

# An Exploratory Study of How Twitter Is Affecting Sports Journalism

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A theoretical perspective of technological determinism was used to assess what, if any, changes Twitter is causing in journalism news work. This change was assessed based on the responses of sports journalists around the country. Results indicated very little change in terms of the journalists' perceptions, but different groups were using the new technology differently. Younger and broadcast journalists were more likely to see Twitter as having stand-alone value and use it in forward-thinking ways. Older and print journalists were more likely to use Twitter for traditional purposes such as promoting printed work on other platforms.

**Keywords:** new technology, adoption, news work

On the weekend of June 16–17, 2009, a unique conference took place in New York City. The 140 Character Conference hosted 69 sessions and panels over 2 days, with attendees from places like Australia and Qatar (Pulver, 2009). The conference had dozens of different topics, but one main theme: to better understand how Twitter is changing the way people live and communicate.

Created by Evan Williams and Jack Dorsey, Twitter is a form of digital communication that limits messages to 140 characters or less. (However, if the message goes beyond 140 characters the service will link the rest of the message to an Internet site.) Users publish these "tweets" from a computer or mobile device that circulates them to anyone interested in following the communication. Through the Twitter Web site, users can follow the message stream of any number of fellow tweeters, in addition to posting messages themselves (Johnson, 2009). In just a short time, Twitter has become extremely popular. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, it had 32 million users in June 2009, an increase of about 2 million from the previous year, with predictions that the service could have 50 million users by the year 2010 (as cited in McIntyre, 2009).

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The primary use of Twitter has been as a social-networking tool that allows users to post messages to friends, relatives, and any other interested parties (Johnson, 2009). The typical user has a dozen or fewer followers, but celebrities often have millions, such as movie star and producer Ashton Kutcher, who had 2.8 million people following his tweets as of July 2009 (Johnson, 2009). Athletes and sports stars have also attracted devoted followings on Twitter. Also in the summer of 2009, NBA star Shaquille O'Neal had more than a million connections. According to O'Neal, "It's a fun thing. It's a way for fans to connect" (Beck, 2008, ¶9).

However, others have discovered uses for the service beyond social networking. For example, hedge-fund managers and stock traders have started using the service to more quickly access price-sensitive information (Tyler, 2009). College sports coaches now use Twitter to help recruit high school athletes (Gregory, 2009). Another area where Twitter has had an obvious impact is media, particularly journalism. One of the sessions at the 140 Characters Conference in New York focused on how Twitter is changing news gathering and sourcing. The general consensus was that Twitter has an important news value in an era when the news media are having trouble keeping pace with the speed of media consumption and the increasing demand for information services. *NBC News* anchor Ann Curry noted, "We have to look at whether or not mainstream media is [sic] covering the world fast enough and the answer is no. Should we be? Yes. But, right now, we can't keep pace" (Solis, 2009, ¶8).

There is a suggestion that more media outlets are incorporating Twitter as part of their news gathering and production. "I thought the social networking sites were strictly a phenomenon of teenagers and young kids," says Bob Jordan, news director at WFTV in Orlando, FL, "[but] it's now the primary way a lot of people communicate, share, and obtain information. Not to be in that space would be just the dumbest thing anyone could do, if you're in the communications business" (Petner, 2009, ¶15, 6). According to Scott Adkins, a reporter and television news anchor at WEHT in Evansville, IN, "Twitter gives you an opportunity to engage the audience on a more frequent basis. I know it's not a fad, because people wouldn't be sending me story ideas" (Petner, 2009, ¶15).

Thus, the purpose of this study was to take one of the first looks at how Twitter is being used by journalists and assess what impact, if any, it is having.

## Literature Review

### Theoretical Perspectives

According to McLuhan's (1964) technological determinism, Twitter could have a large impact in terms of social and cultural change. In essence, McLuhan argued,

Any new structure for codifying experience and moving information, be it alphabet or photography, has the power of imposing its structural character and assumptions upon all levels of our private and social lives—even without benefits of concepts or conscious acceptance . . . that is what I've always meant by "the medium is the message" (McDonnell, 1966, p. 23).

