult to deal with: "One of the benefits of having done this for 30 years is that I have some sense of perspective. It's [dealing with the Bush Administration] much worse. It's much worse on many levels beginning with the FOIAs [Freedom of Information Act requests]…So it's very difficult to get FOIA requests filled and many reporters have almost stopped relying on them."

Bob Davis, of *USA Today*, had great trouble with FOIA requests: "I will get calls from federal agencies asking four years later, 'Do you still want these documents that you asked for four years ago?' And I will say yes, of course I do. And then I don't hear from them for another year." Davis also worried about the constant need to put up legal fights.

Bogdanich spoke about the difficulty in finding good sources in Washington, because inspectors general, whose job it is to oversee federal agencies, have become largely politicized: "If you were to look at them [Inspectors General] they have been politicized—I say that as a broad generalization; there are exceptions to that. But they have been rendered shall we say toothless in many cases, so that's one source of information that isn't there. And then there was the lack of oversight of the federal government—the executive branch—by Congress because there were fewer and fewer hearings when the same party controlled the White House and Congress. So those sources dried up. It is a very difficult time to be an investigative reporter in the Bush era."

Reporters were not unanimous in their assessment of the Bush Administration, however. Bob Drogin, of the *Los Angeles Times*, asserted that, contrary to popular belief, investigative reporting had gained under the present Administration. He noted that because Congress was for a long time controlled by Republicans, very few hearings were called. Yet, contrary to Bogdanich's observation, this left a vacuum for those officials who had legitimate concerns about issues of policy, and had to rely on reporters to get their message out: "So you could argue that a time of intense secrecy in this country under the Bush administration has led to some of the best journalism because people who believe that information should be made public."

Newsroom Support

Reporters found their newsrooms to be quite supportive of investigative work. This dominant theme emerged from the interviews:

In spite of industry woes, newspapers are still committed to watchdog journalism.

Every reporter, except one, believed their newsrooms were committed to investigations and were trying to put resources towards this end. Embedded in these responses was a feeling of gratitude for this commitment, as reporters recognized the challenging time the industry is facing. Thus, the interview responses strongly support the survey finding that while reporters are generally downbeat in their assessment of the news industry, they perceive strong support in their own newsroom.

Perception of Industry Woes May Fuel Perceived Newsroom Support

These interviews shed light on the survey findings. In the previous chapter, there existed a stark contrast between how journalists perceived the industry (quite negatively) versus how they perceived their own newsroom support (very positively). Several explanations were advanced to explain this contradiction. However, these interview findings point to another explanation. It may be that how investigative reporters evaluate the state of their own newsroom is through the prism of the news industry. Comparisons are made and one's own newsroom seems far more supportive than the industry as a whole, whose buyouts and layoffs consistently fill the news.

For example, Thomas Cole, of the *Albuquerque Journal*, evaluated his newsroom support through the prism of the larger industry: "You could look around and there are maybe one or two other papers in our circulation size in the country that have three reporters of the title of investigative reporter. And we just have a culture and we have a

commitment from our owners...and it's been that way for a long time." Jill Riepenhoff, of the *Columbus Dispatch*, echoed this theme: "We were created at a time when other papers were getting rid of theirs, so our paper has made a commitment."

Thomas Maier also reiterated this theme: "Investigative reporting is very dependent on the resources, and as the newspaper budgets have shrunk because of economic straits that they find themselves in, it has impacted investigative journalism in terms of the resources available to do the work." In this context, Maier then discussed the support of his own newsroom: "However, at *Newsday*, we still have a pretty vibrant investigative effort here."

Newsroom Support Less Than in Past

Another subtheme to emerge is the belief that while newsrooms are still supportive today, this support has diminished. Several of the reporters, while perceiving newsroom support, qualified it. For example, Dan Browning, of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, said newsroom support is "less so than when I started here." He then discussed how the investigative staff at his paper had fewer people now. Bob Drogin, of the *Los Angeles Times*, also held this belief: "Well, until recently, it [newsroom support] was hugely supportive. Right now, we are in cutbacks and buyouts and all the rest of it."

Drogin also noted the additional burden of his newspaper's recent sale which generated a huge debt for the paper: "We have an owner who has come in and made a variety of threats to people and the organization because he has set up a deal where he has to pay back huge amounts of money, so he's come in and threatened to micromanage how the newspaper is run, even though he has no newspaper experience."

There was one reporter who was bitter about the declining support of her newsroom. She noted that her newspaper did away with her title as investigative reporter, and "I've been kind of tossed around since then and this is kind of a symptom of what's happening in newspapers generally speaking." She also blamed the increase use of multimedia elements on the thinning out of the paper: "There isn't much time and in fact everything has gotten thinner…because they're having us do all kinds of crazy things like taking video cameras out and the whole freak out about the future of newspapers."

Future of Investigative Reporting

Paralleling the survey results, the investigative reporters interviewed were split when asked to consider the future of investigative journalism. About half were quite optimistic about the field's prospects, while the other half were either ambivalent or negative in thinking of the future. The dominant theme emerging from these interviews was:

Investigative journalism sets newspapers apart from other media, and will always be central to the role of journalism in society.

Several journalists' optimism was based on the belief that investigative reporting has the capacity to distinguish newspapers from other kinds of media, including the blogosphere. They believed investigative reporting will always be valued because newspapers recognize that this is an important public service that other forms of media rarely do. Walter Bogdanich put it this way: "Newspapers often recognize that the way they can distinguish themselves from the blogosphere is by doing what others can't do and that is sophisticated, responsible investigative reporting. If we don't do it, who will?" Dan Browning echoed this theme: "I think that newspapers are starting to realize that it is

that kind of watchdog reporting that other media do not offer that really sets us apart. It always has and I think it always will.

Always a Demand for Investigative Reporting

A subtheme emerging from these interviews is that, in spite of the industry challenges, there will always be a demand for investigative reporting: it is what readers want and have come to expect. This is the second factor fueling reporters' optimism about the future of investigative reporting, as Thomas Maier noted: "I think there will always be a huge audience for investigative journalism…And I think that history has clearly shown that publications that invest in investigative journalism have continued to rise where others have failed. It's very simple. It's what our readers want. It's what the audience demands." Mark Shlepstein concurred: "I am more optimistic than many of my compatriots. I think that what we are going through right now is a phase that will basically shake itself out in the next five years…there will still be a demand for investigative reporting; the venues will just be different."

Perceived Disconnect with Audience Fuels Pessimism

About half the reporters were downbeat or ambivalent about where they thought investigative reporting was headed. One of their major concerns was that the audience was growing increasingly disconnected from both the media and participating in a democracy. These remarks were often colored by concern and even bitterness. Thomas Cole, expressing the outrage that other reporters felt, exclaimed, "their [Associated Press] biggest client is Yahoo now, and ask them what their top stories that are hit everyday are. It will be Britney Spears and entertainment news! I'm concerned there is just a continuing disconnection of people in this country from being active participants in democracy."

For Bob Davis of *USA Today*, the experience was more personal. He said that one of the "main reasons that I'm mostly pessimistic right now is because I'm a father of teenagers and they just don't care about the newspaper…And that makes me more pessimistic than anything that's happening in the newsroom…"

'*Who Will Pay For It?'*

Other reporters were pessimistic because they did not perceive how newspapers would pay for investigative reporting. Dan Browning explained it this way: "The problem is again, how do you pay for it? I mean, it is not unusual to spend six months to a year on a story, and that could be two reporters probably for four months – there is a copy editor involved, there's a team leader partly involved most of the time, graphics, photographers. You're talking $150 – 200,000 for a story – for people's time."

RQ2: How satisfied are investigative journalists and what motivates them to pursue such a difficult profession?

The interview responses for this research question strongly support the survey findings. Almost the entire group was extremely satisfied in working as an investigative reporter, even those who expressed considerable concern about the news industry or their own paper. They spoke with great passion when discussing their work. The dominant theme emerging from these responses is perhaps best expressed by one of the reporters who said, in regard to investigative journalism:

'It's what I live for…It's lodged in my identity and my purpose.'

In other words, irrespective of the difficulties the news industry faces or the personal challenges of the job, reporters' devotion is ardent. Their responses often

reached into the superlative. Walter Bogdanich of the *New York Times* said, "I'm 57 years old and I still love coming to work." Gary Clark declared, "I would prefer it to doing anything else. As far as that part of the job goes, that is the most satisfying part – the work." Bob Drogin of the *Los Angeles Times* said, "I get great satisfaction out of writing stories…It's my career; I love it." Jill Riepenhoff brought the issue of job satisfaction to even more personal level, noting, "I love it. It's great, fantastic. I was a part-time stay-at-home mom and gave up staying home with my kids to come back to work full-time to do this."

Satisfied Yet Wistful

For other reporters, the subtheme was that while they received great satisfaction from investigative reporting, there was wistfulness for what the past held, yet is now gone. Journalists like Dan Browning reflected, "I love to do it but it's hard to do anymore." In a nod to the past, Bob Davis said that while he is extremely satisfied in doing the reporting, his satisfaction level is down from where it was before.

Personal Motivations

What makes reporters so satisfied with their work? What compels them to pursue the painstaking work of investigative reporting? What inspires these reporters to spend months or even years on a story, sometimes on their own time? This dominant theme emerged from the responses:

Wanting to get to the truth, to go where no one has gone before.

