Addressing Deficits: How Crowdfunded Journalists Find Success

in a Restructuring Media Industry

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines crowdfunded journalists' beliefs about the most effective ways to appeal to potential financial supporters and successfully meet their funding goals. In the wake of continually worsening economic restructuring in the journalism industry and the disruption of journalism's perennial advertising-based business model (Anderson, Shirky, & Bell, 2014; Kaye & Quinn, 2010), crowdfunding has emerged over the last decade as a possible alternative business model (Hunter, 2016). The financial crisis has resulted in cutbacks in coverage and staff, and an erosion of journalism's societal role as the fourth estate (Gasher et al., 2016; McChesney & Pickard, 2011; Mensing, 2007; Picard, 2014; Public Policy Forum, 2017).

The existing literature on what motivates people to support crowdfunded journalism has looked at the question primarily from supporters' point of view (Aitamurto, 2011; Jian & Shin. 2015). However, there has been little research on what crowdfunded journalists themselves think are the best ways to motivate or appeal to potential financial supporters. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews (as per Castillo-Montoya, 2016 and Leech, 2002) with 10 Canadian journalists who have engaged in crowdfunding for new media outlets, this thesis examines key value propositions the journalists use to motivate their audiences, the general obstacles they face when convincing their audience to pay, as well as promotional techniques and other related practices that contribute to successfully reaching their funding goals. The interviews were analyzed thematically (as per Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012) using a constant comparative method and open coding to track emerging themes. The results show that respondents are crafting value propositions by alluding to deficits created by industry restructuring, and the negative impact this restructuring has on democratic society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The digital transformation of commercial publishing in the 1990s caused many structural changes in journalism's long-established advertising-based business model (Bollinger, 2010; Fuller, 2012; Jones, 2010; McChesney & Pickard, 2011). While the shift away from print and broadcast consumption to digital media has sparked many debates about how the *form* of journalistic work should change, a more urgent question seems to be how news companies will innovate new business models to rehabilitate their profitability, regain financial stability and assure continued life for journalism as an institution of civil society.

Innovations in media distribution and production technology over the last 30 years lowered the barrier of entry to starting a media outlet, slowly increasing competition in the marketplace and the amount of content being published (Anderson, Shirky, & Bell, 2014; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2012). There are also few geographic limitations on the audience online publishers can reach (Kaye & Quinn, 2010). Legacy news companies struggled to monetize their own content online as the explosion of media via the commercial World Wide Web was happening; online advertising rates were established at a fraction of print rates when the commercial web first took off and have not significantly increased in the last 20 years (Mensing 2007; Moses, 2014). Publishers currently struggle to compete with data-driven programmatic advertising that Google and Facebook can offer. These two companies now dominate the online advertising industry generally, taking in around 60 percent of all online advertising revenue (Mitchell, Holcomb, & Weisel, 2016).

There has been some experimentation with online subscriptions, metered paywalls, and other payment models. However, the public has come to expect online content to be free, and changing that mindset has proven difficult (Carvajal, García-Avilés, & González, 2012; Chyi, 2005, 2012; Graybeal & Hayes, 2011; Halpape, 2011; Hunter, 2015; Kaye & Quinn, 2010; Ladson & Lee, 2017; Picard, 2000). Only the largest and most well-known news brands, such as *The New York Times* have recently been successful in achieving financial sustainability through reader subscriptions (Scire, 2020a). The contemporary financial situation for even the largest "digital-native" news organizations also looks grim. Companies once considered to be among the few that had "figured out" how to make money is a digital news world through strategies such as native advertising, or video advertising, have been laying off employees in large numbers, with

Buzzfeed and Huffpost laying off 1,000 employees between the two companies in January 2019 (Helmore, 2019).

The economic instability brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has led to even more cutbacks, layoffs, and furloughing of staff. A survey by the Internet Advertising Bureau found that a large majority of online publishers in the U.S. say they have had advertising deals cancelled or paused since the beginning of the pandemic (IAB Proprietary Research, 2020). Buzzfeed announced pay cuts of between five and 10 percent for staff and between 14 and 15 percent for executives (Tani, 2020) and furloughed 68 staff members (Smith, 2020); they also cancelled their morning news show after its partner, Twitter, pulled funding (Scire, 2020b). Vice laid off 155 staff worldwide (Nover, 2020) and cut pay for remaining staff (Spangler, 2020). Vox media put 100 staff members on furlough for three months in April 2020 (Flynn, 2020). Condé Nast, publisher of magazines *Vogue*, *The New Yorker*, *Wired*, *GQ,* and *Vanity Fair*, as well as digital-only publications like *Ars Technica*, *Glamour* and *Pitchfork*, furloughed staff with plans to lay off hundreds (Barber, 2020). As of May 1st, 2020, 36,000 news media workers had been laid off, furloughed, or had their pay cut (Tracy, 2020).

In Canada, all shares in the *Toronto Star*'s publicly traded parent company Torstar Corp. were sold to a private venture capital firm for approximately 5 percent of what they were worth a decade ago (Deschamps, 2020). John Honderich, the chair of the board of Torstar, and former publisher of the paper from 1994 to 2004, cited COVID-19 as worsening existing economic woes at the paper and hastening the decision to sell (Honderich, 2020). Saltwire Network Inc, a newspaper chain of 27 newspapers in Atlantic Canada owned by the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, laid off 109 employees in June 2020 (Benjamin, 2020).

Prior to the current economic crisis, the journalism industry experienced a similar economic contraction, resulting in closures and layoffs, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis (Williams, 2017) .The situation has widely been described as a "crisis" (Aamidor, et al., 2013; Chyi et al., 2012; Kaye & Quinn, 2010; McChesney & Pickard, 2011; Mensing, 2007; Picard, 2014; Public Policy Forum, 2017). Although, others criticize use of the term crisis because it ascribes little accountability to those who managed the newspaper industry during this swift decline (Gasher et al., 2016).

However, at the intersection of media's digital transition, the collapsing advertising business model and rising audience-based revenue models, there is a small subset of journalists

using the internet and digital technology to create new revenue models for news that would have been difficult or impossible prior to the large-scale adoption of the internet as a communication system. The crowdfunding business model originated mainly as a way of raising funds for the R&D and production of new pieces of technology, and then became popular as a way of funding media projects such as movie productions and board games (Bennett et al., 2015); with this financial model "grassroots creative projects are funded through micro-payments by backers through websites such as Kickstarter or Indiegogo" (Bennett et al., 2015, p. 1).

This thesis is concerned with what Canadian journalists who practice crowdfunding think are the key factors involved in their success or failure, particularly when it comes to convincing their audience to become financial supporters. There is a small body of literature on factors influencing the success or failure of crowdfunding campaigns, mainly from a finance and entrepreneurial studies perspective (Agrawal, Catalini & Goldfarb, 2011; Agrawal, Catalini & Goldfarb 2014; Belleflamme, Lambert, & Schwienbacher, 2013a, 2013b; Burtch, Ghose, & Wattal, 2013; Colombo, Franzoni & Lamastra, 2013; Courtney, Dutta & Li, 2017; Davidson & Poor, 2016; Ellman & Hurkens, 2019; Gafni, Marom & Sade, 2017; Hornuf & Schwienbacher, 2017; Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2017; Kuppuswamy & Bayus 2018a, 2018b; Mollick, 2014; Zheng, Li, Wu, & Xu, 2014). Other research has looked at non-profit fundraising through social media networks as a form of crowdfunding (Andreoni & Petrie, 2004; Saxton & Wang, 2014). The scholarly work that looks specifically at crowdfunding for cultural or media-based productions is a small subset of this larger body and looks primarily at successful crowdfunding attempts as case studies (Bennett et al., 2014, 2015; Mollick & Nanda, 2016; Tosatto, Cox, & Nguyen, 2019; Ward & Ramachandran, 2010; Wodtke, 2015).

Crowdfunding in journalism began with campaigns to fund a single story or semi-regular beat reporting. There have been fewer attempts to crowdfund the ongoing operations budget for a media outlet, but it is becoming increasingly common (Aitamurto, 2015a, p. 190; Zaripova, 2017); examples include *Reporter*, a news website launched in Luxembourg (Ciobanu, 2017), *De Correspondent* news website in the Netherlands (Doctor, 2018), an online science magazine called *Matter* (Aitamurto, 2019), *RUBY* and *Femsplain*, two online magazines for women's issues (Hunter & Di Bartolomeo, 2019), and Tortoise Media in the United Kingdom (Bell, 2018;

Mayhew, 2019). All the participants in this study were crowdfunding to provide revenue for a new media outlet intended to be a sustainable and ongoing operation.

Single story crowdfunding campaigns are sometimes referred to as project funding because it supplies a discrete pool of money to complete a reporting project. In the limited examples of crowdfunding to launch a new media outlet intended to be an ongoing operation, journalists have done singular "project" type of crowdfunding campaigns which provide "seed" money to launch the media outlet; the long-term plan is use the seed money to build an audience of subscribers or recurring financial supporters who will provide ongoing funding after the seed money is used up (Aitamurto, 2019). Conversely, they can launch with a crowdfunding campaign that is asking people to sign up to be recurring monthly financial contributors from the beginning.

Of utmost importance to successful crowdfunding is an understanding of what motivates people to become financial supporters. Earlier research on crowdfunded journalism found altruism and community were two significant motivating factors; further, concern with a lack of local news coverage and desire to "fill the gap" of declining news coverage was a significant motivating factor (Aitamurto, 2011; Jian & Shin. 2015). Similarly, financial supporters of cultural crowdfunding projects can be motivated by a "belief that the project or product will simply not be completed in the absence of crowdfunding" (Gehring & Wittkower, 2015, p. 67).

Other research on general crowdfunding has shown the importance of the early support of an individual's immediate friends for the success of a crowdfunding campaign (Agrawal et al., 2011; Davidson & Poor, 2016; Horvát et al., 2015; Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2018a; Mollick, 2014; Zheng et al., 2014). Hunter and Di Bartolomeo (2019) have documented how crowdfunded feminist media often revolves around the idea of community creation and the desire to produce stories about women that are "either under-reported or missed entirely by mainstream media" (p. 274); values such as feminism often become motivating factors when financial supporters "want to express their values by participating in a cause... [and] share their values, as they share beliefs with their peers by sharing the news about their participation in a cause" (Aitamurto 2011, p. 443). Other scholars have also noted that "online participatory news sites usually are created as

alternative sources of information, providing news about themes missing from mainstream media or unusual viewpoints" (Träsel & Fontoura, 2015, p. 113).

This thesis investigates the degree to which journalists believe these kinds of motivating factors are useful for maximizing their crowdfunding success. Are journalists crafting their appeals based on bringing unreported stories to light, or addressing a lack of coverage by existing news media? Are they appealing based on social issues they believe there is a lack of coverage and existing demand for? Are there crowdfunding appeals that journalists think are important motivating factors for their audiences that are not present in the existing literature? Are journalists' crowdfunding appeals built around the content of the journalism stories themselves, or do they use other types of appeals, such as the "existential" ones mentioned above? That is to say, are they arguing for the value of their journalism specifically, or for the value of journalism broadly as a democratic institution, and the need to it because of this important role it plays in public life? Are they primarily thinking about building their audience as a consequence of successfully pitching their journalism stories or are there other ways they appeal to audiences, such as leveraging shared values and "affective economics" which "mobilizes a concept of emotional engagement between consumers and branded goods in order to position itself as beyond mere 'commodification'" (Hills, 2014, p. 185). To what degree do they use altruism in their appeals versus a more pragmatic, transactional logic?