McLuhan saw a culture in which new technology would create a fusion of existing media into a different media hybrid: "The meeting of two media is a moment of truth and revelation from which new form is born" (1964, p. 55). The

birth of this new form could have a corresponding effect on media practice and performance, including the area of news work, or how journalists go about finding and presenting the news to audiences.

Recent shifts in economics and technology seem to be creating some changes in long-established news work routines. The economic downturn of 2008–2009 was a disaster for media companies such as *The New York Times*, which fell \$1 billion in debt, and the Tribune Company, which filed for bankruptcy. Several other newspaper groups faced shutdown and liquidation, and those that survive may do so only through massive layoffs (Hirschorn, 2009). The problems can be traced in part to younger audiences who are increasingly turning away from traditional media outlets such as newspaper and television and moving toward new online offerings. Regardless of age, news consumers are also showing more interest in creating their own news and interacting with media outlets (Papper, 2006). Increasingly, citizen journalists have taken an active role in using these technologies to bypass the mainstream media and disseminate their own content to the public (Lemann, 2006). Some researchers (Edmonds, 2005; Park, 2004; Reynolds, 2003) suggest that their efforts now rival the traditional news media.

Pavlik and McIntosh (2004) argue that because of these factors communications professionals will change the way they do their jobs. Bardoel and Deuze (2001) suggest that future journalists will “serve as a node in a complex environment between technology and society, between news and analysis, between annotation and selection, between orientation and investigation” (p. 100). Faced with both economic and competitive challenges, the mainstream media have begun incorporating new media technologies like blogging, podcasting, and now Twitter (Chan-Olmsted, 2004; Schultz & Sheffer, 2007; “The State of the News Media,” 2008; Teeling, 2006). For example, Lowrey and Mackay (2006) looked at blogging on the macro level and found that awareness of blogs has affected the way journalists practice their profession, including reporting, using blogs as news sources, and making decisions about the newsworthiness of daily events.

However, long-held resistance to change in the media industry makes it difficult to unconditionally accept technological determinism. One of the earliest studies on work roles noted that most journalists performed a combination of a neutral role, with an emphasis on objectivity and verifiable information, and an investigative role, with an emphasis on questioning government and official sources (Johnstone, Slawski, & Bowman, 1976). Over the next 20 years a series of follow-up studies (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986, 1996) found only slight modifications to these categories. In 2006, journalists still placed a high value on the investigative and interpretive role, and most journalists still felt it extremely important to avoid reporting stories with unverified facts (Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2006).

Breed (1955) found that news organizations do not specifically outline policies to journalists. Instead habits are learned indirectly from established group behavior and passed on to succeeding generations. More recent studies (Daniels & Hollifield, 2002; Giles, 1995; Singer, 2004) confirm that reporters are reluctant to change ingrained work habits that they have learned over time and that in news work continuity dominates over change (Reich, 2005). This has been apparent in the recent use of blogging among the mainstream media. Research (Schultz & Sheffer, 2007; Sheffer & Schultz, 2009) has found that despite the growth of blogging at

newspapers, the journalists involved had negative perceptions about blogging and its value and in some cases rebelled against its implementation.

The tensions between change and inertia have created three groups of theorists related to technological determinism. Reich (2005) identified them as the reformers, who think new technologies create a "significant shift" (p. 566) in the work of reporters; the traditionalists, who say changes are moderate and limited by long-range trends; and the selectivists, who believe the changes that are taking place are more pronounced for certain types of media.

## News Work Change

If Twitter does indeed change news work routines, what kind of changes might take place? A tool limited to 140 characters might not seem to have many applications, but several possibilities have emerged, including using Twitter for breaking news. The speed of Twitter makes it ideal as a headline service, and it can also cover stories that the mainstream media often ignore. "We brand ourselves the breaking news station, so if we have breaking news or a difficult weather situation, we use Twitter to push page views," says news director Peggy Phillip of KSHB television in Kansas City (Petner, 2009, ¶11). Solis (2009) writes that coverage of the 2009 protests in Iran was driven by a need for real-time information, information that was "unfolding live through citizen journalism. The world was watching . . . and it did so on Twitter, not CNN or any other news network" (¶1).