In way or another, all the interviewees reiterated this theme. These interview responses supported the survey findings that inner motivation (e.g., wanting to reform the system, hold system accountable) is far more powerful than external motivation (e.g.,

money or recognition). Moreover, the survey found that one of the best predictors of job satisfaction was the meaning journalists bring to their work. Meaning was also an important theme in the interviews.

In general, reporters gave three explanations as to what most motivated them to pursue investigative reporting: meaning, effect, and standing in for others.

Finding Meaning in Work

Many reporters linked their motivation to the meaning they find in their work. Walter Bogdanich revealed that the traditional reasons often cited for pursuing investigations "all have meaning to me, and I feel good at the end of the day knowing that I've done good and…I'm part of an honorable profession that…serves a huge public interest." Bob Davis said he thought investigative journalism was the "purest form" and that he relishes "going deeper and deeper into something – following the path to where no one has gone before.

Effect of Investigative Journalism Provides Motivation

For other reporters, it was the effect that investigative journalism can have on reforming the system or changing laws, that most motivated them. Dan Browning asserted that had more people taken their stories seriously on property flipping, the city of Minneapolis would have less daunting problems than the high foreclosure rate it now faces. He believes investigative stories can have real impact, and that is what excites him. Same with Jill Riepenhoff who linked reforming wrongdoing with the foundation of journalism: "Change laws, change people's lives. Everything. If there is wrongdoing – for me, that's where it's all at. It's the purpose of journalism – the foundation….It's great

when the legislature and the people across the street stand up, take notice, and do something, and change what's wrong."

Standing In For Others

A third subtheme to emerge is the notion that reporters are not simply representing themselves or their newspaper, but that they are standing in for the citizens who cannot dig up the facts or ask the hard questions. This belief of standing in where others cannot gives added motivation to the job. This is perhaps best expressed by Mark Schlepstein of the *New Orleans Picayune*, in his work of investigating the Army Corps of Engineer's efforts to improve the city's levies:

> Post-Katrina, a lot of cases the stories I'm doing are important to the people that are my neighbors. I consider myself as their representative in venues where they can't be and I recognize that I need to represent them. And that really drives a lot of what we do here at the newspaper. We are doing the work that they can't do. They can't be out there looking at the levees, they can't be finding engineering documents and reading them…

Bob Davis, at *USA Today*, also suggested this theme of standing in for others: "I want to take the time and put the energy into asking the questions that need to be asked – that everyone has on their mind but they don't take the time to investigate."

RQ3: What are investigative journalists' attitudes about the Internet and its impact on investigative reporting?

The interview responses supported the survey findings concerning journalists' attitudes towards the Internet. There exists considerable ambivalence and general

disagreement among journalists as to the Internet's implications for investigative journalism. This was the dominant theme emerging from the interviews:

Still trying to figure it out.

Journalists' Attitudes about Internet

If there was a consensus among reporters, it was that using the Internet is still in flux and everyone is still trying to figure it out – how to best use the medium and make money from it. Interestingly, although the interview questions were framed broadly, none of the respondents discussed the financial implications of the Internet, as one might expect. Instead, participants focused on the Internet's impact on the journalistic process and product, whether for good or ill.

Different Entry Points to Story

Several journalists expressed their enthusiasm for the Internet by suggesting that placing stories online, with various multimedia sources, allowed different entry points for the reader, as opposed to the traditional print story where there was only one. As Gary Clark pointed out: "I think [the Internet] gives readers and consumers a different kind of entry point into something. If there's somebody who really likes to read, you can read it. If you really want to see some video with it, it's there. If you want to see the documents that are a supporting basis for stuff, it's there." Mark Schlepstein commented, "It's what I call 'a thousand points of entry'… It's other ways of telling the story that grabs people and pulls them in, which is important." For Thomas Maier, these different entry points to a story is thrilling. "There is a thrill these days being able to offer a lot more complete investigative reporting on the Internet with the use of video, with the use of PDF files

where you can literally annotate your investigative work so people can look at the reports themselves…"

Other reporters emphasized that video is able to tell elements of a story that even the best writing cannot. Capturing images on the Internet can be a powerful addendum to many investigative pieces, as Gary Clark observed: "I'm a decent writer – but even if I were a better writer I don't think I could have captured in words what we captured on video."

Internet Could Harm Journalistic Product

Yet the thrill of the Internet enhancing stories was not shared by about half the interview pool, who worried what the new technology might do to existing journalistic practices. This subtheme was expressed by Bodganich, who noted that the downside of the Internet is that there exists a tendency for investigative reporters to spend too much time online and not enough on the phone. He believes that only through the phone, or in-person meetings, can serendipity occur in which unexpected and important topics surface. Yet because information is so readily available on the Internet, fewer interviews are conducted today. Bogdanich is also concerned with the use of video cameras in conducting investigations because he has seen first hand that this could jeopardize some interviews and the willingness of sources to talk.

Some reporters expressed concern that the Internet diverts time away from traditional, in-depth reporting, due to its need for constant updates and multimedia elements. Bob Drogin, out on the campaign trail, has been "astonished at how more often people have to file, and you wonder, 'If you are doing all of that filing when are you actually talking to people.'" Barbara Adams put the matter bluntly, "I do spend time

writing my little web text for every story. Other reporters are more excited about this than I am because I feel like every single minute you give to that…takes away from the depth and quality of your work." For Maier, this has an effect on the kinds of investigations that are chosen to pursue. Given the increased time requirements, he observed, "So what it means is you've got to pick our projects a lot more carefully. You've got to ask yourself, 'Is this going to be worth it?'"

Thus, in evaluating the Internet's impact, reporters were not concerned with the considerable financial implications but rather with how the new technology affects the reporting itself. Yet they were about evenly divided in whether it contributed to enhanced stories with multiple entry points for the reader, or whether constant updates diverted from in-depth reporting.

RQ4: What role do watchdog reporters believe nonprofits will play in the future of investigative journalism? How comfortable are they in partnering with nonprofits?

There exists among the journalists interviewed a definite skepticism about nonprofits venturing into watchdog reporting and what role these nonprofits would play in the future. Nobody thought that nonprofit reporting would one day carry the lionshare of investigative reporting, in spite of the news industry contracting through budget cuts and layoffs. While journalists generally thought that most nonprofits were well-meaning, their ability to do groundbreaking investigative reporting was significantly limited. The dominant theme emerging from these interviews was:

Though well-intentioned, lack of distribution and funding issues limit the role of nonprofits.

Role of Nonprofits

Reporters offered several explanations as to why they believed the role of nonprofits would be limited.

Lack of Distribution Power Impedes Nonprofits

An important subtheme was that nonprofits could not play a major role in investigative journalism, either in the present or future, because of inherent distribution limits, which compelled them to constantly seek partnerships with media organizations to publish their findings, which some reporters did not believe would happen. Thomas Maier, of *Long Island Newsday*, linked the success of nonprofits with their ability to partner with major news organizations: "I see them distinguishing themselves as an entity to the extent that they are published in other venues. It will depend on the trust and the long-term relationships that Paul Steiger and other editors at Pro Publica have with other entities." However, Maier expressed skepticism that such partnerships would readily occur: "I think there is a natural and to some degree understandable caution that a newspaper like the *New York Times* or *Newsday* or the *Washington Post* would have on essentially accepting the work of somebody that they can't completely oversee."

Bob Drogin, of the *Los Angeles Times*, echoed this subtheme in questioning how nonprofits will widely distribute their stories, given current industry norms: "I have a tremendous respect for them [Pro Publica, a nonprofit] but we have yet to see them do anything, and we've yet to know whether when they first come up with whatever story they come up with…whether it runs in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*…or any other major news organization and what is going to happen…but as a rule, news organizations tend to not work with other news organizations."

Bob Davis discussed the competitive nature of the business, and how it is against the norm to publish others' work because of the prevailing notion that publishing others' work is a tacit admission that one was beat on the story. While Davis did not agree with this sentiment personally, he believes it is widespread.

Thomas Cole put the matter succinctly: "Well, their [nonprofits'] problem is that they don't distribute that widely. How are they going to reach, like we do, more than 100,000 a day? No, I don't see that."

Ideological Issues with Funders

Another subtheme to emerge was that reporters were concerned that funders of nonprofit publishing organizations may impose, however subtly, their own ideology on the stories. These reporters took pride that the mainstream media is independent, not beholden to funding interests, other than their readers. For instance, Gary Clark, of the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, remarked: "I hope that they can find ways to make sure they don't sort of follow the ideological path of their funders. So that is my one concern…"

Clark, as well as other reporters, were generally admiring of nonprofits' work. Still, this question of funder-imposed ideology was a concern. For Bob Drogin, the issue was not as much about ideology of funders, but rather relying on funders who may not always support the organization. He believes "the nonprofits are always going to be at the mercy of somebody with really deep pockets willing to sustain that…It means that the day the funding stops, you go out of business."

Lack of Local Focus

Another subtheme was that some investigative journalists believe the local angle is important in investigative pieces, and that readers naturally want to know how the investigation will affect them in their city or town, but nonprofits lack this local focus. Jill Riepenhoff, of the *Columbus Dispatch*, commented, "I do think it [lionshare of investigative reporting] will stay with the newspapers…also they [nonprofits] are looking largely at sort of a national perspective and I think people really want to know what does this mean for me here in Columbus, Ohio or Tacoma, Washington…."