While there is some scholarly work showing the thought process behind journalists' creation of tiered rewards to entice potential financial supporters (Hunter, 2016), there has not been any work that specifically asks journalists what they believe is the best way to appeal to potential supporters. Given this, the main research question of this thesis is: What do crowdfunded journalists think is the best way to appeal to their audience and financial contributors, and has their thinking on the matter been influenced by the success or failure of crowdfunding campaigns they have conducted? Secondary questions include: What do journalists think are the most important motivating factors for potential contributors when they begin crowdfunding? Do they craft their pitches based on "rational" or "emotional" appeals? To what extent did they rely on friends and family to create initial momentum in their crowdfunding campaigns? What role do community and altruism play with their audience support? How do they think these beliefs affected the level of success, or lack of success, the respondents experienced in crowdfunding their journalism work? It also asks what effect experiencing some

level of failure has on journalists trying to support a media outlet through crowdfunding. How do they respond when their crowdfunding campaigns do not reach their targets, or there is less interest in their outlet than they had expected? How do they adapt to go from low levels of success to higher levels of success?

I investigated these questions via in-depth semi-structured interviews with 10 journalists who have tried to fund the operation of a digital news outlet through crowdfunding with varying degrees of success. As David Silverman (2010, p. 118) argues, some research questions are better suited for a qualitative approach, particularly how and why questions. From a quantitative perspective, participants in this study have relatively small audiences and for this reason might be considered not worthy of study by some researchers. However, what is of interest here is the study of a new form of journalism practice, a new permutation of the journalist-audience relationship, a new form of revenue generation. Thus, the need for "how" and "why" focused questions; how are these journalists interacting with their audiences and why are they making the decisions they do about those interactions?

As is explored by Amend and Secko (2012), qualitative research was utilized in mass communication studies beginning in the late 1980s as a way to "explain how meaning and value are produced and maintained," but also as an alternative to the epistemological approach of positivism and empiricism (p. 242). Amend and Secko explore these ideas in the context of science and health journalism; for example, qualitative research can be used to understand "what counts as science and health journalism in the mind of practitioners... uncover the logic behind decisions by reporters and editors,...[and] document complex journalist-scientist relationships" (2012, p. 245). This thesis takes a similar approach and is interested in the journalist-audience relationship in crowdfunded journalism and who the audience is in the mind of crowdfunded journalists and the logic behind their decisions in appealing to their audience.

Respondents were recruited through an internet search for public facing websites related to crowdfunding journalism in Canada. For media outlets, the most prominent name on the masthead was found, while for others the most senior person in charge of crowdfunding was found. Outlets or individuals were contacted by email with an invitation to take part in the

research project. The gathered data was analyzed thematically using a constant comparative method (Butler-Kisber, 2019; Jensen, 2013).

The chapters contained in the thesis are as follows: Chapter 2 is a literature review that covers pertinent arguments and discussions around the fiscal crisis in journalism, crowdsourcing and crowdfunding. Chapter 3 covers the methodology used in this research; it provides an explanation of my approach to qualitative data collection and analysis, mitigating interpretive biases, and providing credible conclusions from the data. Chapter 4 covers the results of the data analysis, discussing the four themes found in the data: I) Value, II) Promotion, III) Audience, and IV) Crowdfunding practices. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results which summarizes the thematic connections in the data and what respondents said about crowdfunding and convincing their audience to become financial supporters, and draws conclusions about how these journalists see themselves within the context of a larger media ecosystem and the democratic and public value of their work, and arguing for a particular interpretation of the results which emphasizes value propositions largely structured by this context. The discussion argues that the respondents in this study are conscious of their positions within a restructuring news media industry. The value propositions they make to potential financial supporters during their crowdfunding campaigns address how the public have been negatively affected by the economic decline of the news media industry. They appeal to their audience by saying they will replace the deficits created by a lack of quality journalism and thereby rejuvenate journalism's role in civic affairs and public accountability.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

   This literature review begins by discussing the origins of the fiscal crisis in journalism, briefly covering some statistics to show the economic contraction taking place, with a specific look at the Canadian journalism industry. It then looks at crowdsourcing and its influence on journalism, followed by looking specifically at crowdfunding for journalism, which is conceptualized as a subset of crowdsourcing. The various ways in which crowdfunding has been used as a revenue source of news is covered, as well as studies that look the viability of crowdfunding as a revenue source in journalism. This explores the different permutations that crowdfunded journalism can take regarding, for example, contribution type (donation, reward, equity). Finally, this literature review will also address critical issues related to crowdfunded journalism, such as the tension it puts on traditional journalism ethical values, and the literature that exists that addresses motivations for financially contributing to crowdfunded journalism.

The Financial Crisis in Journalism

   The news industry is going through an economic and technical structural transformation (Aitamurto, 2011; Ananny & Crawford, 2014; Carvajal et al., 2012; Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 1; Picard, 2014, p. 507; Public Policy Forum, 2017). The digital networked society has created a situation in which "the era of dominant newspapers and influential network news divisions is rapidly giving way to one in which the gathering and distribution of news is more widely dispersed" (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 1). The internet and digital media have "changed the conditions of (public) communication by changing the material basis, roles and funding of journalism" (Loosen & Schmidt, 2012, p. 868). The internet has become a more popular platform for advertising than newspapers are, and the increasing popularity of consuming media on the internet and through digital means have put the financial well-being of the newspaper industry and television news in jeopardy (Chyi, Lewis & Zheng, 2012; Gasher et al, 2016; Kaye & Quinn, 2010; McChesney & Pickard, 2011; Siles & Boczkowski, 2012).

   Newspaper sales never fully covered the cost of producing a newspaper; production has always been subsidized to a high degree by advertising revenue (Kaye & Quinn, 2010, p. 19). During a crucial decade between 1996 and 2005, the newspaper industry did not invest in online revenue in a meaningful way (Aitamurto 2015, p. 189; Ladson & Lee, 2017; Kammer, Boeck, Hansen, & Hauschildt, 2015; Mensing, 2007). New forms of online advertising that bypass

traditional publishers have shut news companies out of a vast majority of online revenue, at a time when both advertising money and readership are moving fully online (Loosen & Schmidt, 2012). In 2019, just three tech companies – Amazon, Facebook, and Google – took about 67 percent of all online advertising revenue in the United States. In Canada, Google and Facebook take approximately 75 percent of online advertising revenue (Winseck, 2019).

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, corporate newspaper consolidation expanded rapidly, with a few key corporations buying many newspapers through debt financing. When the Great Recession hit in 2008, these debts became unmanageable (Aamidor et al., 2013, p. 3; Pickard, 2011, p. 75). The large-scale corporate consolidation within the news industry over the last 20 years left companies laden with debt that could only be financed if economic conditions remained consistent with earlier performance. Thus, newspapers were not well positioned to handle the downturn in advertising revenue that began in the early 2000s. In the American newspaper industries, these financial struggles have led to many bankruptcies, purchases, swaps, and mergers among the biggest corporate players (Robertson, 2017; Sorkin, 2008). Some argue that newspaper operations are still profitable but the companies that own them aren't because of the risky loans they must now manage under less than optimal financial conditions (Downie & Schudson, 2009; Edge, 2018).

Newspapers slowly embraced the World Wide Web as a distribution platform in the 1990s. After initial debates over whether to charge for access to news websites, a free-content-with-advertising model largely won out (Chyi, 2012; Mensing, 2007, p, 33). Other attempts to monetize online news have included personalized content such as keyword-based newsletters, specialized information related to business or sports, micropayment systems which charge small fees for access on a per-article basis (it was a popular idea in the mid-1990s and was revived in 2009 by a *Time* magazine cover story written by the then Editor-in-Chief, Walter Isaacson) (Graybeal & Hayes, 2011; Ladson & Lee, 2017), and "transactional" revenue, more widely known today as affiliate linking, an e-commerce based business model where publishers get a finder's fee for directing traffic to shopping websites (Mensing, 2007).

There are also tiered or "metered" strategies widely in use at the current moment, which allow a reader free access to a certain number of articles per month before a paywall is imposed (Chyi, 2012, p. 233). The use of paywalls has remained ineffective for most news media organizations (Aitamurto, 2015). Currently, most news websites rely on advertising to generate

revenue (Chyi, 2012). Graybeal & Hayes (2011) proposed a micropayment model that rewarded readers for sharing articles on their social media networks. Carvajal, García-Avilés, and González (2012) suggest a non-profit model may be an avenue to solving the news industry's financial woes.

The New York Times first tried to paywall some of their website in 2005; called TimesSelect, for a monthly subscription fee the Times gave online access to their columnists and the newspapers archives (Pérez-Peña, 2007). In the face of widespread dissemination of the columns for free on blogs, Times executives removed the paywall in 2007, saying that the greater reward would be found in offering the content for free, supported by advertising (Kaye & Quinn, 2010, p. 38). However, they re-established a metered paywall in 2011 which allows a certain number of articles for free per month before a user is locked out. Indeed, in the last few years the Times has had one of the most successful transitions to subscriber-based revenue of any North American newspaper (Scire, 2020b).

News consumers are used to paying a nominal fee for newspapers, rather than a price reflective of the overall cost of production, and, more to the point, consumers also expect that content on the internet, generally, won't require any payment at all (Kaye & Quinn, 2010; Pickard 2011). Chyi (2005) found that people were unwilling to pay for online news because it is mostly available for free. They also found that younger people are more willing to pay for news, contradicting assertions made elsewhere (Wang, 2015).

The ubiquity and disposable nature of newspapers made their lack of value almost common sense; newscasts were available for free on network television and radio broadcast. The major producers of news in the early days of the internet, large metropolitan newspapers, made a gamble on offering content for free and generating revenue from advertising. Yet, arguably newspapers failed to properly invest in building online audiences; publishers underestimated the value of their online content, and often produced "shovelware" for their website offerings, essentially copying and pasting work from the print version to their website without taking advantage of the richness the online medium offered (Nadler, 2016). Partially as a consequence of this, online advertising is not able to produce comparable revenue as print advertising previously had for newspapers; digital advertising has become an increasingly larger percentage of newspaper advertising revenue, yet overall advertising revenue continues to decline (Barthel, 2019). In the collective unconscious, "news" just seems to naturally exist, an extension of the

enduring democratic institutions that create the very basis of civil society itself. Given this, it is not surprising that recent surveys of "millennial" attitudes toward paying for news cite some claiming that they didn't feel they needed to pay for news because they felt it was their right to have it as a citizen (Wang, 2015).

Responses to these structural changes tend to emphasize either the accountability reporting and public watchdog role of journalism, or the business side of the news industry. Emphasis on accountability argues that the funding crisis represents a problem for the functioning of democracy and prevention of government corruption (McChesney & Pickard, 2011), and recommends policy interventions to ensure society continues to benefit from quality news coverage (Gasher, et al., 2016; Jones, 2010; Public Policy Forum, 2017), criticizing corporatism and financial mismanagement for the overall decline in the quality and breadth of news. Suggested solutions from this point of view include non-profit models, bestowing news media organization with charitable status, or developing grants for community news organizations (Carvajal, García-Avilés, & González, 2012; Downie, & Schudson, 2009; Gasher et al. 2016; Picard, 2014; Pickard, 2011; McChesney & Pickard, 2011).