Another possible use for Twitter would be to promote journalists' work on other media platforms. It is impossible to write a developed story in 140 characters, but those characters can be used to direct users to longer stories and images in a newspaper or on a television station or Web site. "Twitter is based on personal brands—something that many television journalists do a good job of representing," says Ellyn Angelotti, interactivity editor at the Poynter Institute. "When a station can tap into the individual brands within the organization, it can strengthen the collective organization's brand" (Petner, 2009, ¶22).

Not only can journalists brand their own work, but also Twitter users can then spread the word through the service. "The power of Twitter is when people start spreading your stories for you," said Jonathan Kealing, online editor of the Lawrence (KS) *Journal-World*. "We're catching on now that everyone on staff is a brand and we have to market that" (Ryan, 2009, ¶¶6, 8). After the University of Kansas won the NCAA national basketball championship in 2008, Kealing's staff put together a multimedia package that highlighted the win and recapped the season. The package got 50,000 plays, primarily because "we used Twitter to promote the hell out of [it]," said Kealing (Ryan, 2009, ¶16).

Much like blogging, Twitter offers a unique opportunity for real-time conversations. It could be used by journalists to directly connect and communicate with audiences on news topics and stories. Recently, ABC News's *Nightline* created a half-hour digital program (*Nightline*) via Twitter that provides a simultaneous forum between its anchors and viewers ("*Nightline* Develops Twitter Program," 2009). According to Johnson (2009), "We're actually having a genuine, public conversation with a group that extends far beyond our nuclear family and our next-door neighbors. . . . It [adds] a second layer of discussion and [brings] a wider audience into what would [be a] private exchange. And it [gives it] an afterlife on the Web" (¶¶10, 12).

Taking these possibilities into consideration, "Twitter and social media represent a new, powerful platform to broadcast news, crowd source leads and stories, and expand the media's role and earned relevance in the new age of media" (Solis, 2009, ¶36). However, there is a sense that these potential changes could be more pronounced for the print media. Television and radio have long used headline-type formats to promote and tease upcoming stories, which is what newspapers are now just beginning to do with Twitter. "Twitter is better for newspapers than it is for television or blogs," said Nick Denton, the founder of Gawker Media. "I think part of it is Twitter is kind of a broadcast model; it's asymmetric, which actually works quite well. If you're a newspaper person you're used to lecturing people, which is why newspaper journalists probably like it" ("Online Journalists," 2009).

## Sports

This study focused on the potential changes in the news work of sports journalists, which is an ideal group to study in regard to Twitter for several reasons. According to Nielsen Media (as cited in Gregory, 2009) the primary users of Twitter are 35–49 years old, which coincides with the demographics of heavy sports consumption (Gantz & Wenner, 1991; Perse, 1992). Even more important is the popularity of Twitter with athletes, fans, and the sports media, a popularity that has the potential to "change the athlete/fan interaction forever" (Gregory, 2009, ¶24). In the summer of 2009, a Twitter tracking site ([www.trackingtwitter.com](http://www.trackingtwitter.com)) revealed that Shaquille O'Neal had 1.75 million followers. Other sports stars included cyclist Lance Armstrong (1.54 million followers) and skateboarder Tony Hawk (1.2 million), and the NBA Twitter site boasted 600,000 followers. "We're hitting (Twitter) hard," said Chris Bosh of the NBA's Toronto Raptors. "You can put up what you're doing. Or if you have a question, you'd be surprised how much people know. You can be, like, 'I need directions to this spot.' People will tell you" (Feschuk, 2009, ¶6).

This interaction is strengthened by the sports media. Mediated sports play a large role in fan identification (Wann, 2006), and they allow fans to bask in the reflected glory (also known as BIRGing) of their favorite players and teams (Wann, 1993). This has an obvious connection to Twitter, which allows fans and athletes to communicate directly with one another. According to Gregory, "Twitter satisfies fans' thirst for a closer connection to big-time athletes," in part because it "peels back the curtain on an athlete's existence" (2009, ¶6). "It's not really personal, but it feels kind of personal," said Indiana psychology professor Edward Hirt. "I'm part of a posse" (Gregory, 2009, ¶8).