Indeed, many newspapers seem to agree with this logic, as the industry ramps up its coverage of local news and reduces reporting on national stories. There is even a new buzzword in the industry – hyperlocal – which refers to news organizations covering highly local events, because they believe this is what readers want. Dan Browning, of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, expressed skepticism that reporters would know how to contend with state laws, which could inhibit their reporting: "And do they know the public records laws in every state they are going to work at? There are a lot of obstacles. I wish them well, I really do."

Partnering with Nonprofits

The participants were about equally divided as to whether they would be willing to enter partnerships with nonprofit organizations, either to help write the story or publish it. The survey results had a similar finding, that about half the journalists (51.5%) were very or somewhat comfortable with partnering, with the other half somewhat or very uncomfortable, or neutral. The dominant theme emerging from this category was: In-depth knowledge of nonprofit and full access to everything are required for any partnership.

Many of the journalists reiterated this theme that they were open to partnering with nonprofits but certain conditions had to be met. Journalists wanted to be familiar with the history of the nonprofit and understand where their funding comes from. They expected full transparency and access to all documents and sources in the process. Gary Clark stated, "I would want to see the history. I would want Pro Publica to have a little bit more history first!" Mark Schelpstein emphasized the important of due diligence before any partnership could be considered: "I would look at the nonprofit and make sure that I don't have any problems with its intent in doing it or its goals; make sure its work is accurate and not biased. But if it met those goals I personally would be okay with it."

Bob Davis cautioned that partnering with nonprofits come with "a lot of issues…and it is not to be entered into lightly. He stressed that the two most important attributes were transparency and accountability. Echoing the views of many of the interviewed journalists, he declared, "I would not want to partner in any way that we weren't fully active and had access to everything that they were doing, just like I would be here [at *USA Today*]."

Some journalists remain skeptical

However, not all journalists were sold on the idea of exploring partnerships with nonprofit organizations, even if certain conditions were met. About half the journalists were uncomfortable with the idea. Why? A variety of explanations were given. One was that the standards between the newspaper and nonprofit might differ. Thomas Maier made this point: "I don't see a lot of collaboration and I don't think that there should be a lot of collaboration because standards can be different in the newspaper than they are at another nonprofit, they may have an agenda that we may not be very clear about…." Jill

Riepenhoff was uncomfortable with the idea of partnering with nonprofits in general and the process it involves: "Me personally I want to be on the ground floor. I don't want somebody handing me something and going, 'Ta-da! Now find somebody in Ohio who this applies to. I don't do that.'"

In expressing her discomfort in partnering with nonprofits, Barbara Adams repeated the theme of ideological issues over funding and how that might affect the report: "I would have to know a lot about the history and the makeup. See, that's the problem. And nonprofits rely on donors and you need to be funded by somebody that you can be comfortable that…the journalist is left alone to have that journalistic independence. Dan Browning was concerned about what happens should the news organization be sued.

Shifting Ground

A minor theme that also emerged was the notion that while industry practices have traditionally been against such partnerships, the ground was shifting as the news media contends with a radically changing environment. Several reporters noted that while the idea of partnerships might have met resistance in the past, there may be increasing acceptance towards it. Bob Drogin put it this way: "I'm happy to work with anybody, but as a rule, news organizations tend to not work with other news organizations. That may change. We are in a world that is changing very quickly; the ground is shifting out from under us, so it is entirely possible." Mark Schlepstein also stressed the changing nature of the business. He stated that while in the past, management at his newspaper "have not been interested in doing that in the context of, 'Well, if we're interested in doing that

story we will do it ourselves.' But I think we're right on the cusp of 'Hum, that looks okay.'"

RQ5: How influential do investigative journalists perceive their work in changing policy and what role do they see the public playing in the agenda-building process?

The investigative journalists in this purposive sample strongly believed their work had an impact on changing policy. This is supported by the survey, which found that about two-thirds of respondents believed their work had at least some impact. It is an important question because, as shown in the previous chapter, belief in impact of one's work is a major predictor of job satisfaction. The dominant theme arising from this category was:

Investigative stories often have great impact on readers and policy, but impact can be defined in many ways.

Thomas Maier, of *Long Island Newsday*, perhaps best expressed this theme when reflecting on the impact of investigative stories: "I think a multi-series in a newspaper has tremendous impact on its audience and it can reverberate for years intersecting social policy, in creating laws and programs, and the way that the audience sees the world." He agrees with the work of David Protess and colleagues (1991), discussed in the literature review, that impact can be defined in many ways: "It can be defined by an indictment, it can be defined by Senate hearings, it can be defined by changes in perception that people have about government, schools, community, about themselves."

Many of the journalists happily recalled the many accomplishments their work produced. This ranged from stories that freed innocent people from incarceration;

eliminating excess benzene in the air; documenting the disparity of hospital care; to preventing teachers back in the classroom who had abused children. Some of the reporters were quite enthusiastic over how much an impact their work has had. One reporter noted, "Every big series we've written has resulted in legislative action."

Journalism's Limited Capacity to Change Policy

Not all reporters, however, shared this enthusiasm that their work often produced reform. There existed a feeling among a minority of journalists that investigative journalism was limited in impact because it could not change human nature or the facts on the ground. Thus, even if several individuals are indicted for their crimes, there will be others to take their place. For example, Dan Browning believed "there have been some laws passed and things like that but people are still doing the same things they're doing when I was writing about this ten years ago. More of it really." He suggested that "if you take a street dealer off the street, there is another street dealer the next day…I got rid of some of the bad guys for a while…but now looking back I realize that somebody else stepped up and took their place. It's just an endless process. It's okay because you can't change human nature."

Along these lines, Bob Drogin, the *Los Angeles Times* reporter stated: "They reformed because of 9/11, not because of anything I wrote. There was reformed intelligence because there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, not because I wrote that there were no weapons…." Yet Drogin did allow that change happens more frequently on a state level, "where newspapers with good investigative stories can have a large impact."

Role of Public in Agenda-Building

As discussed in the literature review chapter, David Protess and colleagues (1991) discovered that among investigative journalists, the Mobilization Model – the public is outraged over a published story and demands action from lawmakers – though largely a myth, is held by the vast majority of reporters. In their research, they found that most of the time when reform happens, the public plays a passive role. The researchers discovered that much of the reform occurred even before the story was published, as authorities learned about the wrongdoing. They also found that the ease with which the problem could be fixed was an important factor in determining if reform ultimately occurred. Much of the literature in political science confirms this view, that in most matters of policymaking, the public does not play a particularly active role.

What these interviews found is that the myth of the Mobilization Model is widely held by nearly all journalists. Moreover, investigative journalists seemed confident that the public played an active and even indispensable role in creating change. This was the dominant theme to emerge:

It's the public that drives any change.

Perhaps this myth persists because the Mobilization Model follows the ideals of journalism. A powerful story is published and the public is mobilized by outrage, demanding reform. With this belief, investigative reporters can conduct investigations that lead to moral outrage, without compromising their objectivity. As discussed in the literature review, reporters used the allegedly active role of the public as one way of preserving their own objectivity (Ettema & Glasser, 1998).

Many of the journalists were quite emphatic in the importance of an active public in achieving reform. For example, Walter Bogdanich of the *New York Times*, winner of three Pulitzer Prizes, stated, "elected officials sense that the public is upset about something; they may be getting letters or phone calls. And people who truly represent their constituents will do something about it and typically that's what happens." He added, "And if the public isn't outraged, nothing is going to happen." Many other journalists echoed this theme. Dan Browning remarked, "And a lot of times…after the story people are waiting to see if they get a lot of phone calls or emails. And if they don't get any, they are not going to do anything."

Barbara Adams was also adamant in the indispensable role the public plays in policy change: "Well, it all comes from the public." She did recognize, however, that the simplicity of the solution was also a key factor: "You know, sometimes problems are big and it's not obvious what to do about them…the simpler the solution, the more likely it is to be done immediately." Bob Davis agreed: "If change is going to come, it's because the public has been educated and they've seen something in a different light and they become motivated to take action about it…It's the public that drives any change."

What these findings suggest is that agenda-building is poorly understood by journalists who consistently make assumptions as to how reform occurs, without investigating it. Journalists' understanding of agenda-building may exaggerate the public's role because this allows reporters to assume a stance of moral outrage (which nearly all exposés have) yet still maintain their objectivity. As journalists are clearly uncomfortable taking on any kind of crusading role, their understanding of agenda-building may be an effective way to relieve this conflict.

Subject of Story Affects Public's Reaction

While nearly all journalists agreed that the public played a highly active role in producing reform, there were those journalists who qualified their answer, noting that certain subjects of investigations did little to mobilize the public. For example, Gary Clark noted: "The tough part with criminal justice things, especially if you are doing stories about wrongly accused or inmate rights is that those folks just aren't really high on the public agenda anymore…So it's hard to generate much in the way of public advocacy in those stories." Thomas Maier reiterated this subtheme when discussing his investigations on the exploitation of immigrants: "When I did the immigrant series, my voicemail was flooded with people saying that they shouldn't be here in the first place…And so the reaction is sometimes they disagree with the findings."