Emphasis on business calls for harsher copyright laws to punish blogs or websites that aggregate, republish, or link to newspaper stories or government intervention to extract financial concessions from social media platforms that have taken a massive part of advertising revenue (Aamidor et al., 2013). There are arguments here, too, for government intervention, but more like an industry bailout like the automotive industry received in the wake of the Great Recession (Maher, 2017; McIntyre, 2009; Pickard, 2011). This point of view tends to emphasize external factors such as the rise of the internet and the 2008 fiscal crisis (Barthel, 2017; Gasher et al. 2016 p. 3; Ladson & Lee, 2017; Mitchell, Holcomb, & Weisel, 2016). Solutions here seek a way to return to profitability (Chyi, 2012), often taking for granted that "the old order will be preserved" (Pickard, 2011, p. 75). The Canadian Federal government recently went ahead with a suite of tax policies to ease the financial burden of the news industry, which was widely referred to as bailout in mainstream media (Wechsler, 2018).

The Canadian Context

Canada is one of the most highly concentrated news media industries in the world. In 2011 five companies accounted for 83.1 percent of Canadian newspaper circulation (Edge, 2014, p. 75). Data from 2016, shows that three companies, Torstar, Postmedia, and Transcontinental

owned 66 percent of all daily newspapers in Canada (Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage & Fry, 2017). However, beginning in 2017, Transcontinental began selling off its daily and community newspaper holdings; newspaper properties in Atlantic Canada were sold to SaltWire Network Inc., a newly formed media conglomerate owned by the Halifax Chronicle-Herald (CBC News, 2017). More precise information about newspaper ownership in Canada is hard to get. The Canadian Media Concentration Research Project says that following the "twists and turns in the ownership and structure of the newspaper market is not easy," but estimates that concentration in the newspaper industry declined between 2010 and 2015, but has increased slightly in the last four years "as old players disappear and new ones with a more regional profile solidify their place within the industry" (Winseck, 2019, p. 71).

Three major public inquiry reports (released in 1970, 1981 and 2006) by the Canadian government have all pointed to media ownership concentration as affecting the quality of news in Canada (Public Policy Forum, 2017, p. 27). The news industry in Canada has long been indebted to various "Crown corporations created to compensate for a media market otherwise shaped by, and indebted to, advertising" (Public Policy Forum, 2017, p. 34). In a real sense, a robust news industry in Canada would not have been possible without government intervention (Raboy, 1990). These interventions were also designed to "counter an economic logic that has favoured the importation of information from large media entities [in the United States]" (Public Policy Forum, 2017, p. 38). Moreover, an uncertainty over the relationship between the public and private sectors, whether the government should regulate the private sector at all, a commitment to public broadcasting along the lines of the BBC, and a belief that there is an inherent public service component to broadcasting have all been central to this history of news in Canada (Raboy, 1990).

The Canadian newspaper industry has had frequent rounds of layoffs since the turn of the millennium (Healing, 2017; Butterfield, 2014). A recent report commissioned by the Federal government concluded that "new forms of digitally based media and communications" do not currently have the potential to replace the declining newspaper and broadcast news industries in Canada (Public Policy Forum, 2017, p. 7). A newspaper such as the Globe & Mail, for example, received 5.7 million unique visitors in July 2016 compared to just 1.4 million for iPolitics, a digital media news outlet that started in (2017, p. 26).

Crowdsourcing

The term crowdsourcing was coined by Jeff Howe in an article for *Wired* magazine. It's an idea steeped in internet culture and the concepts of the networked society. The internet is often seen as the "main enabling factor" for crowdsourcing (Ghezzi, et al., 2018, p. 344; cf. Brabham, 2013, p. 10 - 17). The defining characteristics of crowdsourcing in business and product development circles are "the use of the open call format and [a] large network of potential laborers" to find solutions to problems. Notably, in these circles, it is not considered crowdsourcing until "a company takes that design, fabricates [it] in mass quantity and sell[s] it" (Howe quoted in Brabham, 2008, p. 76). This does not necessarily require mass commercial production to be considered crowdsourcing. It can also be described as the "process that a network uses for obtaining resources such as ideas, solutions or contributions related to economic activities" (Carvajal et al., 2012, p. 641), or "how distributed groups of people can collaborate to get work done on a scale that exceeds individual capabilities" (Gerber & Hui, 2013, p. 24). Crowdsourcing has been used to create t-shirt designs, supply stock photo repositories, and complete scientific R&D projects (Aitamurto, 2011; Howe, 2006; Muthukumaraswamy, 2010;). Howe's definition of crowdsourcing from 2008 is focused on product creation and business; however, since 2008 the concept of using a large network of potential labourers has been applied to crowdsourced journalism, which takes the form of participatory journalism where audiences act as laborers to produce a journalism project.

Crowdsourcing is often spoken about in strictly economic or business development terms (Belleflamme, Lambert, & Schwienbacher, 2013a; Mollick, 2014). However, it is also hoped that crowdsourcing is the beginning of a new era of networked, collaborative production, and increased productive connections between more people (Bannerman, 2013). Crowdsourcing is often related to the ideas of open innovation and co-creation (Aitamurto, 2013; Ghezzi, et al., 2018). The main way that crowdsourcing differs from open-source and commons-based creation is in the power dynamics; peer-based collaboration involves a non-hierarchical, community-based power structure, whereas crowdsourcing is inevitably controlled by top-down management located within the individual or institution doing the crowdsourcing (Brabham, 2013, p. 7). Crowdsourcing is also often mentioned in the context of theories of collective intelligence (Brabham, 2008, 2013; Buecheler, et al., 2010; Muthukumaraswamy, 2010; Sharma, 2010; Wexler, 2011).

Crowdsourcing's Influence on Journalism

While the harnessing of "collective intelligence" in media has long existed in the form of letters to the editor, for example, the rise of the internet has "added a whole new dimension to such citizen-media interactions" (Muthukumaraswamy, 2010, p. 48). Thus, while the internet is the critical element in the crowdsourced journalism discussed below, journalism has a long pre-internet traditional of sourcing labour and feedback from its audience.

The term "convergence" is used to describe the merging of once quite separate media technologies, such as television, radio and print, into a single digital medium accessed through an internet connection. However, convergence also refers to the merging of top-down, corporate media production with bottom-up, grassroots production; it recognizes the ways in which "journalism is created and influenced by the public, the readers, or the users" (Aitamurto, 2011, p. 341). In a contemporary newsroom context, crowdsourcing can be described as "the act of specifically inviting a group of people to participate in a reporting task—such as newsgathering, data collection, or analysis— through a targeted, open call for input; personal experiences; documents; or other contributions" (Onuoha, Pinder, & Schafer, 2015), or an "open call for anyone to participate in an online task… by sharing information, knowledge, or talent" (Aitamuroto, 2015, p. 3524). Participation in crowdsourcing of news varies from actual participation in reporting and production to asking for simple feedback through comments on social media posts or forums (Carvajal, García-Avilés, & González, 2012; Muthukumaraswamy, 2010).

The general wisdom that newsgathering is becoming "more participatory and collaborative" (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 2) has become commonplace in the last ten years. Yet, other research has found that audience interest in participation may have plateaued, and that, in any event, there is a natural cap to how much audiences genuinely want to take part in the production of news media (Karlsson et al., 2015). In terms of the news-making process, Domingo et al. (2008) found that participation was fairly limited. For the most part news companies saw audience participation as an opportunity for their readers to debate current events or give feedback on the quality of the news they read. On the other hand, it is common for financial contributors in a crowdsourced project to "develop a sense of ownership and a desire to be involved in the decision-making process" (Halpape, 2011, p. 32).

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a derivation of crowdsourcing that asks for funds from a large pool of people online, rather than their labour or ability. The goal is typically to get a large number of small contributions (Belleflamme, Lambert, and Schwienbacher, 2013a; Kaye & Quinn, 2010; Hunter 2016; Jian & Usher, 2014). Crowdfunding takes on the form of a campaign with five stages: "preparing the campaign material, testing it, publicizing the campaign, following through with the project and reciprocating the resources and lessons learned back to the community" (Aitamurto, 2015, p. 201).

Crowdfunding takes on different parameters depending on what supporters expect in return. Donation-based has no expectation of anything in return, while reward-based offers something tangible - such as stickers, t-shirts, or the product for which the money is raised - in exchange for a contribution. Rewards are often structured in tiers; when the "reward" is the product that is being financed, this can be seen as a form of pre-ordering (Aitamurto, 2015; Belleflamme, et al., 2013a, 2013b; Davidson & Poor, 2016). In lending-based campaigns, financial contributors expect to receive back the money they contributed, perhaps with interest. Kiva.org is one of the original "micro-lending" websites (Aitamurto, 2015, p. 92). In equity-based campaigns, financial contributors receive equity and profit-sharing. However, there are investment rules around equity and profit-sharing based crowdfunding, limiting who can engage in it. Additionally, there is an important distinction between ex-ante funding, which raises money before a project begins, and ex post facto funding, which raises funds after a project begins (Aitamurto, 2015; Bannerman, 2013). Another way of organizing the different forms of crowdfunding is simply whether supporters expect a financial return, with equity and lending-based being the only types in which a financial return is expected (Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2018b).

Crowdfunding most often takes place on a dedicated online platform, where a third-party supplies the technical infrastructure. Common platforms include Kickstarter, RocketHub, and Indiegogo. There are niche crowdfunding platforms for specific projects, such as SellaBand for music and Fundable for entrepreneurs (Aitamurto, 2015, p. 191 - 192). Patreon has become popular for subscription-based donation or reward crowdfunding, where donors commit to a certain amount per month, creating a regular income for creators (Ingram, 2014; Orsini, 2017). Depending on which platform is used, creators may only get to keep the money raised if they hit

their fundraising goal, while others allow the creator to keep any money raised (Aitamurto, 2015, p. 193).

Belleflamme, Lambert, and Schwienbacher (2013b) surveyed all non-platform based (not using a service like Kickstarter, for example) crowdfunding campaigns they could find on the internet between the end of 2009 and early 2010, discovering 44 such campaigns. They found that over 90 percent of campaigns offered donors either non-financial benefits (a token reward or a unit of the product being made), or financial compensation, such as equity, revenue, and profit-sharing arrangements (2013b, p. 314). The other 10 percent were seeking donation-based contributions with no tangible benefit to the supporter. Additionally, they found that many crowdfunding initiatives are seen as marketing tools; besides being a source of funding, entrepreneurs can gauge potential interest in their product through the success or failure of the crowdfunding campaign (2013b, p. 331; cf. Mollick, 2014). Branding is becoming an increasingly important skill in journalism (Porlezza & Splendore, 2016), and it has been observed that crowdfunding for news outlets can be used as a branding exercise, or as a means for testing the "traction" of stories, and thus provides more than monetary benefits (Aitamurto, 2015, p. 200).