There is the same potential for sports journalists to connect with audiences. As just one example, in 2009 ESPN used Twitter to directly interact with fans during the course of the Big XII Conference baseball tournament. Scibetti (2009) noted, "With [more] alternate websites and social media outlets there are, companies need to be willing to go outside their own web-space and seek out their fans in other places" (¶4). In terms of how sports journalists are incorporating Twitter as part of their news work, a good recent example is Derrick Goold of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. In 2009, Goold was cited for his innovative use of Twitter as part of his beat covering the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team. Before one particular game, Goold tweeted that the team was watching a Major League

Baseball-related steroid video. According to Thornton (2009), "That's the kind of nugget that would never make it into a game story or even into a blog post. Goold also interacts with users via Twitter and has a Facebook page for himself and his blog" (¶4). Goold leads the discussion on his blog, yet lets the audience lead the discussion on Twitter and Facebook.

Such interaction can also be in the form of opinion and commentary, even when messages are limited to 140 characters. In July 2009, someone illegally videotaped ESPN broadcaster Erin Andrews undressing in her hotel room and put the images on the Internet. Regarding the incident, *USA Today* sportswriter Christine Brennan tweeted, "Women sports journalists need to be smart and not play to the frat house. There are tons of nuts out there. Erin Andrews incident is bad, but . . . there are 100s of women sports journalists who have never had this happen to them" (Cherner & Weir, 2009, ¶5, 6). Brennan's seemingly innocuous tweet ignited a firestorm of controversy, which filled the pages and airwaves of the sports media for the following 2 days and forced Brennan to try to explain her position.

There is recognition by both sports leagues and sports media that Twitter is a potentially powerful and revolutionary tool. According to the National Football League, 12 of the league's 32 teams have banned or limited media tweeting during open practices at team training camps, although there are no restrictions on fans tweeting at the same venue. Media members violating the policies risk jeopardizing access to players and coaches (Kravitz, 2009). In August 2009, ESPN created an in-house guide to tweeting as part of its "Guidelines for Social Networking." The policy suggests that ESPN employees not tweet what they would not say on air or write online. It also discourages discussing internal policies and disparaging colleagues or competitors (Hiestand, 2009).

## Research Questions and Methodology

Based on the literature and the theoretical perspectives, the following research questions were developed:

RQ1: To what degree is Twitter causing changes in the news work of sports journalists?

Technological determinism would suggest that change is taking place, but just how much might depend on journalist resistance.

RQ2: To the extent that changes are taking place, what types of changes are they? Just how are sports journalists using Twitter? Has a dominant use emerged, such as promotion for work on other platforms? Is Twitter more of a headline service or does it allow journalists to engage in more commentary and opinion like blogging?

RQ3: To the extent that changes are taking place, are they more pronounced for certain types of media than for others?

The literature suggested that the changes might be more pronounced for print journalists than for broadcast journalists.

These research questions were tested with a purposive survey of sports journalists from around the United States. Using industry and other Internet sources ("SHG Resources, 2009; "US Newspaper List," 2009; "Find a Radio Station," 2009), a list of all the local U.S. newspapers and television and radio stations was created. The sample was created based on media outlets that served a local audience and produced content for an Internet audience. Although this might have eliminated some outlets, we believed that those outlets would not have qualified for the purposes of the study. Twitter is an extension of online content, and it seemed counterintuitive that print-only outlets would engage in the practice.

The sports journalists at these media outlets were identified, and that list was cross-referenced to see which journalists had Twitter accounts (using Twitter.com). Only sports journalists who had an active Twitter account and were using it for professional media reasons were included in the survey sample. ("Professional media reasons" meaning the journalist was using the account in connection with his or her duties with the sports media). The same methods were used to create a sample of sports journalists from national media outlets, which included ESPN, *Sports Illustrated*, CBS, NBC, and Fox Sports (ABC was not considered as a separate entity because it is under the same ownership as ESPN). Based on size and audience reach, these outlets are considered the leading national sports content creators and distributors in the country. Combined with the list of local outlets, the total sample included 705 sports journalists, which included 372 in print (newspaper and magazine), 188 in television, and 145 in radio. However, it was difficult to assign the journalists to one specific medium because so many of them reported on multiple platforms. The questionnaire did ask them what they considered their primary media outlet, and that information was included in the results and used for data analysis.