In all, only one journalist questioned the notion that the public plays an active role in bringing about change. Thomas Cole believed the public plays "a passive role because I think most of the time when government makes a change, it's not because their phones are ringing off the hook…but that they don't want to answer for it down the road during an election…Change just always doesn't happen."

RQ6: Do investigative journalists perceive government as more likely to be the target of an investigation, and why might this be the case?

All the journalists agreed that government is far more likely to be the target of an investigation than business, although a couple of reporters noted that they personally were working on stories targeting business. The reporters were clearly concerned about

the lack of investigations of business, and some even suggested that this was harming society. The dominant theme arising from this category was:

Most investigations target the government, and not nearly enough investigate corporations.

Target of Investigations

Gary Clark, of the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, stated, "I think government should be investigated and I do worry…that we are getting closer and closer to sometimes giving a free pass to the corporate world." Clark noted that he did not think this was intentional so much as the fact that investigative reporting often comes from a metro side of a newspaper instead of business or sports. Ben Bagdikian's theory (discussed in the literature review) that as media organizations become part of larger corporations themselves, they are less bothered by corporate wrongdoing, finds support in Clark's experience: "I sometimes think that we're sort of guilty of this too, that we're not as bothered perhaps by the possibility of corporate wrongdoing out there. We have industries here [Rochester, NY] who have lopped off thousands of people." Supporting Bagdikian's claims even further, Clark added:

> And sadly, I think part of it is that the corporations we work for are guilty of the same thing. Basically a lack of concern of the wellbeing of their employees. It's just a constant push to appease Wall Street…I worry we are not as aggressive looking at the harm big business can do…And I think it's just that *we settle into this belief that this is the way it is*, and in the media world the companies we work for are guilty of it. So I think if a company basically starts axing people wholesale, it's no different than what the media companies are doing these days; instead of really questioning

the impact on lives and the real justification for it, we don't really give the same concern to that as we would sometimes with government. [italics added]

Barbara Adams shared these concerns. She believes that business reporters were "asleep at the switch for a long, long, long time – like through the 90s" and that a dearth of business investigations contributed to the current subprime loan crisis.

Tactical Reasons versus Ideological Reasons to Pursue Government

Journalists offered a variety of explanations as to why investigative journalists most often pursue government wrongdoing over business. These can be classified into tactical and ideological explanations. Tactical explanations focus on the fact that investigating government is far less onerous than targeting business. Walter Bogdanich, of the *New York Times*, observed that "not enough investigative reporting involves business" because they are a tougher target. "Why is it? Because they have more sophisticated public relations people that protect them and build this impenetrable wall – as much as they can – around misconduct in the business world." He also noted the media savvy of many companies: "They are much more sophisticated in dealing with the media and they have money and they have lawyers and they know where the pressure points are and they are not afraid to use that knowledge."

While Bogdanich focused on the formidable public relations weapons of corporations, other journalists emphasized the difficulty of obtaining documents from companies. Of course, Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests take time, but the documents will usually be produced. That is not the case with business, as Dan Browning explained: "It's almost all government [as targets of investigations]…that's where the

documents are that you can get your hands on. We can file public record requests for a lot of that stuff. It's a lot easier."

Journalists making this point were careful to distinguish public companies from private ones. Browning stated, "Now public companies are a lot easier than private companies, of course, because they also have a lot of documentation. So if you're dealing with Cargill [a private company] good luck. If you are dealing with General Foods, then it's a lot easier." Riepenhoff also noted that for the government "it's easier to get records. They have to comply with public record policy. There is much less of a documented trail for companies."

Other tactical explanations relate to the law. Journalists agreed that companies were far more litigious than government, which has had a chilling effect on news organizations. Plus, as Thomas Maier pointed out, "the laws are more clearly defined about public officials and public figures." Thus, there is less risk in targeting officials.

Some journalists offered more ideological reasons for why news organizations most often pursue government. For Thomas Cole, pursuing government is more essential to the role of the news media in society: "The role of the news media is to inform members of the public that they can participate in democracy. And what that means is giving them information about the government; telling them how their rulers are ruling them. That's really the essence of the Free Press." This subtheme was also expressed by Thomas Maier who believed that pursuing government in investigations is ultimately more fruitful for citizens because government – whether federal, state, or local – will generally have far more impact on a person's life than a company.

The next chapter will revisit the hypotheses and research questions posed in chapters four and five. It will then discuss implications, both theoretical and practical, of the study, and explore areas of further research.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter revisits the study's key findings, and discusses their theoretical and practical implications. It also suggests limitations of the study, proposes areas for further research, and draws general conclusions.

The study's main findings are divided into six theory-based categories: importance of ownership type; testing agenda-building theory; attitudes toward Internet; role of nonprofits; understanding job satisfaction and motivation; and examining practices of investigative journalism.

Importance of Ownership Type

How important is ownership type in job satisfaction? Are investigative journalists from family or privately held newspapers more satisfied than their counterparts at public ones? The study clearly shows ownership type is not related to job satisfaction, as all types of ownership had nearly identical means. This contradicts, however, the arguments of media critics, such as McChesney (1999). A logical extension of his argument would hold that those working at public companies, facing constant pressure to please Wall Street and report quarterly earnings, would be less satisfied than those shielded by the market. What these findings indicate, however, is that perceived newsroom support, not ownership type, is the most important factor in job satisfaction.

Does ownership type matter in how supportive investigative journalists find their newsroom? The results show that type of ownership does not have an effect on newsroom support, contrary to the arguments of McChesney (1999) and Bagdikian (2004). In fact, not a single journalist working at a publicly held company described their newsroom as "very unsupportive." Instead, the study found that investigative journalists, in spite of the

great turmoil engulfing the industry, staunchly believe their newsrooms are highly supportive. The research also uncovered a sharp contrast between how investigative journalists perceive the support of their own newsroom versus the news industry writ large. Several explanations were advanced to account for this disparity.

Do perceived organizational constraints in newsrooms differ by ownership type? Again, the data suggests that investigative journalists at publicly held newspapers are no more likely to experience organizational constraints than those working at private or family papers. In fact, relatively few reporters believed their newsroom put pressure on them to kill or drop a story (30%). Many more experienced pressure outside the newsroom, whether by advertisers, interest groups, sources, companies, or government.

Testing Agenda-Building Theory

Whereas most research on agenda-building has focused on what influences the media's agenda or how the media might affect the policy agenda, the present study adopted a different approach. It tested the theory of agenda-building by turning it toward journalists themselves, asking to what extent this theory predicts job satisfaction and commitment to field. The research shows that the degree to which journalists believe in the impact of their work to reform policy accounts for 6% of the variance in job satisfaction. Thus, belief in impact of one's work is a predictor of job satisfaction, but the study uncovered stronger predictors.

If agenda-building is associated with job satisfaction, is it also associated with investigative reporters' commitment to their field? Results show no association. Those believing their work had high impact had virtually the same level of commitment as those believing their work had some or little impact. One reason for this may be that

investigative journalists' commitment to their field is remarkably high, with over 91% planning to conduct investigations within the next 10 years. This level of commitment was much higher than journalists in general, in which only 77% planned to continue in the field over the next five years (Weaver, et al., 2007). As commitment to field was so high, variables such as influence of work on policy did not matter. The finding suggests that investigative journalists are highly devoted to the process of investigative journalism more than the outcome.

From the depth interviews, we learn that investigative journalists strongly believe their work has an impact on reforming the system. However, they were careful to point out that impact can be defined in many ways, not all of which leads to substantial change. There were a minority of journalists, however, who believed investigative journalism was limited in impact as it could not change human nature, so that even as one corrupt person was exposed, another would soon take his or her place.

Examining agenda-building through a historical lens, how have agenda-building practices, and attitudes toward the public, changed over nearly 20 years? Journalists today are more apt to contact policymakers to discuss policy reforms that might result from their story. The percentage of those who "very" or "somewhat frequently" contact policymakers rose 14 points to about two-thirds of today's reporters. It was hypothesized this may be the case because newspapers today are under considerably more pressure to achieve measurable results, which might persuade management to continue to support investigative work. Moreover, as newspapers have been challenged by a litany of competition over the past 20 years, reporting on how original investigations helped reform policy is something that can help newspapers stand out in a crowded marketplace.

Attitudes toward Internet

As the Internet has unquestionably transformed investigative journalism and the news industry, how do investigative journalists perceive this new medium? The data shows that this depends on how experienced the journalist is. Even when controlling for a variety of demographic factors, there exists a negative association between experience and perception of Internet's impact on field. Seasoned journalists are substantially more downbeat in their view of the Internet than their less experienced colleagues. It may be that journalists with more experience are wistful about a time when diminishing advertising revenue and constant web updates were not the norm. These journalists have more of a basis of comparison between the Internet and pre-Internet era and, consequently, may not be as dazzled by the technology.

Aside from its association with experience, what are journalistic attitudes toward the Internet and its impact on investigative reporting? Initially, it seemed that investigative journalists found the Internet highly beneficial, with almost 80% of the respondents finding it to be either "somewhat" or "very beneficial." Yet, the open-ended survey responses and interviews revealed considerable ambivalence and general disagreement among journalists as to its impact. If there was a consensus however, it was that the industry is still "trying to figure it out" –how to best use the medium and make money from it. Several interviewed journalists were quite enthusiastic about the multimedia elements to online stories, believing this created "different entry points to a story," yet about half the interviewees worried that this new technology could harm existing journalistic practices by diverting time away from traditional, in-depth reporting, with its constant need for updates and multimedia elements.