Much of the current literature on crowdfunding is similar to crowdsourcing, in that it is seen in economic or entrepreneurial finance terms, juxtaposing it with "professional investors" (Belleflamme, Lambert, & Schwienbacher, 2013a, p. 17, cf. Davidson, & Poor, 2016; Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2017, 2018b; Mollick, 2014). This often takes the form of analyzing how supporters can do "due diligence" on the quality of the potential investment, avoid fraud, and how creators can mitigate the effects of early-stage public disclosure of project details. As this type of crowdfunding is more akin to stock market investment, it is subject to oversight and regulation. Crowdfunders theoretically have access to a global pool of capital, and online mechanisms remove many geographic obstacles to early-stage investment (Agrawal, et al., 2011).

The internet as a communication technology now produces innovation in an increasing number of social arenas. Crowdfunded media is one example of this. While reader-funded or viewer-funded media is not new, particularly in the realm of public broadcasting, it is the technological aspect that allows this practice to take on new permutations, and grow, or shrink, or change in its execution. Accordingly, the scope with which audience or "fan" funded media

strategies are applied expands into new areas. Over the last five years, there has been a growing body of literature focused on crowdfunding and digital media. In the introduction to *Crowdfunding the Future: Media industries, ethics & digital culture*, Bennett, Chin, and Jones (2014) note that the volume began as a response to the lack of scholarly work on crowdfunding and media. At the time the idea of fans pooling their financial resources through crowdfunding had just come to public attention through the *Veronica Mars* movie crowdfunding campaign which raised $5.7 million at the end of 2013 to fund a feature film length installment of a cancelled television show (Bennet et al., 2015).

  Crowdfunding the Future explores various intellectual strains about crowdfunding that are relevant to this thesis. For example, many academic articles focus on the economic resourcefulness of crowdfunding rather than the "affective engagement" between creators and their donors (Leibovitz, Telo, & Sanchez-Navarro, 2015, p. 19). Also relevant to this thesis is an interest in how crowdfunding creates "community as a symbolic value available for purchase through broadcasting structures" and the degree to which a genuine community is created around crowdfunded media (Gehring & Wittkower, 2015, p. 66 - 67).

  There has also been some academic work on the crowdfunding of civic projects, essentially funding public works and infrastructure, or community resources of other types. In these types of projects transparency of how funds are used is paramount, and Davies (2015) argues that there is an accountability problem in civic crowdfunding. There are also important avenues for research into what kind of news can successfully build a crowdfunded audience. As Träsel and Fontoura (2015) note, it would be impractical for crowdfunded journalism to try and replicate or replace the daily news cycle, and donors are usually not looking to crowdfunded journalism to fulfill that need.

Crowdfunding as a Revenue Source for News

  In journalism, crowdfunding largely began as funding of individual stories through "voluntary donations via an open call to anybody to donate" (Aitamurto, 2011, p. 429). However, the idea of soliciting funds from viewers or readers is not new to the media industry, public broadcasters have long-held fundraising marathons, but now individuals can solicit funds in this manner without institutional support (Aitamurto, 2015, p. 193; Hunter, 2015; Jian & Shin, 2015). Additionally, donation-based funding models for non-profit news organizations like *Voice of San Diego* and *Texas Tribune* have seen popularity lately (Aitamurto, 2011). For some,

crowdfunding is seen as a solution to all of journalism's many ailments from "clickbait" to declining journalistic independence and incomes (Tudor, 2016). Others see it as an extension of the participatory journalism culture described above (Aitamurto, 2011).

Between 2009 and 2015, 658 journalism-related projects were posted on Kickstarter, raising around $6.3 million; that is, nonetheless, much less than other creative categories like music or technology. Seventy-one percent of those were produced by individuals not tied to any journalistic organization (Vogt & Mitchell, 2016).

There are four types of crowdfunding that take place within the journalism field: funding for a single story, for a continuous coverage/beat, for a new platform/publication, and fundraising for a service that supports journalism, such as travel expenses (Aitamurto, 2015, p. 195). The single-story category, an example of ex-ante funding (2015, p. 196), includes Lindsay Hoshaw's 2009 investigation of the Great Garbage Patch. Hoshaw raised $10,000 to join a boat trip to the patch and one of the articles she wrote appeared in *The New York Times* (2015, p. 195). Funding for continuous beat coverage involves "subscription-based pledging," as it involves continuous, ongoing work (2015, p. 197). Crowdfunding for new platforms or publications has not been tried as often. Two of the most recent successful examples come from Europe; *Krautreporter*, from Germany, raised $1.38 million in 2014, and *De Correspondent*, from the Netherlands, raised $1.3 million in 2013 (2015, p. 199). Crowdfunding in journalism is often a mix of ex-ante and ex post facto, with ex-ante being used to fund specific investigative projects, but ex post facto subscription-type donations sustaining ongoing operations (2015, p. 193).

The first high-profile attempt to make a crowdfunding platform specifically for journalism was Spot.Us, launched in San Francisco in late 2008 with seed money from the Knight Foundation (Aitamurto, 2011; Jian & Usher, 2014; Kaye & Quinn, 2010). David Cohn launched Spot.Us directly in response to journalism's funding crisis, with the intention of figuring out "how reporting can thrive as we witness the death of the institutional model that traditionally supported it." (quoted in Kaye & Quinn, 2010, p. 66). Journalists posted story ideas and visitors funded the ones they wanted to see reported. The platform limited the percentage of donations from any individual to stop advocates and lobbyists, and published material under a creative commons license (Kaye & Quinn, 2010; Kershaw, 2008). It also allowed people to contribute by editing articles, suggesting tips and leads and sharing expert knowledge. Single

stories could be bought by established news publications (Aitamurto, 2011). Spot.Us was bought by American Public Media in 2011 and closed in 2014 (Easton, 2015). Journalists have also used general crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter and Indiegogo, not specifically designed for journalism, to raise funds for their work (Hunter, 2014; Porlezza & Splendore, 2016; Carvajal et al., 2012; Liu, 2016; Aitamurto, 2011).

Most studies conclude that crowdfunding may be sustainable for small scale enterprises, but it is not a substitution for the complete funding needed to restore news industry revenues to 20th-century levels (Aitamurto, 2011, 2015; Carvajal, et al., 2012; Halpape 2011; Jian & Shin, 2015; Price, 2017; Vogt & Mitchell, 2016). It has also been observed that the larger the initial capital requirements are, the more likely that a profit-sharing model of crowdfunding needs to be adopted (Belleflamme, Lambert, & Schwienbacher, 2013a). This raises questions about a profit versus non-profit financial model for crowdfunded news media.

Arguably, the most high-profile current example of a crowdfunded journalism outlet is the Dutch website *De Correspondent*. After securing prominent journalism scholar Jay Rosen as their "ambassador" to the United States in March 2017, they launched the crowdfunding campaign for their English-language version, *The Correspondent*, in November 2018 (Gabbatt, 2018). The respondents in this research all had a funding strategy that relied on direct financial contributions from their audience.

Critical issues in Crowdfunding Journalism

The more central role of the audience in crowdfunded journalism raises questions around journalistic autonomy, maintaining a divide between the business and editorial side of a news operation, and changing the types of tasks journalists must perform in the course of their workday (Carvajal, García-Avilés, González, 2012; Hunter, 2016; Zaripova, 2017; Porlezza & Splendore, 2016). Porlezza and Splendore argue that crowdfunded journalism puts supporters in a "position of power," ceding some of the "gatekeeper" power traditionally held by reporters and editors (2016, p. 197), a sentiment echoed elsewhere (Aitamurto, 2011; Jian & Usher, 2014). Like crowdsourcing, crowdfunding can be seen as a manifestation of collective intelligence, insofar as choosing which stories to fund is an adjudication of "the topics journalism needs to report" (Aitamurto, 2011, p. 429). It is recommended that journalists "clearly define what sort of relationship they want with their funders, including input into story design and development, and outline this in their initial pitches" (Hunter, 2015, p. 284). Crowdfunded journalists felt a

personal responsibility to complete a story for their supporters, but not necessarily to curate the stories they cover to suit audience taste (Aitamurto, 2011; Hunter 2015).

Andrea Hunter (2015) explores how journalists who crowdfund their work experience conflicting feelings about norms of autonomy. They have difficulty with being transparent about a story before it is produced and justifying its value to their audience, rather than an editor. However, crowdfunded journalism operations tend to espouse an affinity toward transparency in how they work (Hunter, 2016; Porlezza & Splendore, 2016; Price, 2017). Some journalists have expressed feeling a closer connection to a "community" when writing for donors rather than editors (Zaripova, 2017). Others note that for many crowdfunded news organizations, bringing on people with business skills is crucial to sustainability (Price, 2017).

While crowdfunding allows independent journalists to operate outside the structures of legacy and corporate media (Hunter, 2016), it is also the case that they "must become entrepreneurs themselves and adopt many of the same strategies as media organizations that survive through subscriptions and advertising" (Hunter & Bartolomeo, 2018, p. 13). Also, as crowdfunding involves much more interaction with audiences, including the distribution of rewards, some argue that the "time spent on delivering perks to donors detracts from the time and money invested in the actual project" (Bennett et al., 2014, p. 142). Hunter (2016) has written about the extra work involved in crowdfunding journalism, beyond the actual work of reporting, equating it to having a second full-time job.

Motivations and Success or Failure

Research shows that it is more the *idea* of journalism or "the press" that leads people to contribute financially to journalism; it is an altruistic donation to the "cause" of journalism (Aitamurto, 2015, p. 202). Other common motivating factors for supporting crowdfunded journalism include belief in freedom of the press and the civic role of journalism, altruism, community contribution and wanting to "make a difference" (Aitamurto, 2011; Burtch et al., 2013; Jian & Shin, 2015). Some argue that any crowdfunding contribution that isn't equity or lending-based is, on some level, motivated by altruism (Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2018b). Given that Chyi (2012) found that the payment method did not affect consumers' willingness to pay for news, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the main barrier will simply be whether people think they should pay for news or not.

Potential donors look to see if other people are contributing and may quickly lose interest if the campaign gets off to a "cold start" (Ward & Ramachandran, 2010). When payment is voluntary, "free-riding," or the act of consuming a product while allowing a smaller, more dedicated subset of the audience to fund it, is common. People tend to either be motivated by strategic substitution - if fewer people contribute, the individual will donate to make up for what is lacking - or by reciprocity and a sense of fairness - if more people contribute, the individual feels they should also donate (Borck, Frank & Robledo, 2006; Davidson & Poor, 2016; Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2018b). Price (2017) notes that the prevalence of free riding is often baked into business models of crowdfunded news. Under this business model success is contingent on building a loyal core audience that believes in the project enough to fund it, allowing the content to be produced and made available freely to the vast majority of the audience who do not contribute financially. Andreoni and Petrie (2004) studied the role of publicly naming donors and found that it tended to decrease free-riding and increase the number of donors. Interest in engaging in prosocial behaviour has been named as playing a role in successful reward and donation-based crowdfunding (Jian & Shin, 2015; Smith et al., 2014).