In August 2009, these sports journalists were invited via e-mail and Internet feedback sites to take part in an online questionnaire related to the study. The research questions were directly addressed in such questions as "What are your primary reasons for using Twitter as part of your sports journalism duties?" "How much has using Twitter changed your sports journalism duties?" and "Which areas of your duties have changed the most?" In addition, demographic information on age, gender, media outlet, and other areas was collected.

Given the nature of the study, e-mail was considered the most appropriate form of contact. The first week of August was chosen because it is considered something of a slow time in sports journalism (football, basketball, hockey, and all levels of school sports, including high school and college, have not yet started), thus increasing the chance for response. Follow-ups were conducted 2 weeks after the initial invitation, and data collection was closed the first week of September 2009. Twenty-one invitations were returned as undeliverable, reducing the sample size to 684. Final response was 146, for a response rate of 21%.

We had obvious concerns about the response rate and sample size. Perhaps alternative delivery methods (i.e., phone or postal mail) might have improved the response rate. However, the demographics of the sample were very close to the demographics of the universe. (For example, 53% of the total number of people invited to take part in the study were newspaper reporters, which compared with 53% in the returned sample. Similarly, more than 90% all reporters contacted were male, which compared with 94% in the sample.) Thus, we believed that additional responses would not have necessarily improved validity.

## Results

Most of the respondents worked at newspapers (52%), were men (94%), were between the ages of 30 and 39 (34%), had 11–19 years of professional experience (30%), and indicated that they used other tools such as blogging (66%), text messaging (13%), podcasting (7%), or some combination of those (8%). In addition, 96% indicated that their media outlet hosted a Twitter site separate from the sites of individual journalists (Table 1).

**Table 1 Demographic Breakdown of Respondents (N = 146)**

Category	n	%
Age, years		
20–29	46	32
30–39	50	34
40–49	34	23
50–59	15	10
≥60	1	<1
Professional experience, years		
≤5	29	20
6–10	36	25
11–19	43	30
≥20	38	25
Gender		
male	136	94
female	9	6
Media outlet		
newspaper	76	52
television	38	26
radio	20	14
internet	9	6
magazine	3	2
Duty		
on air	53	37
writer	42	29
reporter	29	20
editor	15	10
commentator/opinion	6	4
Media tools used in addition to Twitter		
blog	90	66
text messaging	17	13
podcast	10	7
Facebook	8	5
some combination of above	11	8

*Note.* Not all categories had 146 responses.



How these journalists are using Twitter was measured using a 1–5 scale on which 1 represented *extremely unimportant reason for using* and 5 represented *extremely important reason for using*. Results indicated that most sports journalists were using Twitter for breaking news ( $M = 4.34, SD = .95$ ), promoting their other work at the outlet ( $M = 4.21, SD = 1.13$ ), and connecting to fans ( $M = 4.03, SD = .92$ ). Personal opinion ( $M = 2.75, SD = 1.35$ ) and following organizational directives ( $M = 2.53, SD = 1.41$ ) were less important motivations for use.

RQ1 asked to what degree Twitter was causing changes in sports journalism news work. Change was assessed on a scale of 1–5, with 1 representing *extreme lack of change* and 5 representing *extreme change*. The means and standard deviations for overall change ( $M = 2.26, SD = .95$ ), change in time devoted to job ( $M = 2.23, SD = 1.19$ ), and change in journalism practices such as reporting and writing ( $M = 2.01, SD = 1.06$ ) suggested that very little change was taking place in these areas. Change in reliance on technology was slightly higher ( $M = 3.06, SD = 1.28$ ) but not significantly above the neutral position using a one-sample *t* test,  $t(138) = .60, p = .55$ . There were no significant differences in perception of change based on age or type of media outlet.

The results of RQ1 would seem to render RQ2 somewhat moot, but differences were observed in terms of *how* certain subgroups are using Twitter (Table 2). Based on the same 1–5 scale with 1 representing *extremely unimportant reason for using* and 5 representing *extremely important reason for using*, older journalists (those 40 years and older) were more likely to use Twitter to promote other work at the media outlet,  $t(143) = 1.64, p < .05$ , whereas younger journalists (those 39 and younger) were more likely to use it for breaking news,  $t(143) = 2.27, p < .02$ , and to express their personal opinion,  $t(142) = 2.17, p < .02$ . Younger respondents were also significantly more inclined to think that using Twitter made them better sports journalists,  $t(143) = 2.82, p < .01$ .