Role of Nonprofits

How do journalists view nonprofits that conduct investigations? The study uncovered a definite sense of skepticism among journalists. Reporters were skeptical as to what role these nonprofits would play in the future, and not one interviewed reporter thought they would carry the lionshare of investigative reporting in the future, in spite of an industry-wide contraction. Reporters cited nonprofits' lack of distribution power, ideological issues with funders, and lack of a local focus as key factors that would limit the role of nonprofits. Participants were also about equally divided as to whether they would be willing to partner with nonprofits, a very similar finding to the survey. Those who were willing to potentially partner had strict conditions that would need to be met before any partnership would be possible. Reporters also noted that while industry practices traditionally frowned on such partnerships, the ground was shifting and there may be more openness to such an arrangement.

The dissertation also explores if circulation size affects willingness to partner with these nonprofit news organizations. It was hypothesized that that investigative journalists working at smaller papers would be more comfortable partnering with nonprofits because they likely have less bureaucracy and journalists may have more autonomy to make these decisions. On a practical level, smaller papers do not have large staffs and may need the help of an outside organization to conduct investigations, which frequently require considerable labor and time. No relationship was found, however. Part of the reason is that about half the journalists were somewhat or very comfortable partnering, with only 20.7% as somewhat or very uncomfortable. Thus, there already existed fairly widespread acceptance of this practice, irrespective of circulation size.

Understanding Job Satisfaction and Motivation

This research project attempted to shed light on what factors best predict job satisfaction. One reason job satisfaction is important to consider is its extremely high correlation with commitment to field. Certainly, for investigative journalism to flourish, it needs seasoned watchdog reporters.

Four factors emerged as the best predictors of job satisfaction. Together, they account for more than one-third of the variance, a very high amount. The strongest predictor was perceived newsroom support, with this factor alone accounting for 22.6% of the variance. The second strongest predictor was "time journalists spent on investigative journalism compared to five years ago" suggesting the great devotion investigative journalists bring to their work. The third factor was "how meaningful investigative journalists find their work," suggesting that meaning is something these journalists take very seriously and perhaps derive their motivation from. The fourth factor was the one discussed under agenda-building, belief that their work reforms the system.

How satisfied are investigative journalists? The interview responses strongly supported the survey findings, as almost the entire group was extremely satisfied, even those expressing grave concern about the industry. Journalists spoke with tremendous passion about their enthusiasm for the job and their responses often reached into the superlative. Yet there was also a subtheme of wistfulness for the past, a feeling that while satisfied, they missed the past when investigative journalism was easier to conduct.

The interview responses also echoed the survey findings that inner motivation (e.g., reforming the system, holding it accountable) is far more powerful than external motivation (e.g., money or recognition). Reporters offered three explanations as to what

most motivated them to pursue this line of work: meaning, effect, and standing in for others.

Have the motivations of investigative reporters to conduct "successful" investigative projects changed over two decades? Are journalists today more motivated by money? The findings indicate that the motivations for pursuing excellence are remarkably consistent. The most important motivator, both then and now, was "reformer in you satisfied." Two-thirds of the respondents chose this reward as the most important reward from conducting successful exposés. The second most important motivator, both then and now, was "increased freedom over time or assignments." Monetary rewards came in last for both studies. These findings suggest that investigative journalists receive most of their motivation internally (e.g., "reformer in you satisfied") as opposed to externally, (e.g., money or awards) and that these attitudes are very stable over time.

Examining Practices of Investigative Journalism

What are investigative journalists' experiences in the newsroom and how have they changed in the past five years? One surprising finding was that investigative journalists believed that they are actually spending *more time* on investigative reporting, as compared to five years ago. In fact, only 11.5% believed time spent on investigative projects had decreased significantly. Clearly, this finding is contrary to what one would expect, given the magnitude of budget cutbacks, buyouts and a shrinking newshole.

Watchdog reporters were about evenly split as to whether investigations taking longer than three months were more frequent today than five years ago. This was also a surprising finding, given the financial constrains many newsroom managers are now under.

In fact, reporters generally found their newsrooms to be very supportive of investigative work, in spite of industry woes. Many expressed a feeling of gratitude about this, acknowledging the turmoil of the industry. The interview data suggest that one reason reporters rate their own newsrooms as highly supportive is that the way they evaluate newsroom support is through the prism of the news industry and its difficulties. Thus, through this lens, their own newsrooms appear quite supportive.

High levels of newsroom support notwithstanding, which two resources did reporters cite as most important to produce excellence in their work? They chose "more staff" as the single most important resource, and "more time to complete projects" as the second. The resources "higher budget" and "higher salaries" came in a distant third and fourth in the ranking. These findings show that money is not the essential element in the pursuit of excellence, according to those who practice it. Ranking far higher was how management allocates its present resources, not necessarily adding more money. This finding should give hope to newsroom managers who increasingly are challenged with shrinking budgets.

Are there investigative techniques that most reporters would not use due to ethical concerns and does gender play a role? Investigative reporters are cautious about which techniques they use, with only 20% willing to using any technique (e.g., deception, going undercover, using hidden camera or hidden microphone). The most controversial technique was using deception to write the story, with two-thirds of participants unwilling to use this technique. Previous research (Opt & Delaney, 2000) found that women were less likely to approve the use of a hidden camera or microphone than men, but this study found that this gender difference did not apply to reporters. The one gender

difference found was that male reporters were more willing to use any investigative technique than female reporters.

Finally, in the practice of investigative journalism, reporters believed government was far more likely than business to be the target of an investigation, and many reporters were quite concerned with this imbalance. In the interviews, journalists offered both tactical and ideological reasons why government was the main target.

Summary of Themes Emerging from Interviews

By discerning themes and patterns in the interview responses, we can deepen our insight as to why participants responded as they did. Thus, for each topic, I discovered a dominant theme that emerged, which encapsulated how many of the participants responded. The following table summarizes the dominant themes found in the interviews:

TABLE 6

Dominant Themes in Interview Responses

Topic	Dominant Theme
State of Investigative Journalism	Huge storm rolling out over journalism, creating transition period.
Newsroom Support	In spite of industry woes, newspapers are still committed to watchdog journalism.
Future of Investigative Reporting	Investigative journalism sets newspapers apart from other media, and will always be central to the role of journalism in society.
Job Satisfaction	"It's what I live for…It's lodged in my identity and purpose."
Personal Motivations for Pursing Investigations	Wanting to get to the truth, to go where no one has gone before.
Attitudes Toward Internet and Impact	Still trying to figure it out.

on Investigative Reporting	
Role Nonprofits Will Play in Future of Investigative Journalism	Though well-intentioned, lack of distribution and funding issues limit the role of nonprofits.
Partnering with Nonprofits	In-depth knowledge of nonprofit and full access to everything are required for any partnership.
Influence of Work on Changing Policy	Investigative stories often have great impact on readers and policy, but impact can be defined in many ways.
Role of Public in Agenda-Building	It's the public that drives any change.
Government as Targets of Investigations	Most investigations target the government, and not nearly enough investigate corporations.

Theoretical Implications

Ownership Type and Newsroom Support

This study tested the theories of media critics, Robert McChesney (1999) and Ben Bagdikian (2004), concerning ownership and the news media. McChesney's theory is that media consolidation has created behemoths interested only in share price and profit, and not the democratic role in society that journalism and investigative reporting play. One implication to this theory is that public companies, which most typify the conglomerations to which McChesney referred, would provide less newsroom support for investigative journalism than private or family companies (which also may be public, but are somewhat shielded from the market by family members who own the majority of voting shares). We would also expect job satisfaction and commitment to field to be lower, greater organizational constraints imposed, and less satisfactory newsroom

experiences over the past five years from those working at publicly owned newspapers.

This study does not support McChesney's theory. It found that ownership type bears no relation to perceived newsroom support. Journalists working at public companies reported just as high levels of newsroom support than those in family or private companies. The results also show that reporters at public companies are equally satisfied and committed to the field as those working for private or family papers. Further, journalists' experiences in the newsroom, such as amount of time devoted to investigative reporting compared to five years ago, actually increased, while the number of projects taking longer than three months remained about the same. There was no indication in the data that this depended on type of ownership.

The same held true for organizational constraints. Relatively few investigative journalists in the survey and almost none of the reporters in the interviews believed that their own newsroom had applied pressure to drop or not pursue a story. The consensus was that this pressure did exist somewhat from outside the newsroom (advertisers, interest groups, sources, etc.) but considerably less so from inside. Those working at public companies did not report greater organizational constraints than their counterparts in private or family papers.

Yet, one theory of McChesney and Bagdikian does find some support. Their theory postulates that as the news media has become a more integral part of large corporations, the corporate sector has received considerably less scrutiny, and there has even been hostility toward investigative reporting itself. Bagdikian (2004) also argues that as the media has become part of large conglomerations, it has become sympathetic to profit maximization, by whatever method, among corporations. While reporters

dismissed the notion that there existed hostility in the newsroom against investigative reporting, there was a consensus among all the reporters interviewed that watchdog reporters target government far more than business, and this imbalance was causing a problem. Several reporters agreed with Bagdikian's argument that as the news media has increasingly become part of large conglomerations, there has been a greater tendency to overlook corporate wrongdoing.

Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) classic work *Mediating the Message* explores which factors influence media content. They propose a model of hierarchal concentric circles, with each influence enveloping the previous one. The authors emphasize the importance of ownership type on content:

> When a company is privately owned, the owners can operate the business as they see fit. But most large media firms are owned by stockholders. This form of ownership intensifies the purely economic objectives of the company. Managers of publicly traded companies can be replaced if they fail in their responsibility to the stockholders to maximize profit. The stock market cares little for public service if it means sacrificing profitability. (p. 145)

Yet, this study disputes their claim that ownership type affects support for public service. It suggests that if ownership has an impact on the newsroom, it is highly complex and cannot be oversimplified into such narrow categories.

Agenda-Building

Studies on agenda-building usually investigate which factors build the media's agenda or how the news media shapes policy agendas. However, this study tested a different aspect of agenda-building. It asked how well this theory predicts job satisfaction

and commitment to the field. Both the survey and interviews found that many reporters do believe their work often reforms the system. Belief in their capacity to build the policy agenda had some predictive power in job satisfaction, although it was not the most important factor. Three factors that better predicted satisfaction were perceived newsroom support; time journalists spent on investigative work, compared to five years ago; and how meaningful investigative journalists find their work.

This research project also discovered that journalists' belief in their agenda-building capacity did not affect their commitment to the field. Journalists are highly committed to the field with over 91% planning to conduct investigative projects in the next 10 years, a far greater percentage than other journalists, as documented by Weaver and colleagues (2007). Belief in agenda-building cannot explain investigative journalists' very strong commitment to the field, suggesting that they are very devoted to the *proces*s of investigative journalism, more than the outcome. This theoretical finding was surprising, for if journalists believe their work has little impact on reform, this would seem to sap them of their morale.

The study also investigated how agenda-building practices and conception of the public's role had changed over a 19 year period. Investigative journalists today are more likely to contact policymakers after a story was published than journalists two decades ago. The perceived role of the public, however, remained the same. Journalists today still believe that the public plays an active and even indispensable role in reforming policy, even though, according to scholars such as David Protess (1991), reform rarely happens this way. This theoretical finding shows how reporters continue to magnify the role of the public, in spite of evidence to the contrary, perhaps because this model upholds

journalists' notions about objectivity. Watchdog reporters walk a fine line between narrating a story of moral outrage while remaining disinterested and impartial. Elevating the role of the public helps achieve this balance.

Attitudes toward Internet

Open-ended survey responses and interviews reveal deep ambivalence and general disagreement among investigative journalists toward the Internet and its impact on their field. Some interviewed journalists were quite enthusiastic about the journalistic potential of online stories, while others worried that this new technology was harming journalistic practices by diverting time away from traditional, in-depth reporting. The one consensus to emerge was that the industry is in transition, desperately trying to "figure it out." More than any other factor, level of experience shapes journalists' perceptions of the Internet. Seasoned journalists tended to be more downbeat in their view. They were far more likely to point to traditional journalistic practices that were not as common due to the Internet. These findings suggest that highly experienced journalists have a greater tendency to perceive the Internet as a threat, perhaps because, unlike their younger colleagues, the new technology was *imposed* on them at some point in their career, rather than always being a part of their work lives.

Role of Nonprofits

In spite of a news industry that is contracting, watchdog reporters remained skeptical as to what role nonprofits would play in the future of investigative journalism. Reporters were most likely to cite lack of distribution power, ideological issues with funders, and lack of local focus as factors that would limit their role. Watchdog reporters were also about equally divided as to whether they would be willing to partner with

nonprofits, but interestingly, circulation size was not a factor. This implies that journalists tend to see these nonprofits not in practical terms (i.e., we have a small staff, we could use the help) but ideological ones that insist on knowing the potential partner thoroughly.

Understanding Job Satisfaction and Motivation

This study suggests that investigative journalists are very satisfied with their work because the four factors that best predict job satisfaction are largely met. The strongest predictor was perceived newsroom support; indeed, most journalists found their newsroom quite supportive. The second strongest predictor, "time journalists spent on investigative journalism compared to five years ago" was also met, against expectation. Journalists reported spending more time on watchdog reporting than before. The third factor, "how meaningful investigative journalists find their work," is met by journalists' passion to inspire needed reforms. The fourth factor, belief that their work reforms the system, was also addressed as most journalists believe their work does help achieve reforms in the system.

The findings also indicate that these journalists are highly motivated *internally*, with a strong desire to reform inequities in the system. All three explanations as to what best motivated them were internal in nature: meaning, effect, and standing in for others. What this finding implies is that investigative journalists are, to some extent, shielded from a struggling industry, for even if salaries and budgets are not to their liking, their motivation to pursue excellence is largely unaffected. Indeed, these internal motivations have not changed over two decades.

Practical Implications

This research project has several practical implications for the practice of journalism. First, newsroom managers should note that, in spite of industry woes, job satisfaction, commitment to the field, and perceived newsroom support remain quite high. Managers should not let troubles in the industry detract from this.

Newsroom managers should also take heart that investigative journalists, in pursuing successful exposés, most value the "reformer in them satisfied" and increased freedom over time or assignments. These priorities have not changed in 20 years, and suggest that even cash strapped newsrooms can still pursue excellence in watchdog reporting, without necessarily spending more money. Moreover, in the present study, as was the case 20 years ago, monetary rewards were ranked relatively low. This further confirms that newsroom managers could successfully motivate their reporters to pursue excellence, even if their budget is very tight.

This finding suggests that newsroom managers should reinforce the importance of investigative journalism in a newspaper's mission and consistently follow up for what reforms might result from the story. Even in newsrooms facing budget cuts, managers should strive to allow reporters more autonomy and time for assignments, as this is also an important motivator in pursuing excellence.

Those who manage newsrooms might also learn from this study that, when asked to rank the two most important resources a newsroom could offer to help with investigative reporting, money was not a major factor. In fact, the lowest percentage of reporters (5.7%) chose "higher salaries" as one of the most important resources. Rather, journalists believed that more staff and more time to complete projects were paramount.

Over 72% of investigative journalists chose one of these as the most important resource a newsroom could offer. This is an important finding because it further lends support that even in difficult economic times, newsrooms still have the capacity to improve investigative journalism by reallocating existing resources, such as additional staff when needed or more time to complete complex projects.

Another practical implication is that newsrooms wishing to partner with nonprofits to conduct and publish investigations, have considerable skepticism to overcome from their own staff. The consensus from the survey and interviews is that these partnerships should only be considered if a number of stringent conditions are met, such as transparency, full access, and an in-depth knowledge of the nonprofit. Therefore, newsrooms may wish to consider articulating guidelines which must be met before partnerships are formed. To allay journalists' reservations, newsroom managers might first listen carefully to the concerns of their staff, before making their recommendations. Some newsrooms today have standards and practices that prescribe various journalistic practices. These guidelines can be an important addition to that. Newsroom managers should also be aware that, according to this study, reporters from larger papers are not more resistant to such partnerships than reporters at smaller papers.

This research project also found that older journalists are more mistrustful of the Internet than their younger counterparts. As this belief can sap morale, newsroom managers may wish to consider educating older journalists as to the benefits of the Internet, perhaps through workshops or seminars, and should not assume these as a given.

Finally, to uphold high levels of job satisfaction, or to increase it, newsroom managers should consider the factors that best predict job satisfaction. Four factors that

strongly predicted satisfaction were perceived newsroom support; time journalists spent on investigative work; how meaningful investigative journalists find their work; and perceived impact of work on reforming system. Again, none of these factors are financial therefore, managers in most newsrooms should be in a position to maximize them.

Limitations of Study

The present study had a number of limitations, one of which was the sample used for the survey. In order to be fully generalizable to the population, any sample must be randomly chosen. However, this study, like many academic projects, relied on a convenience sample for its data. Although attempts were made to gauge a high number of participants and for the sample to reflect the population, this study might approach generalizability but certainly does not achieve it. For the depth interviews, interviewing ten participants, from both large and small papers and from public and private/family papers, was enough to achieve theoretical saturation. In interviewing these journalists, it gradually became apparent that the same ideas and views began to repeat themselves. Nevertheless, a larger interview pool might have further expanded the findings.

This examination of investigative journalism focused on newsroom support, job satisfaction, and commitment to field, and how these may have been influenced by type of ownership. However, the study lacks a content analysis, which could investigate if private or family owned papers engaged in more frequent and robust investigative journalism than publicly owned newspapers. Although ownership type did not seem to affect newsroom support and job satisfaction, differences may emerge through analyzing content.

Finally, this research project did not consider readers' views of investigative journalism and how much value they place in it. Examining readers' attitudes toward watchdog reporting is important because the future of this kind of reporting rests in their hands, as they ultimately sustain the news operations.

Areas of Further Research

One area of further research is examining the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of investigative broadcast journalists and online journalists, as the present study focused only on print reporters. A three way comparison would be highly beneficial, to better understand how investigative journalists in each medium are faring in the Internet age. It would be interesting to explore if the medium (print, broadcast, or online) matters in terms of journalistic attitudes and experiences.

A second area of further research might be a comparative content analysis that examines the content from publicly held newspapers as well as privately and family owned. The present study found ownership type had no impact on newsroom support or job satisfaction, but would the same be true of the content itself? Such an area of study would allow broader conclusions to be drawn.