Belleflamme, Lambert, and Schwienbacher (2013b) found that "direct involvement by the crowd exerts an important role in the amount of funds raised" (p. 330). Moreover, "community-based experiences" are widely seen as a part of the reward of taking part in crowdfunding campaigns and are one of the main factors for success when running a donation-based crowdfunding campaign (Belleflamme, Lambert, & Schwienbacher, 2013a, p. 3). Belleflamme, Lambert, and Schwienbacher (20130b) also found that non-profit organizations tended to be more successful in crowdfunding initiatives, concluding that "the reduced focus on profits by such entrepreneurs is viewed by crowdfunders as a credible commitment to provide larger community benefits" (p. 331). Kuppuswamy and Bayus (2018b) observe that for equity and lending-based campaigns "community support signals that the project is of high quality" (p. 362). Some of the "signals" that Mollick (2014) suggests as having an impact on crowdfunding success include producing a promotional video, sending frequent updates to supporters, and a lack of typos or other indicators of unpreparedness and lack of care. Mollick also argues that supporters are generally always more interested in supporting a campaign they feel has a good chance of success.

Gerber and Hui (2013) found both creators and supporters were motivated by a desire for social connection. For creators, it was to connect with a receptive audience, for supporters it was to develop a connection through supporting a cause or helping others (p. 14 - 17). Porlezza and Splendore (2016) found that "accountability itself appears to be a form of participation" (p. 211) at *De Correspondent*; donors are given many opportunities to supply feedback on the journalism work being done. The editor of *De Correspondent* says that they view their audience as a "knowledgeable community that can actually inform the beat and the way you cover the beat" (Doctor, 2018). Hunter (2015) found that journalists are interested in building a community with their supporters, but not at the expense of editorial control. Gerber and Hui (2013) recommend three crowdfunding campaign design principles to reflect the importance of community: support the exchange of resources between donors, keep donors updated for the duration of the campaign (even past the official end), and provide transparency of the operation being funded.

Ladson and Lee (2017) found that content type and reward options play a role in campaign outcomes. Art & culture, lifestyle, tech and crime stories tend to be funded more successfully than stories on politics, economics, or international affairs. Indeed, there appears to be some divergence between what journalists consider newsworthy and what news audiences are willing to pay for in terms of public affairs journalism versus lighter topics (Boczkowski et al., 2011; Boczkowski & Peer, 2011; Ladson & Lee, 2017; Lee & Chyi, 2014). Lee (2013) found four categories of motivating choices for news consumption: information, entertainment, opinion, and social, concluding that older people are motivated by information and opinion, while younger people by entertainment and social. However, all media consumption choices were motivated to some degree by all four categories. Jian and Usher (2014) conclude that consumers prefer stories that supply practical, everyday advice, while reporters prefer stories about government and politics. Early access to what is being crowdfunded for has also been noted as a motivating factor (Mollick, 2014), something which could easily apply to media publishing.

Generally, people will contribute when they believe their addition will make a significant difference or be part of a critical mass that pushes a crowdfunding project to hit its target or goal. So, if toward the end of a campaign cycle a creator is close to their goal, it leads to an increase in contributions, but once that goal is reached contributions drop off (Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2017). Jian and Shin (2015) found that altruism, community and a belief in free content were

primary motivating factors. Their survey asked donors on the since shut down journalism-dedicated crowdfunding platform Spot.Us to rank motivating factors in terms of importance. However, they also found the only motivators associated with long-term, sustainable funding were fun or enjoyment, or donors wanting to support friends and family, things which involve a sense of immediate gratification. Larissa Wodtke (2015) has looked at how emotion functions in the appeals of crowdfunded musicians, but this dimension has not been deeply explored in studies of crowdfunded journalism. Agrawal et al. (2011) also found that a direct social network (friends & family) plays a role in gaining initial momentum for a crowdfunding campaign.

Tanja Aitamurto has made significant contributions to preliminary exploratory scholarly work, sketching out the contours of what crowdfunded journalism looks like. Aitamurto's (2015) chapter in *Crowdfunding the Future* looks at the role of crowdfunding in the "business model ecosystem" of journalism (p. 190) and begins to develop a categorization of crowdfunding activity in which journalists engage. In this chapter, Aitamurto also discusses crowdfunded journalism in terms of building audiences. However, they largely discuss audience building in terms of it being a side effect of how much attention a proposed story pitch is gaining, arguing that in a cyclical fashion, the more attention a pitch gains, the more the audience grows and the more access they gain to increasingly broader audiences. Aitamurto (2011) acknowledges that "reasons for contributing to a pitch are more altruistic than instrumental in nature: rather than getting a good story to read, the donor donates for a common societal goal which is a democratically healthy society" (p. 442).

The literature review in this chapter will form the backdrop for the research for this study. Research into what motivates people to contribute to charitable fundraising is a large and diverse body of work. Some of that research has been applied to crowdfunding campaigns, if they are "donation" type crowdfunding. However, there has been less research that looks at the motivations of crowdfunding campaign supporters that is not limited to models taken from charitable fundraising. Research into crowdfunded journalism specifically is even more limited, and there has been no research into how crowdfunded journalists themselves view the primary motivations of their financial contributors.

This thesis uses in-depth, semi-structured interviews to examine crowdfunded journalists' attitudes toward, and beliefs about, what motivates their audience and financial supporters, how they appeal and pitch their journalism work to their existing and potential audience and what

they feel are necessary elements in having a successful crowdfunding campaign for a digital news company, including what elements they thought they had missed if their crowdfunding had been less successful than expected. The following chapter explores the methodology used for data gathering and analysis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This section begins by looking generally at what qualitative research is as opposed to quantitative research. It explores the ways in which qualitative research is sometimes seen as non-scientific or prone to bias, but how there is now a consensus that all research requires some level of interpretation, and that there various stringent ways qualitative researchers produce reliable interpretations from qualitative data. It then looks at semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection, exploring the differences between semi-structured and other types of interviews and questionnaires, and explores how the advantage of interviews is the depth of meaning produced in the data. Following that, it describes the program for recruiting respondents, refining the interview protocol, and collecting data. This section ends with an explanation of the analytical process. It describes the use of thematic analysis modified from grounded theory which is inductive and iterative in nature and is used to identify categories and concepts within text, from which to develop codes and final themes. Lastly the final themes and subthemes that emerged during analysis are presented before moving on to the presentation of results in Chapter 4.

Qualitative Research

Analysis in qualitative research is regularly described as a highly interpretative process, in comparison to quantitative research which takes a positivist approach to analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Until quite recently, even practitioners of qualitative research described their work as "non-scientific" (Jensen, 2013, p. 265). Science is regarded as inherently objective and therefore something to which social and humanistic inquiries should aspire. From a positivist perspective, an inquiry is supposed to deal strictly with provable and disprovable facts, often considered to be things that are numerically quantifiable. Yet, it is now understood that both types of data require interpretation that can allow biases to slip into analytical conclusions. Moreover, social phenomena and cultural meanings are often difficult or impossible to quantify or measure by the rules of positivism (Priest, 2010, p. 4). As David Silverman (2010) points out, positivism "treats 'social facts' as existing independently of the activities of both respondents

and researchers" (p. 102). However, both types of data require a commitment to empiricism through systematic observation if reliable conclusions are to be drawn (Priest, 2010, p. 4). The unique value of both quantitative and qualitative data is now recognized throughout the academy.

This thesis is based on a qualitative research design. As was mentioned in the introduction, qualitative research has its own strengths that make it suitable for research that focuses on 'how' and 'why' questions about respondents' perspectives. Qualitative research expresses data through language, so often researchers choose it because the answers to their questions require a depth of meaning that is unavailable through quantitative methods (Silverman, 2010, p. 118). As Jensen (2013) points out, this means that in qualitative research, language serves as both "a tool of data collection and an object of analysis" (p. 271). This is the crux of the interpretative issue is qualitative research. Thus, it is not that qualitative research is inferior, but that often researchers choose a qualitative methodology for a research question that would likely be better answered by a quantitative methodology, or they do not properly mitigate the analytical interference that arises out of that linguistic tool-of-collection, object-of-analysis relationship.

Essentially, the issue at hand is the researcher-as-interpretive-subject. Interpretative meaning on the part of the researcher and respondent is imposed prior to the formal analysis process (Silverman, 2007). Moreover, given that both researcher and respondents are making sense of the world through subjective meanings, what authority does a researcher have to interpret the words of their respondents and come to generalizable conclusions about those words? A distinguishing characteristic of qualitative methods, compared to quantitative, is "the pervasive nature of interpretation throughout the research process" (Jensen, 2013, p. 266). Without quantitative data to stand for some version of concrete, external reality, the qualitative researcher must constantly be wary of how their own meanings influence their interpretation of the meanings being studied or used as an explanatory concept.

Relating to the issue of interpretative bias is the question of how qualitative researchers using in-depth interviewing should treat the statements made by interview respondents. David Silverman describes how there are positivist models, which assume that "interviews can give direct access to 'experience'" and emotionalist models, ones that focus on respondents' feelings (2010, p. 190). Silverman suggests a "constructivist" model, which focuses on understanding how respondents construct narratives and meaning in response to the things they are being asked.

Susanna Hornig Priest points out that qualitative research requires an abundance of caution about potential confirmation bias because "every conclusion is an interpretation." Thus, qualitative research must proceed systematically with conceptual open-mindedness and data comprehensiveness and be guided by carefully chosen research questions (2010, p. 161). In deductive techniques, researchers begin with a theory they believe can predict what will happen in novel situations and use it to create a hypothesis that can be tested by the research data. In inductive methodologies, researchers begin with specific data and use it to reason to a theoretical conclusion, or a descriptive analysis (Priest, 2010, p. 8). The analysis in this thesis proceeds from a largely inductive approach but begins with a structural coding process, a deductive approach based on the research questions.

Qualitative research provides insights into the subjective perspectives of respondents; thus, it is important that qualitative data be valued for showing a respondent's specific point of view and not be made to try and make generalized conclusions about the sample population. The subjective perspectives of research subjects are often referred to with the anthropological term "emic," and the observer's perspective is called etic. The value of the emic perspective, beyond what can be achieved by an empirical study, is that it reveals perspectives considered correct by an insider, etic perspectives may be ones that an outsider would consider correct, but which conflict with those being studied themselves think about what is being discussed. However, as Jensen (2013) explains, "the emic or internal perspective on culture is not simply there; it is identified from some etic, external, comparative perspective," and additionally, "the etic perspective is itself, in one sense, emic: it represents a social setting, a historical period, and an academic (sub)culture" (p. 267). The research questions in this thesis ask about respondents' subjective, or emic, perspective.

These ambiguities and uncertainties must be mitigated by the researcher as precisely as possible; the "self-conceptions, opinions, and worldviews" of research participants "must be inferred from narratives, arguments, and other discursive structures" (Jensen, 2013, p. 271). According to Butler-Kisber (2019), the use of what they describe as "constant comparative inquiry" generates an analysis that "facilitates the search for an emic or insider perspective, rather than imposing an outsider or etic one on the work" (p. 41). The use of the constant comparative method, which Butler-Kisber views as one technique within a broader suite of constant comparative inquiry, as well as other techniques used to ensure quality control during

the process of drawing inferences from discursive transcript data will be described below in the section Coding and Data Analysis.

In-depth, Semi-structured Interviews

Compared to survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews do not have to rigidly stick to their pre-written questions or script; rather the questions serve as a guide, and the interviewer is free to ask follow-up questions or to rephrase questions to get a better response (Priest, 2010, p. 17-18). Interviewees also have the freedom to follow their train of thought into tangential topics. As Jensen (2013) observes, media studies have "taken on board a variety of interdisciplinary influences" (p. 266) and the semi-structured interview technique has largely been borrowed from anthropology and ethnographic studies.