**Table 2** How Journalists Are Using Twitter Based on Age and Media Outlet ( $N = 146$ )

Category	M		Mean difference
	Younger journalists (age $\leq 39$ years)	Older journalists (age $\geq 40$ years)	
Use for breaking news	4.47	4.10	0.37*
Use for personal opinion	2.93	2.42	0.51*
Use to promote media outlet	3.95	4.24	-0.29*
Makes me better journalist	2.94	2.28	0.66**
	Print outlets	Broadcast outlets	
Use for breaking news	4.47	4.16	0.31*
Use to promote other work	4.47	3.83	0.64***
Use to give personal opinion	2.58	2.97	-0.39*
Use to connect with sources	1.78	2.28	0.50**

Note. Responses based on a scale of 1–5 where 1 represented *extremely unimportant reason for using* and 5 represented *extremely important reason for using*.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

It may also seem somewhat self-evident, but there was a positive correlation between higher levels of Twitter use and more positive feelings about it. The journalists who more often used Twitter were more likely to use it for breaking news,  $r(141) = .34, p < .001$ ; more likely to use it to better connect to audiences,  $r(141) = .27, p < .001$ ; and more likely to believe that it made them a better sports journalist,  $r(141) = .36, p < .001$ . This group was also less likely to see problems associated with the use of Twitter and more likely to believe that it was changing their duties as sports journalists,  $r(139) = .30, p < .001$  (although, again, the perception of such change was relatively small).

Regarding RQ3, although there were no significant differences in perception of change based on media outlet or age (gender was not analyzed based on the relative lack of female response), again, there were significant differences in terms of how these groups were using Twitter (Table 2). Print journalists (those at newspapers and magazines) were more likely to use Twitter for breaking news,  $t(135) = 1.88, p < .05$ , and to promote the work they do on other platforms,  $t(135) = 3.36, p < .001$ . Broadcast journalists (those at television and radio stations) were more likely to use Twitter to give opinion,  $t(134) = 1.66, p < .05$ , and connect with sources,  $t(135) = 2.68, p < .01$ .

Qualitative data were also collected related to the research questions and supported the quantitative results. For example, for RQ2 a young newspaper reporter noted that Twitter made him a better sports journalist because "it, allows me to stay on top of rapidly rising trends in sports coverage." An older sports journalist was more interested in Twitter's ability to promote, specifically, it "allows me not only to link to stories other than my own, but also to read links that help generate ideas."

For RQ3 newspaper reporters indicated, "It's just another way to get information out there, and it gets that information to the people who don't read the newspaper" and "[Twitter gives us] branding of the breaking news as ours. It's the first stamp we can put on it." Broadcasters were more likely to say something like this television reporter: "I have been surprised how sources have sought me out on Twitter. They'd seen I was working on a story [on Twitter] and contacted me to contribute info. It's happened multiple times."

## Discussion

This study sought to assess the level of change in sports journalism as a result of the introduction of Twitter. Technological determinism (McLuhan, 1964) suggests that new media technologies such as Twitter could create changes in the culture that trigger a corresponding change in journalism practice. McLuhan argued that such changes would develop over time, depending on the adaptation rate for the new technology. Given that all the journalists in the study were using Twitter, and that 96% of their media outlets also had a Twitter site, adaptation would seem to be fairly high.

Thus, it is somewhat surprising that at first glance not much change has taken place and that sports journalists said that for the most part their daily news work routines remained the same. However, a closer look reveals some plausible explanations. In terms of age, younger journalists have different attitudes about Twitter and use it differently than older journalists. It may be that these younger journalists did not see much change related to Twitter because they have grown up professionally with many new technologies (blogging, podcasting, etc.) and may be more accustomed to

their implementation. That is, younger journalists may not perceive change because they are so used to the constantly evolving nature of modern journalism.