A third area of research might focus on how audiences evaluate investigative journalism. Such research might involve focus groups, which can help discern patterns in how audiences make meaning. The focus groups might also consider if trust in media is an important factor in how audiences evaluate watchdog reporting.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine how ownership type affects newsroom conditions, job satisfaction, and commitment to field. At the same time, it explored the

theory of agenda-building, asking if belief in one's work to reform the system was a major predictor of job satisfaction and what changes might have occurred over 20 years in journalists' conception of the role the public plays in policy building. It also more broadly examined the state of investigative journalism today by probing the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of investigative journalists working for newspapers and how this has changed over time.

Although this research project is exploratory in nature, several general conclusions can be drawn. First, type of ownership does not seem to affect newsroom support, job satisfaction, or commitment to field. Whether at public, private, or family newspapers, journalists across the board expressed great job satisfaction, fierce devotion to the field, and high levels of support in their own newsrooms, irrespective of ownership type. This study then contradicts the theories of media scholars Robert McChesney (1999), Ben Bagdikian (2004), and others, who place a high premium on ownership and its effect on the newsroom.

In terms of agenda-building, the majority of watchdog reporters believe their work has substantial influence in reforming policy. Belief that one's work can produce reforms, has some predictive value in job satisfaction, but not in commitment to field. Investigative journalists' commitment to field is extraordinarily high, and not dependent on perceived outcome of stories.

Investigative journalists today are more likely to contact policymakers to follow-up the impact of their stories than journalists were two decades ago. By the same token, journalists today are more upbeat in how they perceive the public thinks of them. Journalists from before were more likely to believe the public was antagonistic toward

them. Yet, what has remained the same, is journalists' strong conviction that the public plays a crucial role in changing policy, what David Protess and colleagues (1991) termed the Mobilization Model, despite most empirical studies casting strong doubts on such an active role.

This research project found deep ambivalence about the Internet and its impact on the field. While nearly everyone agreed the Internet has made accessing documents and conducting searches far easier than before, many journalists were uneasy that time spent on creating multimedia elements or filing constant updates was diverting resources away from traditional, in-depth reporting. Some journalists bemoaned the financial difficulties this new medium has imposed on the news industry. Yet, there did seem to be a pattern in the data. More experienced journalists were more apprehensive about the Internet and its effect on the journalistic process, whereas less experienced journalists seemed more at ease with its technological gifts.

The study also found considerable skepticism among reporters concerning the role nonprofits would play in the future of investigative journalism. Almost no one believed these nonprofits would one day carry the lionshare of investigations, because they were inherently held back by a lack of distribution and potential ideological issues with their funders. Reporters seemed split on the idea of partnering with nonprofits. Whereas some thought this was inappropriate, others were open to the possibility but insisted on stringent conditions being met.

Surprising Findings

The study had several surprising findings. The first was a very strong dichotomy between journalists' view of their own newsroom and of the industry at large. Most

journalists reported that their own newsroom provided solid support, but believed the industry was creating a highly challenging environment for investigative journalism. A second surprising finding was that watchdog reporters today report spending more time on investigative journalism than five years ago. Further, they report not spending any less time today on projects taking three months than five years ago. Both results are unexpected, given the current industry turmoil and subsequent diminishing staff and newshole.

Another surprising finding was that the very same factors that motivated journalists 20 years ago to do excellent work are the exact same factors cited by today's journalists. In both cases, "reformer in you satisfied" and "more time or autonomy to complete projects" were the most widely chosen, with increased salary ranked lowest for both groups.

One final surprising finding were the two resources investigative journalists chose as best able to equip them to pursue excellence in their investigations. The two resources overwhelmingly chosen were "more staff" and "more time to complete projects." On the opposite end, the fewest candidates chose "higher salaries" and "greater recognition." This finding suggests that money is *not* the essential element in producing excellence in investigative journalism, according to those who practice it. Thus, even financially struggling newspapers can be in a position to pursue excellence.

Overall, these findings suggest that the state of investigative journalism in the Internet age is in reasonably good health, with highly motivated and committed journalists who believe in the power of their work. Yet, there also exists a feeling of

apprehension as the larger news industry struggles to ride out the storm caused by the Internet, with all its benefits and pitfalls.

Appendix A:
Consent Form for Interviews

Project Title: The State of Investigative Journalism in a Digital Age

Why is this research being done? This is a research project being conducted by Andrew Kaplan at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you have participated in an investigative project within the past two years. The purpose of this research project is to understand how journalists view investigative journalism and its state in the digital age. We hope this information will serve both the profession and the academy in adding new knowledge.

What will I be asked to do? The procedure involves participating in the interview which should last between 60 and 90 minutes. The questions will ask you about your views of investigative journalism and its place in today's newsroom.

What about confidentiality? We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential.

This research project involves making audiotapes of you. The tapes are being made because what is said will be transcribed and then analyzed. However, only the researcher will have access to them. The tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet and they will be destroyed one year after completing the dissertation. Other than the researcher, only a professional transcriber, who lives out of state and has no connection to the University, will hear the tape one time in order to make the transcript. She will send back the tape to the researcher and will not keep a copy for herself.

---- I agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

----I do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Should you choose to remain anonymous (by checking below), your name will never be used.

___ I do not want my name to be included in any write-up of the interview.

Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

What are the risks of this research? There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.

What are the benefits of this research? This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about investigative journalism. We hope that, in the future, other people and the news industry might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how investigative journalism is most likely to flourish in the digital age.

Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time? Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions? This research is being conducted by Andrew Kaplan at the College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Andrew Kaplan at: akaplan@jmail.umd.edu or 240-838-9498 or 1117 Journalism Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Or you may contact my advisor Professor Don Heider: dheider@jmail.umd.edu or 301-405-2432.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742; (email) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678. This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Statement of Age of Subject and Consent: Your signature indicates that:
You are at least 18 years of age; the research has been explained to you; your questions have been fully answered; and you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Signature and Date:

Name of Subject: _____

Signature of Subject: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B:
Depth Interview Questions

Introduction/Biographical

1. What prompted you to consider journalism as a career and when?

2. What got you interested in investigative journalism?

3. What would you regard as your key career accomplishments in investigative journalism?

State of Investigative Reporting:

4 Compared to 10 years ago, do you think investigative reporting is better off or worse off?

Prompt: Why?
Prompt: Do any examples come to mind?

5. How optimistic are you about the future of investigative reporting?

Prompt: What do you see as its future?
Prompt: Is there reason to be (the opposite) pessimistic or optimistic?

6. To what extent do you think nonprofits -- such as Center for Public Integrity or Pro Publica -- might someday carry the lion's share of investigative journalism?

Prompt: How comfortable are you in partnering with nonprofits?
Prompt: Have you done so? Please elaborate.

Media Ownership and Content:

7. In general, how supportive would you say newsrooms are to investigative reporting today?

Prompt: How supportive in terms of staff, budget, commitment, freedom?

8. How supportive is *your newsroom* to investigative reporting?

Prompt: How has this changed over time?

9. Have you ever felt pressure – subtle or otherwise-- to avoid or drop a story so as not to antagonize an advertiser, government agency, or other powerbroker?

Prompt: Can you tell me about such an incident?

10. In general, how satisfied are you in doing this kind of reporting?

Prompt: What could make you more satisfied?

Internet and Investigative Journalism:

11. In what ways do you think the Internet has helped or hurt investigative journalism?
Prompt: Has the Internet, with its need for videos, blogs, and constant updates, curtailed your time available for investigative reporting?
Prompt: Has the Internet made investigative reporting a more feasible and doable enterprise?
Prompt: How has the Internet affected money available for investigative projects? e.g., classified advertising or slowdown of print ads)

Agenda-Building:

12. Thinking back on your investigative pieces from recent years, how influential were they in changing policy?
Prompt: Can you recall a few specific stories that achieved substantial impact?

13. When your investigative stories do change policies, how does that change usually occur? What's the most likely scenario?
Prompt: How would you describe the process?
Prompt: Do you think many investigative stories successfully mobilize the public into action, such as demanding change or accountability?
Prompt: How important are your contacts with policymakers in producing change?

14. Do you think your investigative pieces prompt policymakers to give higher priority to many issues than otherwise would be the case?
Prompt: Can you cite some examples?

15. How do you see your relationship with government? Adversarial? Symbiotic? Both?

Personal Motiviation:

16. What motivates you to do this kind of reporting?

The Investigative Process:

17. Do you investigate government or business more in your pieces? Why so?

18. How do you decide which stories to pursue? What's the process?
Prompt: Do editors suggest stories? Do you generate them on your beat? From tips? From colleagues? From competition?

19. What added resources can a newsroom offer to help investigative journalists do their best work?

Demographics:

20. How long have you been an investigative journalist? What is your age?

21. Is your news organization privately, publicly or family owned? What is the Sunday circulation of your paper?

22. Do you have any final comments to add, or would you like to expand on any subject we've discussed?

Appendix C:
Consent Form for Survey

Project Title: The State of Investigative Journalism in a Digital Age

Why is this research being done? This is a research project being conducted by Andrew Kaplan at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you have been involved in an investigative project within the past two years. The purpose of this research project is to understand how investigative journalists view their field, in light of changing times, how influential they view their work, and what they see as its future. We hope this information will serve both the profession and the academy in adding new knowledge.