Interviews are considered the best way for understanding research respondents' perspectives on the world and what they think of a particular situation or topic. When it comes to interview-based data, Jensen (2013) counsels that "statements from either individual interviews or focus groups (or from survey responses), are not simply representations, more or less valid or reliable, of what people think" (p. 270). Interview data may be based on questions that ask subjects to create a narrative or discursive accounting of "certain ideas and notions that otherwise may remain unarticulated, [and] part of practical consciousness" (p. 270). Moreover, there is a "tendency among respondents to distort their 'true' feelings by answering questions in a socially acceptable manner" (Marvasti, 2004, p 19). As Jensen (2013) puts it, "people do not always say what they think, or mean what they say," so researchers must "tease out the meanings and implications of what other people - and they themselves - say" (p. 270). Other ways in which interview-based data can be lacking include that it is "necessarily selective," even when "trying to document everything" (Butler-Kisber, 2019, p. 44), and that researchers cannot often be expected to maintain a perfect interview methodology when faced with "response[s] that they must process in a split second" (Jensen, 2013, p. 270). Accordingly, from the preliminary stages of research design, researchers using interview-based methods must be concerned about how they will draw reliable conclusions from their analysis of the data.

This thesis takes from the main principles of qualitative research the assumption that a naturalistic context for research interviews is preferable when possible (Jensen, 2013, p. 266). The interviews for data collection were conducted remotely and so subjects were removed from a natural context. However, given the population in question (tech-savvy media professionals),

having subjects communicate and conduct interviews via remote means, either telephone or video chat, was not far removed from their normal professional daily routines. The naturalistic approach is intended to optimize the achievement of an emic interpretation of the data and provide analysis that corresponds correctly to the subject's own point of view and meanings.

Data Collection and Sample

The data is based on 10 interviews with journalists who attempted with varying degrees of success to finance the operation of a digital news company through crowdfunding. All interviews were conducted remotely, either by telephone or video chat, as the respondents were in cities across Canada. The data collection protocol for this thesis research went through an iterative process, wherein the "interview guides [are] semi-structured during each phase but the content of the guides [is] driven by what is learned from each successive phase" (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012, p. 22). The interview guide was revised once, between the fourth and fifth interviews. The main change was the substitution of indirect questions for more direct questions on audience and promotion (see Appendix 1 and 2 for each version). Data collection took place between May and September 2019. Transcription of the recordings began in mid-June after six interviews had been conducted.

The recruitment phase used theoretical sampling: subjects were chosen to gain access to a specific subset of journalistic practices, namely those associated with crowdfunding campaigns. Theoretical sampling selects subjects "in order to explore concepts or categories" (Jensen, 2013, p. 269). In quantitative research, samples are typically gathered through probability sampling and random selection. In contrast, samples in qualitative research are "driven by a purpose, not by a principle of probability" (Jensen, 2013, p. 268). In media studies, theoretical sampling often involves first selecting a specific sub-area of communication that is of interest and then singling out a certain subset of users involved for study (Jensen, 2013). In this thesis, the sub-area of interest is crowdfunded journalism, and the users are the journalists.

To recruit a large enough sample, an element of convenience sampling was used. This sampling approach is sometimes called "accidental sampling," and is a form of non-probability sampling. Like all non-probability samples, with convenience sampling it is difficult to "know whether the sample is representative of the population under study;" however, it "becomes more appropriate and acceptable when the population of interest is difficult to define to allow any reliable form" of sampling (Phua, 2004, p. 197). Thus, convenience sampling is warranted given

the relatively recent and incipient nature of the phenomenon under study. Subjects were reached through publicly available email addresses. Emails described the study and requested the recipient's participation.

In this study, the concept of crowdfunding was expanded to include audience-funded models that some researchers using a stricter definition might describe as membership or subscription based. Broadly speaking, crowdfunding for journalism can describe a broad range of "audience-funded" approaches including membership practices, which usually involves having exclusive activities for recurring financial supporters. Broadly speaking all the respondents sought direct financial support from their audience on a voluntary basis, payment was not necessary to view the journalism product. The definition of success used here for crowdfunding is that the respondent was able to sustainably fund the ongoing operation budget for a media outlet from crowdfunded revenue, or if they met the target of their crowdfunding campaign that provided initial seed money for a timeframe they had previously decided on; it can also mean having initial low levels of success and then changing their approach to increase success. Below is a list of the 10 respondents and the status of their success or failure.

Respondents

Name	Code	Media Outlet	Result of crowdfunding
Chelsea Murray	R1	The Deep	Partially Successful
Ethan Cox	R2	Ricochet Media	Successful
Confidential Respondent	CR1	confidential	Successful
Joey Coleman	R3	The Public Record	Successful
Mack Male	R4	Taproot Edmonton	Successful
Taylor Lambert	R5	The Calgarian	Not Successful
Jeremy Klaszus	R6	The Sprawl	Successful
Emma Gilchrist	R7	The Narwhal	Successful
Lindsay Sample	R8	The Discourse	Successful
Darren Krause	R9	LiveWire Calgary	Not Successful

Final interview questions were optimized using the Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework developed by Castillo-Montoya (2016). The IPR framework calls for a four-phase

refinement process. Firstly, a researcher uses a matrix to ensure interview questions align with the research questions of the project. It is a simple but effective exercise. In a spreadsheet, I put the four main research questions along the y-axis in the first column. Along the x-axis, I put each interview question in the first cell of each column. For each research question, I marked off the corresponding cell under each interview question. In the process, some of the interview questions were refined to ask more directly about something the research questions are interested in and it was ensured that each research question was addressed by at least two or three interview questions.

The second phase does a check for the conversational quality of the interview script, aiming to create a balance between inquiry and rapport building (Castillo-Montoya, 2016, p. 821). This phase was useful in the research design of this thesis as it provided a final check to make sure interview questions didn't use academic language or concepts for contextualizing the questions. Rather, the goal was to get subjects to talk about their work, crowdfunding efforts and the relationship with their audience in as direct language as possible. The third and fourth phases of the IPR framework were not used in this thesis due to limitations of time and resources, they are: receiving feedback through close readings by others and piloting the interview. While it was not possible to ask for close readings and feedback from a large number of colleagues, the interview questions were subject to feedback from the thesis supervisor and second reader. The fourth phase, piloting, was not possible because of a lack of suitable test subjects.

The real-time technique for conducting interviews in this study was refined using advice published by Beth Leech (2002). Primarily, Leech advises gaining subjects' rapport by being professional and appearing less knowledgeable than the subject on the topic at hand, to put subjects at ease by explaining the project in plain language, and to demonstrate active listening through restating what respondents have said without reinterpreting their response, and using their own language if possible. Additionally, Leech counsels to move from non-threatening questions at first and bring in more sensitive topics in the latter half of the interview. Sensitive questions should be handled through the use of non-judgmental wording and an appreciation of the difficulty and seriousness of a situation. Leech also recommends what they call "grand tour questions" (p. 667), ones that ask subjects to describe a typical day or typical experience, to "walk me through" a certain practice, task or process of interest or provide an example of something being described.

Ethics approval was obtained from Concordia University's Human Research Ethics Committee before the study began (Certificate number 30010994 to Kenneth Gibson). Prior to interviews all respondents were sent a consent form which outlined all possible risks involved with participation (see Appendix 3); it also outlined the timeframe by which they could withdraw their consent to have their data used (up to 90 days after the interview was conducted). Respondents were given the choice of being confidential. The interviews were recorded as audio recordings or video screen capture recordings and transcribed verbatim into text documents. The data was stored on a password protected computer.

Coding and Data Analysis

This thesis uses an inductive approach to analysis, which is exploratory and descriptive in nature, compared to analysis which is hypothesis-driven and confirmatory (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). By taking the approach of an exploratory and inductive thematic analysis, the analysis here is closely related to grounded theory (a "set of inductive and iterative techniques designed to identify categories and concepts within text" (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012, p. 11) because the analysis does not start with predetermined codes or thematic categories, rather codes were derived from the data. Moreover, the goal of the analysis was answering a research question that was structured like so: "What do *x* people think about *y*?" (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012, p. 6). As Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) note, thematic analysis moves "beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus[es] on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data" (p. 9). Thus, there is more interpretation involved and greater concern about the reliability of generalizations and conclusions.

However, criticism of grounded theory's claim to proceed from an atheoretical starting point aside, the analysis here cannot be considered grounded theory as such, because the theoretical underpinning of this thesis comes from existing theories in political-economy of media, and from the conclusions and further research suggestions found in the existing literature on crowdfunding. Furthermore, this thesis takes the approach of analyzing the textual data from the research interviews as proxies for experience; so, the text isn't an object of analysis itself, the text is considered to be standing for lived experience, which is being described.

The process of interviewing research subjects and turning the recorded conversations into transcripts is the process of using language as a tool to create a language-based data set that can be analyzed. The ambiguity of language being both tool and object of study is a root cause of the

inherent difficulty of drawing definite conclusions in the study of social and cultural phenomena. This thesis used a thematic analysis method modified from the grounded theory approach (Butler-Kisber, 2018; Guest, MacQueen, and Namey, 2012; Jensen, 2013). This method involves finding patterns and trends within the data and then generalizing toward meaningful, descriptive categories.

My analysis aim was to develop a midground between highly detailed micro-level analysis and very general macro analysis in terms of refinement. As Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) note, "the view" that one wants to generate through data analysis is important to what approach a researcher takes to analysis; the view can vary from a broad, high-level "global" view to a narrow, micro-focused "street" level view. The applied thematic analysis approach outlined by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey was chosen because it can be adapted depending on time and resources available for analysis and can be used with a range of data-set sizes. Given the somewhat limited size of the data sample used in this thesis, an analytical approach that accounted for varying data-set sizes was warranted. While thematic or narrative analysis is considered distinct from grounded theory, the approach used here draws on the constant comparative method to do thematic analysis without committing to grounding theory fully in the field of study. The constant comparative method is a process of "several, reiterated stages of sampling, analyzing, memoing, and interpreting materials" (Jensen, 2013, p. 278). This decision helps mitigate one of the main critiques of grounded theory, that it is dubious to think any researcher would enter a field of study without prior theoretical understanding, by acknowledging that the theoretical lens used is taken from existing literature and not generated in the field.

Margaret D. LeCompte (2000) says that before researchers can interpret data they must analyze it first, which requires them to "organize their data and use it to construct an intact portrait of the original phenomenon under study and second, to tell readers what that portrait means" (p. 147). The interview refinement protocols used here and mentioned in the earlier section were the first step in creating systematized and reliable data. In the first stages of planning the analysis, a simple structural coding procedure was applied to the interview transcripts. The semi-structured interview guides used during data collection served as the basis for the structural codebook generated by this process. This coding allows answers from different

research respondents to the same question to be grouped together. Below, in Table 1 are the initial codes taken from the structural analysis, grouped according to interview topic.