This is not necessarily the case for older journalists, many of whom view Twitter as yet another unwelcome adaptation. Diffusion (Rogers, 1995) would suggest that implementing new technologies like Twitter would be more difficult for older adapters, and this was somewhat evident in the qualitative data. One older newspaper respondent noted, "You're asking for a lot of definitive responses I don't have. I'm just experimenting with [Twitter]; trying to figure out if it can add value to what I do. [I'm] still not sure of the answer to that." Contrast that to the response of a young television sports journalist who said, "Use it or fall *way* [emphasis original] behind." This younger generation of sports journalists may in fact be McLuhan's evolved hybrid—so accustomed to and accepting of change that they scarcely notice it. They are not chained to traditional practices and thus view Twitter as just another tool to help them become better journalists.

The differences in uses between print and broadcast outlets reinforce a similar point. Print sports journalists do not see Twitter as having stand-alone value but view it rather as a promotional tool to point to their other work. It is true that print reporters use Twitter more for breaking news, which is not surprising given that the broadcast media already have a delivery platform for such news. But in other respects print-media journalists seem to be ignoring many of the obvious technological breakthroughs associated with Twitter (i.e., the ability to connect directly with sources) and instead are using it to point back to the journalism they grew up with—developed stories on the printed page based on traditional journalistic practices. Qualitative response from print journalists included, "At what point do we stop? Journalism is about facts, not quick hits and rumors" and "It's impossible to put stories in larger context."

Broadcast sports journalists were more likely to see the value of Twitter as a stand-alone tool and also seemed much more inclined to use it in newer ways. They valued the ability of Twitter to more closely connect to fans and make sports journalism more direct and interactive. "It's fun," said one television respondent, "and I think it connects well to sports fans, who are often young and like hip new things." Another television respondent observed, "It is definitely the way of the future and our news department has even been able to use it to send pictures of fires and accidents from the scene and have them air-ready just minutes later."

## Conclusions

The study findings suggest that perception of change is not as easily measurable as was believed. Instead of viewing media change as a one-time event (such as the introduction of a new technology like Twitter), it is perhaps more valuable to view it over a longer period of time. Change is certainly taking place, but seemingly more slowly and gradually than can be captured in a snapshot of one moment in time.

The larger implications of these findings relate not so much to journalists' perception of change but to the evolution of journalism itself. There does seem to be an emerging sports-journalism hybrid of which Twitter is a part—an instantaneous, interactive, intermedia conglomeration that seems to be continually redefining itself. Among other things, it is part traditional reporting, part blog, part Twitter, part Facebook, part YouTube, and part text messaging. Sports journalists seem to

be reacting to this hybrid in different ways. Although not necessarily critical or resistant to new technologies like Twitter, older journalists and those at print-media outlets seem more tied to the past. They prefer old-school journalism—report, write, and then repeat the next day. By contrast, it appears that younger sports journalists and those who work at broadcast outlets are more likely to accept and assimilate Twitter as part of the natural evolution of the profession.

These results may signal an important news work paradigm shift. Breed (1955) saw a newsroom in which older journalists handed down beliefs and practices to newer generations. Today, the older generation seems to have somewhat distanced itself and left the younger generation to figure out things on its own. Katz (1997) would suggest that the younger generation of journalists is perfectly capable of using new technologies such as Twitter to redefine journalism and communication, arguing that “no other social group is as poised to dominate culture and politics in the 21st century” (p. 186).

The emerging hybrid of journalism—whatever it may be—should be more conducive to broadcast journalists if for no other reason than it will certainly include the electronic elements (video, sound, etc.) with which they are so familiar. These elements are also well known to younger journalists who have been exposed to them in some form or fashion most of their lives. The reluctance of print journalists to embrace Twitter was in part a result of uncertainty over the new technology. However, some of it was also related to their perceived dislike of the emerging journalism hybrid and its consequences for “real” journalism. It is certainly proper to debate these consequences in terms of their effect on the sports journalism profession, but that was not the purpose of this study. Instead, the findings point to a need to more closely examine particular groups of sports journalists and their perceptions that new technologies are not only leading the profession in the wrong direction but also killing off traditional methods and models. “Am I contributing to my own [i.e., print media] demise?” asked one newspaper respondent. It is a fair question, the answer to which requires further investigation.

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