What will I be asked to do? The procedure involves taking the online survey which should last about 20 minutes. The questions will ask you about your views of investigative journalism, basic information about your news organization, and basic demographic information.

What about confidentiality? We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, you will not be asked to include your name on the survey. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. No individual names will ever be used and all results will be analyzed in the aggregate. Please complete the survey at a private location and after completing the survey, you should close the browser to help maintain confidentiality. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

What are the risks of this research? There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.

What are the benefits of this research? This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about investigative journalism. We hope that, in the future, other people and the news industry might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how investigative journalism is most likely to flourish in the digital age.

Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time? Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions? This research is being conducted by Andrew Kaplan at the College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Andrew Kaplan at: akaplan@jmail.umd.edu or 240-838-9498 or 1117 Journalism Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. . Or you may contact my advisor Professor Don Heider: dheider@jmail.umd.edu or 301-405-2432.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742; (email) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678. This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Statement of Age of Subject and Consent [Please note: Parental consent always needed for minors.] Your signature indicates that:
You are at least 18 years of age; the research has been explained to you; your questions have been fully answered; and you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Signature and Date:

Name of Subject: _____

Signature of Subject: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D:
Survey Questions[3]

1. Have you worked on an investigative reporting project for a newspaper in the past two years either as a reporter, editor, project supervisor or some other capacity?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. What is your position in conducting investigative reports?

- ☐ Investigative reporter
- ☐ Investigative editor
- ☐ Project manager
- ☐ Management
- ☐ Other

Other (please specify)

3. How long have you worked as an investigative reporter or editor (either full-time or occasionally)?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-4 years
- ☐ 5-9 years
- ☐ 10-19 years
- ☐ 20 years or more

4. Are you full-time, part-time, or freelance?

- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Freelance

[3] For purposes of historical comparison, some questions were adopted from the survey conducted by David Protess and colleagues (1991) at Northwestern University, published in *The Journalism of Outrage* (New York: Guilford Press).

5. Is the news company you work for publicly or privately owned?

- ☐ Publicly owned
- ☐ Privately owned
- ☐ Family owned (even if company trades publicly, family owns majority of voting shares)
- ☐ Not Sure
- ☐ Other

Other (please specify)

6. What is the approximate Sunday circulation of your paper?

- ☐ More than 1 million
- ☐ 500,000 - 1 million
- ☐ 250,000 - 500,000
- ☐ 100,000 - 250,000
- ☐ 50,000 to 100,000
- ☐ Less than 50,000
- ☐ Not sure

7. (Optional) What is the name of your news organization?

8. Thinking about your work in the past year, compared to about 5 years ago, tell us whether each of the following has increased significantly, increased somewhat, decreased somewhat, decreased significantly, or remained the same.

	Increased significantly	Increased somewhat	Decreased somewhat	Decreased significantly	Remained the same
a.Time you spent on investigative projects compared to other forms of journalism.	☐ Increased significantly	☐ Increased somewhat	☐ Decreased somewhat	☐ Decreased significantly	☐ Remained the same
b. Number of reporters and editors assigned to work on investigative projects at your	☐ Increased significantly	☐ Increased somewhat	☐ Decreased somewhat	☐ Decreased significantly	☐ Remained the same

	Increased significantly	Increased somewhat	Decreased somewhat	Decreased significantly	Remained the same
news organization.					
c. Number of investigative projects you worked on that took longer than 3 months to prepare.	☐ Increased significantly	☐ Increased somewhat	☐ Decreased somewhat	☐ Decreased significantly	☐ Remained the same
d. Number of investigative projects you worked on that focused primarily on government wrongdoing.	☐ Increased significantly	☐ Increased somewhat	☐ Decreased somewhat	☐ Decreased significantly	☐ Remained the same
e. Number of investigative stories you worked on that focused primarily on wrongdoing in the private sector.	☐ Increased significantly	☐ Increased somewhat	☐ Decreased somewhat	☐ Decreased significantly	☐ Remained the same

9. Thinking back over the investigative stories you worked on during the past 5 years or so, how often did you contact policymakers to discuss policy reforms that might result from your story?

☐ Very frequently

☐ Somewhat frequently

☐ Somewhat infrequently

☐ Very infrequently

10. In general, how much impact have your investigative pieces had toward achieving reforms?

☐ Great impact

- ☐ Some impact
- ☐ A little impact
- ☐ No impact

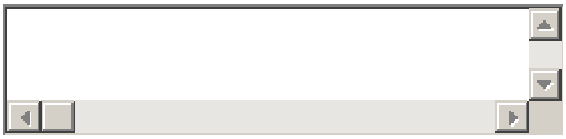
11. Do you think, as a result of your investigative pieces, some issues were given higher priority by policymakers than they otherwise would be given?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Definitely disagree

12. How often do you follow up on the impact of your story to see if it produced change in the system?

- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely

13. Thinking back on your investigative stories that prompted reforms, please describe the process of how those reforms came about (once the stories were published)?



14. Please rank, from most important to least important to you, these five rewards that may sometimes result from doing "successful" investigative pieces.

	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important
a. Monetary (bonus or salary increase)	☐ Most important	☐ Second most important	☐ Third most important	☐ Fourth most important	☐ Fifth most important
b. Journalism awards or prizes	☐ Most important	☐ Second most important	☐ Third most important	☐ Fourth most important	☐ Fifth most important
c. Reformer in you satisfied	☐ Most important	☐ Second most important	☐ Third most important	☐ Fourth most important	☐ Fifth most important

	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important
d. Increased freedom over time or assignments	☐ Most important	☐ Second most important	☐ Third most important	☐ Fourth most important	☐ Fifth most important
e. Personal recognition	☐ Most important	☐ Second most important	☐ Third most important	☐ Fourth most important	☐ Fifth most important

15. How do you respond to the following statements?

	Agree Strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly
The public is becoming increasingly antagonistic toward investigative reporting.	☐ Agree Strongly	☐ Agree somewhat	☐ Disagree somewhat	☐ Disagree strongly
The public is becoming increasingly indifferent toward investigative reporting.	☐ Agree Strongly	☐ Agree somewhat	☐ Disagree somewhat	☐ Disagree strongly
There is more investigative reporting being done today by television news than newspapers.	☐ Agree Strongly	☐ Agree somewhat	☐ Disagree somewhat	☐ Disagree strongly
The news media's commitment to investigative reporting is as strong today as it was 10 years ago.	☐ Agree Strongly	☐ Agree somewhat	☐ Disagree somewhat	☐ Disagree strongly

16. Considering the financial implications and informational aspects of the Internet, would you say the Internet, overall, has been beneficial or detrimental to investigative reporting?

- ☐ Very beneficial
- ☐ Somewhat beneficial
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat detrimental
- ☐ Very detrimental

17. Please tell us why you answered as you did. Is the Internet, overall, beneficial or detrimental to investigative reporting?

18. How supportive is your newsroom toward investigative journalism?

- ☐ Very supportive
- ☐ Somewhat supportive
- ☐ Neither supportive or unsupportive
- ☐ Somewhat unsupportive
- ☐ Very unsupportive

19. Have you ever felt pressure (spoken or unspoken) from OUTSIDE your newspaper to drop a story, so as not to potentially antagonize advertisers, officials, or powerful individuals/interests?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

20. Have you ever felt pressure (from either inside or outside your newspaper) to drop a story, so as not to potentially antagonize advertisers, officials, or powerful individuals/interests?

- ☉ From inside newspaper
- ☐ From outside newspaper
- ☐ Both
- ☐ Neither

☐ Not sure

21. Please indicate which techniques, if any, you would NOT use in pursuing a story, even if the technique might uncover an important element in the story?

☐ Hidden camera
☐ Hidden microphone
☐ Using deception to gain access
☐ Going undercover
☐ Other
☐ I would be willing to use any of these techniques

22. From a 1 (not at all appreciative) to 5 (very appreciative), please rank how appreciative you think the public is of investigative journalism?

☐ 1 (Not at all appreciative)
☐ 2 (Somewhat unappreciative)
☐ 3 (Neither appreciative nor unappreciative)
☐ 4 (Somewhat appreciative)
☐ 5 (Very appreciative)

23. What resources can a newsroom offer to best equip investigative journalists to do excellent work. Please rank top two:

	Most important	**Second most important**
Larger budgets for projects	☐ Most important	☐ Second most important
More staff	☐ Most important	☐ Second most important
Higher salaries	☐ Most important	☐ Second most important
More time to complete projects	☐ Most important	☐ Second most important
Greater recognition	☐ Most important	☐ Second most important

24. Nonprofit, grant-funded news operations (for example, ProPublica or the Center for Investigative Reporting) sometimes offer investigative stories free to news outlets, whose own staffs might help with newsgathering. How comfortable are you in joining such efforts?

☐ Very comfortable
☐ Somewhat comfortable

- ☐ Neither comfortable or uncomfortable
- ☐ Somewhat uncomfortable
- ☐ Very uncomfortable

25. Please tell us why you answered as you did.

26. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

27. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian American
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other

Other (please specify)

28. What is your age?

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 and older

29. Please select the highest level of education you have attained:

- ☐ High school (or less)
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree

☐ Doctoral degree

30. What professional work do you hope to be doing in 5 years from now?

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