Table 1: Structural codes based on interview topic

Interview Topic	Structural Code Name
>How the idea of trying crowdfunding as a revenue source first appeared? >Research or resources used to develop a crowdfunding best practice?	>(CROWDFUND-EMERGE) >(CROWDFUND-RESEARCH)
>What was the perception of the potential audience for their proposed journalism outlet? >Did this perception change over time or with subsequent crowdfunding campaigns?	>(AUDIENCE-POTENTIAL) >(AUDIENCE-POTENTIAL-CHANGE)
>What did they think was the best way to reach the potential audience when they began crowdfunding? >Did these ideas change over time?	> (PROMOTION-STRATEGY) > (PROMOTION-CHANGE)
>The role that personal networks played in initial crowdfunding.	>(CROWDFUND-NETWORKS)
>How do they communicate the value of journalism to their financial contributors or potential financial contributors?	>(JOURNALISM-VALUE)
>The role that the concept of community plays in motivating their financial contributors	>(CROWDFUND-COMMUNITY)
>Is altruism a significant motivator for their financial contributors?	(CROWDFUND-ALTRUISM)
>What do they think is the biggest obstacle to persuading news audiences to pay for the news they consume?	(AUDIENCE-WILLING-PAY)

This first coding exercise that produced the codes in Table 1 was deductive in nature because it is based on the research design, which was developed out of a reading of the existing research literature. Once the data had been structurally coded, I used open coding to find emergent codes from the textual data from the interview transcripts. Open coding prescribes a method of ascribing labels to the collected data and is designed to "open up the data to all potentials and possibilities contained within them" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 160; cf. Silverman, 2010). A refinement process determined which codes should be merged and which should be allowed to stand on their own. Some structural codes, such as (JOURNALISM-VALUE) became one of the four themes emergent in the data, with other subthemes grouped under it; (CROWDFUND-COMMUNITY), for example, became a subtheme under the main theme of Value. Most of the final subthemes are based on codes that appeared during open coding. Using a frequency count of the occurrence of codes, the most common ones were determined. Codes whose frequency fell well below the average occurrence were considered for inclusion in a larger, more encompassing code or to be allowed to stand independently as a minor code (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).

Table 2 shows the final collection of themes and subthemes developed from both deductive structural coding and inductive, open coding for emergent codes. The subthemes were grouped thematically based on conceptual relatedness or interconnection, a process often called axial coding; however, as Corbin & Strauss (2008) point out, the process of axial coding typically begins during the open coding phase, as patterns of similarity begin to appear between codes. Following the direction of grounded theory, I used the constant comparative method to place each subtheme under a thematic heading. The grouping of the subthemes followed recommendations in Margaret D. LeCompte (2000). The approach to developing the final themes was also inspired by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey, who point out that

> codes represent a greater level of abstraction than themes, and a single theme
> can engender multiple codes… The use of systematic segmenting facilitates
> an efficient approach that can employ frequencies, matrices, and/or clusters
> to identify code combinations. These combinations are then explored through
> a targeted review of the associated text to develop descriptive and explanatory
> models (2012, p. 52).

As mentioned above, some general rules were followed in the analysis to guarantee reliability and validity. The first step in guaranteeing validity is to limit the scope of analytic conclusions; as Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) explain: "the more interpretive the analysis becomes, the more tenuous are the outcomes and assertions based on the analysis" (p. 68). It should also be noted that codes applied to textual data are already one step up the ladder of inference in analysis and aren't treated as reflecting exactly what a respondent said, rather the creation and grouping of codes under themes are producing analytic categories. Keeping this in mind guided the analysis toward properly limited conclusions and assertions.

The analysis of the data generating four major themes: I. Value, II. Promotion, III. Audience, IV. Crowdfunding Practices. These themes were partially predefined by the interview protocol and research questions, and therefore descriptive in nature. However, the final conceptualizations of the four major themes also involved interpretive coding. Open coding was used to allow the sub-themes to emerge. There were six sub-themes under the first major theme, Value, four sub-themes under the second major theme, Promotion, six sub-themes under the third major theme, Audience, and three sub-themes under the fourth major theme, Crowdfunding Practices. Sub-themes were developed and then either rejected, subsumed or kept based on the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Below is a table that describes the major themes and their sub-themes. The table is followed by the descriptions of the sub-themes.

Table 2 Description of Codebook

MAJOR THEME	DESCRIPTION OF MAJOR THEME	SUB-THEMES
(1) VALUE	Describes the several ways that respondents conceptualized the value of the journalism they were offering potential financial supporters, and how they formed value propositions. It includes both assertions of the value of news in general, as well as what makes their own journalism of high quality and the	**a)** Deficit Media **b)** Civic Engagement **c)** The Public Good **d)** Social Issues and Topics **e)** Community **f)** Trust

	desirability basis on which they appeal to potential financial contributors.	
(2) PROMOTION	Promotion focuses on how respondents raised awareness about their crowdfunding campaigns, the strategies they used to get their value proposition seen or heard by people it would resonate with; it reflects what respondents thought about which communication style that would be most effective.	**a)** Networking **b)** Reputation and Credentials **c)** Communication Expertise and Engagement **d)** Content
(3) AUDIENCE	Respondents mentioned things they thought were unique to the personality and inclination of crowdfunded audiences; what expectations they have compared to other journalism audiences.	**a)** Willingness to Pay **b)** Local News **c)** Non-profit **d)** Paywalls **e)** Adaptation
(4) CROWDFUNDING -PRACTICES	Practices respondents felt were crucial to sustaining operations for a media outlet through a volatile and unpredictable revenue source such as crowdfunding.	**a)** Sustainability **b)** Preparation **c)** Recurring vs One-time Support

Description of Sub-themes

I. Value
a) Respondents explain that they were responding to a deficiency or weakness in existing media and the degree to which they believed there was an audience looking for media that resolved this deficiency or weakness
b) When respondents describe their audience being motivated by a desire to be informed or to know things about government or other important social institutions.
c) Respondents described their audience as seeing the value of news as a common good, or a public good, their audience motivated by a desire to contribute to the common good.

d) Respondents talk about their audience being interested in specific issues, social or political typically, or topics of interest. It doesn't necessarily have to be "an issue" as in a political issue like climate change, or corruption, but could be just a topic, like Arts & Culture, or Tech.
e) When respondents talked about the role that the concept of community plays in motivating their funders.
f) When participants talk about focusing on in-depth reporting, or long form journalism, rather than daily news because, daily news is produced on mass for free or that in depth longform is different enough from the daily new offering, that it becomes a unique value proposition for audiences.
g) Respondents describe news audiences as being distrustful of media institutions, journalism's relationship with government and powerful influences in society negatively affecting the quality of news, or if they are willing to pay for news when they trust the institution or the journalist themselves.

II. Promotion
a) Respondents describe the use of personal and professional social networks to raise awareness of and promote their crowdfunding campaigns and the launch of their new media outlets.
b) Respondents describe having a reputation with the audience, or credentials that prove they have a track record of doing good journalism, instilling confidence in people considering contributing financially.
c) Respondents describe the ways they used but traditional media and PR tactics, as well as grassroots organizing in order to create a media relations and promotional strategy for promoting their crowdfunding campaign. Engagement is a subset of communication ability that focuses more on energizing people who have already shown interest in the media outlet, or the existing audience.
d) When respondents describe the journalism work itself as an effective way of promoting their crowdfunding and driving financial supporters to sign-up. Often takes the form of publishing a consequential piece of reporting or a popular article. Creating content that attracts attention described as being a potent promotional tool.

III. Audience
a) Respondents described that they thought were the biggest obstacles or barriers to the general public's willingness to pay for news.
b) Respondents describe local news being a particularly fruitful news enterprise to support through crowdfunding, or they believe there is a robust audience for local news, or people are willing to pay for local news.
c) Respondents discuss the role of being non-profit in the success of crowdfunding.
d) Respondents discuss putting journalistic work behind a hard paywall, where a reader would have to pay a subscription fee to read the content or making it available for free and asking audiences to consider contributing financially voluntarily.
e) Respondents describe the ways in which crowdfunding revenue requires a media outlet to respond and change to audience demands and changing market conditions in order to be financially successful.

IV. Crowdfunding Practices
a) Respondents discuss the size limitations of a crowdfunded journalism outlet operation, the extra labour involved in doing crowdfunding, and how crowdfunded journalism may be more sustainable if the scope of operations is scaled back by focus or amount of output expected.

b) Respondents discuss what kind of background research they did on crowdfunding to try and optimize their success and the importance of pre-planning for a successful crowdfunding campaign.
c) Respondents discuss recurring crowdfunded contributions, typically on a monthly basis, versus one-time contributions and limited one-time crowdfunding campaigns.

Theory

Structuration theory and political and political economy of media provides the theoretical basis for interpretation and analysis in the discussion chapter. In the sociological disciplines, there has been a longstanding tension between concepts of individual human agency shaping the social milieu, or individuals being shaped by overarching, anonymous social forces external to any individual to control. Structuration theory was an attempt bridge this gap and develop an analytic framework that does not give primary importance to either the individual agent or prevailing social structures. The general idea goes back as far as Karl Marx, who observed that people make history but not under conditions of their own making (Mosco, 2009)

Structuration theory was developed as a distinct analytical approach by Anthony Giddens in a series of publication from the mid-1970s through the 1980s, but as Stones (2005) points out, if structuration theory is to be used as a sharp analytical tool, "one needs to be clearer, tighter and more systematic than Giddens has been about structuration theory's distinctive and defining characteristics" (p.1). I will draw on Vincent Mosco's (2009) survey of political-economic theory in communications studies, specifically those aspects which intersect with theories of structuration. Mosco (2009) says that structuration theory describes how "social life is comprised of the mutual constitution of structure and agency; put simply, society and the individual create one another. We are the product of structures that our social action or agency produces." (p. 185). As Mosco (2009) explains, structuration theory shows how "structures are produced and reproduced by human agents" (p. 186).

What structuration theory allows one to do from an analytical standpoint is "think about society as a field of structuring actions initiated by agents that mutually shape class, gender, race, and social movement relations that are based on public issues such as access to the Internet" (Mosco, 2009, p. 188). Mosco (2009) says that these categories (class, gender, race and social movements) "constitute much of the social relations of communication" (p.188). The analysis in this thesis will focus on class and social movements; class is defined broadly as relationships based on economics and consumption, or as Mosco (2009) puts it, "social class refers to the

connections among people based on their location with respect to the primary processes of social production and reproduction" (p. 189). Structuration theory uses phenomenology and "practices" as the connecting "hinge" between the two concepts (Stones, 2005, p. 4). Thus, the experiences of the respondents and their description of their crowdfunding practices and their thoughts on crafting the best financial appeals to their audience will be theorized in the discussion as practices and actions in the context of structuration theory.

Political economy in communication studies seeks to understand how "media and communication systems and content reinforce, challenge or influence existing class and social relationships" (Mosco, 2009, p. 110). A critical political economy of media wants to understand "how different ways of financing and organizing cultural production have traceable consequences for the range of discourses, representations and communicative resources in the public domain and for the organization of audience access and use" (Murdock & Golding, 2005, p. 60). Political economy can help with understanding how crowdfunding, as a unique way of financing news, changes which news discourses are available and how audiences access and use news information. For political economists, structuration theory is an alternative to neoclassical economic analysis by emphasizing that "rational" actors operate "within the limits set by wider structures," or social rules and resources; thus, political economy "starts with sets of social relationships and the play of power" (Murdock & Golding, 2005, p. 62). Importantly, these social rules, resources, and "structures" are recursively (re)made through social action (Wheeler-Brooks, 2009).

Structuration alongside political economy provides the framework for presenting the results of this study as indicative of the "traceable consequences" of the shifting structures of financing and organizing cultural production within the journalism industry at large. These shifting structures are the causes and effects of the financial decline of the news industry at this presented in the introduction and literature review. This respondents in this study are conducting crowdfunding campaigns in response to this restructuring and seek to offset some of its negative consequences. As such they are showing agency in terms of challenging or influencing existing class and social relationships.

My analysis will use structuration theory to show how respondents in this study are crafting value propositions in the context of reacting to the economic restructuring of their industry, something which they have little control over and often is an opaque process to workers

within the industry. This general economic paradigm structures much of how the respondents conceptualize the value of their journalism.

Chapter 4: Results

The four themes covered in this results section are: I) Value, II) Promotion III) Audience and IV) Crowdfunding Practices. All respondents said they began crowdfunding in response to what they perceived as a failing or lack of something in existing news media. Overall, respondents conceptualized the value of their journalism as exhibiting a quality that had declined within existing news media; typically this touched on themes such as the depth or breadth of coverage, the issues and topics addressed in the coverage and the degree to which the information contained in the journalism allowed someone to be a more informed and engaged citizen. Often the deficit was attributed to the corporate ownership of much of the news media in Canada. The main way that respondents made appeals to potential financial supporters emphasized a value, worth or usefulness that could be derived from the journalism they produce. The first major theme, Value, covers the grounds on which respondents made value propositions they found to be most enduring and effective for successfully meeting crowdfunding targets. Subthemes under the value theme include deficit of existing news media, civic engagement, the public good, coverage of social issues and topics, community, trust, and length-depth of reporting.

The Promotion theme focuses on how respondents raised awareness about their crowdfunding campaigns, the strategies they used to get their value proposition seen or heard by people it would resonate with; this includes strategies that apply to crowdfunding generally, such as making use of social networks, both virtual and thicker, more personal social connections, as well as strategies unique to crowdfunding for journalism specifically, such as establishing the credentials of your new media outlet. This theme reflects respondents' thoughts about which communication style would be most effective.

In addition, respondents mentioned things that were unique to the personality and inclination of crowdfunded audiences, which are covered under theme III) Audience, and practices unrelated to direct appeal for financial support they felt were crucial to sustaining operations for a media outlet through a volatile and unpredictable revenue source such as crowdfunding, which are covered under theme IV) Crowdfunding Practices.

Value

Under the first theme, Value, respondents described the basis upon which they compel their audience to become financial supporters and the value they believe their journalism offers. Respondents often described this in terms of being able to "show them the value" (R2). Overall, the journalists in this study embraced the idea that they needed to put work in to demonstrate the value of their journalism before people will become financial supporters.

Respondents couched the way they thought of the value they were offering their potential audience within the context of declining media structures; they were responding to deficits in existing Canadian news media offerings. They also expressed to varying degrees that the economic structure of the news media industry had ceased to be functional and they were replacing traditional media that had disappeared due to the economic decline of the existing media structures. The journalists in this study were responding to closures of newspapers and magazines, as well as areas of interest and social issues that the larger capitalist structure of news media had missed; respondents were proposing to potential financial supporters that they would replace some measure of those qualities that had been lost.

Respondents expressed that they offered value through providing information that was useful for taking part in civic life. This value proposition drew from the long-standing concept of news being important to producing an informed citizenry. The ability to inform oneself was considered to have direct exchangeable value. As Mack Male put it: "We think that if we can provide value to our community in an ongoing way, that value is something that should be exchanged for money, right?" Thus, the value propositions went beyond the concept of a "public good," which are thought to not have exchangeable value, either by design or by lack of economic viability.

Many respondents also expressed that the general public had lost trust in existing news media, and this formed the basis of their value proposition; this loss of trust was related to the overall decline of quality of news media, often expressed in terms of the depth and breadth of the journalism produced.

Deficit in Existing News Media

Nine out of 10 respondents said they believe audiences are dissatisfied with current news media offerings, particularly those produced by corporately owned media; they believed the

public recognized the declining quality of the journalism being offered as acutely as they did. They believed they were responding to a real and significant lack in Canadian news media and were "filling" a "hole" (R1; R2; R5), "gap" (R4; R5; R6; R7; R8), "niche" (R1; R9) or "need or want" (R1) in the media industry. Respondents felt that the public are "dissatisfied" (R5; R6) or "frustrated" (R2) with, and have "distrust" (R3) of, existing news media. Two respondents said the corporate media and legacy newspaper business model are "dying" (R1; R2).

Chelsea Murray said their organization looked to fill a gap in the regional area they lived and focused their work on, Atlantic Canada. They believed that targeting that gap contributed to the success of their crowdfunding campaign: "there aren't any magazines doing the same thing that we're doing here, so… because there's a hole, people saw that and wanted it to be filled."

Ethan Cox launched their media outlet in response to what they thought was a lack of quality coverage on the 2012 Quebec Student Strikes in English media. Cox wanted to create non-corporate media, and saw crowdfunding as the only viable alternative: "We wanted to build a non-profit outlet that would not be accountable to corporate owners and the only real alternative to be able to do that is to get an investment, a buy-in, from your readers." Cox attributed the public's interest in crowdfunded media to the decline of quality in existing news media, which they said had declined because of "round after round of cuts, there's barely anyone working those buildings anymore." Cox said in response to increasingly lower quality news from existing media that "people get increasingly dissatisfied with the mainstream, then they get more and more interested in what the alternatives are, and in supporting them."

Taylor Lambert was also responding to concern about corporate media in Calgary after the Alberta provincial elections in 2015, explaining Alberta voters had elected an NDP government but "all the Alberta Postmedia papers, at least the big city papers, endorsed the Progressive Conservatives, which was wildly out of step with the electorate." Lambert said that "it came out later that they were ordered to do that from Toronto" and so "the question of an independent media was certainly hard on my mind, and a lot of people's minds." Lambert said that this disconnect they perceived between Postmedia and the public contributed to their belief they could successfully crowdfund a new media outlet in Calgary. Lambert said they hoped the declining quality of existing news media would provide the contrast to compel people to support their crowdfunding campaign, saying it was their "guiding principle" that they would be successful if they could

Show people the work they are missing out on in the current local media landscape in Calgary, people will be willing to pay money to keep it going. That was my idea behind crowdfunding.

Joey Coleman, who runs a one-person news operation, chooses news stories to cover when there is a gap in coverage in the existing media, and "when something occurs where there is going to be no other coverage if I don't cover it." Coleman recognized a gap in news media in Hamilton based on his own interests, saying that prior to their first crowdfunding campaign they were "not able to keep up on Hamilton politics because there isn't the coverage." Lambert also made this connection with stories going unreported or underreported by existing media, saying that there were "so many stories out there that are going untold, unreported, or just under told." In comparison, Coleman did not think they were filling a gap that was high in demand, but rather they were making news that they themselves "wanted as a consumer of news," saying municipal politics was a niche interest and that "there's only a few of us, maybe one percent of us, that are obsessed" with it.

Both Taylor Lambert and Jeremy Klaszus were responding to the closure of the same Calgary alt-weekly publication, called *FFWD*. In particular, Klaszus had confidence about being successful in crowdfunding because "there was this huge outpouring of online grief and support for *FFWD*. This outpouring made Lambert believe that "people want this, people will really kick in a buck or two a month or something to pay for this." Klaszus described how the closure of *FFWD* spurred him to try crowdfunding:

> When that was gone there was a gap here, but I wasn't sure what could fill that gap. So, I basically started exploring that with different people in town, other journalists, community leaders, basically saying, what do we need in Calgary and how might it work?

Mack Male also believed there would be demand for a crowdfunded media outlet in Edmonton based on "what we could see happening in social media, the reaction that we saw from local people in our community when traditional journalists were let go, or publications shut down." Male said that they started an Arts & Culture newsletter to capitalize on the gap left behind by the closing of Edmonton alt-weekly newspaper.

CR1 and Emma Gilchrist were both responding to what they saw as a gap in coverage of certain important social issues, such as climate change and renewable energy. CR1's media outlet launched with a crowdfunding campaign to fund an environmental news reporting beat

because "climate change is becoming more mainstream, but at the time it really wasn't getting that much coverage, considering the magnitude of the issue." While CR1's media outlet appeals to potential financial supporters primarily based on social issues, they often choose topics to report on based on internal perception of lack of coverage, choosing stories to report that are "less covered issues that we want to just do even if there were no particular people calling for it." CR1 also said that they received much feedback from their financial supporters, saying they contributed because "we really need more of this kind of coverage." Emma Gilchrist said they consider their media outlet to be "like the environment section of the newspaper if there was such a thing, but there's not such a thing," adding that they see their journalism as "basically filling in the gaps that aren't necessarily being covered by traditional news, but I really dislike when people refer to it as mainstream media and alternative media." Gilchrist also spoke about the lack of good environmental journalism in the context of the journalism industry's economic decline: "There has been a huge hollowing out of beat reporters at publications across the country, and so there is just that huge gap." Gilchrist attributes their success to an unaddressed demand for this type of reporting, saying that they "got a lot of new members in that time just because people were so stoked to see there was this new media outlet covering the environment."

Darren Krause felt they were responding to a gap left by legacy newspapers' turn toward a style of journalism that deviated from traditional, daily broadsheet type news. Krause had previously been the editor of the Calgary edition of *Metro*, a free daily Canada-wide commuter newspaper chain that was bought by the *Toronto Star* in 2011. Krause believed that the *Toronto Star*'s mandated editorial direction of addressing social issues had undermined the success of the journalism they had been producing before the purchase:

> We were running a really successful operation in Calgary and we did that focusing on very community-focused, unique content, and so with The Star they wanted us to start tackling, obviously, more social causes, a little bit more activist journalism.

Unlike some of the other respondents who saw a deficit in the existing media landscape around coverage for certain social issues, like environmental reporting, or in general public advocacy, accountability journalism, Krause thought that legacy media had gone too far in appealing to certain issues oriented toward values on a political spectrum and is crowdfunding journalism that is in keeping with traditional journalism's detached stance and tone. They imagined their audience this way:

> The demographic I felt would be all of the people like me who felt a little bit left behind when you're talking about the far-right and the far-left politics. The average centrist who just lives their life in their neighbourhood, tries to give back a little. We really tried to capture that everyday Calgarian, as opposed to the loud right or the loud left.

Krause's beliefs stemmed from their institutional experience with working with the *Toronto Star*, alluding to the CEO of Torstar, John Boynton, and that they had "said it directly to everybody in The Star in a town hall meeting, this is what we are doing, we are going after these market segments because they are the ones who will pay." Krause also believed that in a similar fashion as Torstar appealing to left-leaning people, Postmedia had begun catering to people on the right end of the political spectrum.

Under this subtheme, respondents described how they were appealing to potential financial supporters based on filling in or replacing what is missing from current news media offerings or improving the level of quality that diminished in existing media. Respondents focused on things that would not be reported by existing media, and on stories that were being underreported or not reported at all.

Civic Engagement

Six out of 10 journalists (CR1, R2, R3, R4, R6, and R9) appealed to their audience around the idea of civic engagement. These respondents explicitly alluded to the value of their journalism work as related to the information it contained; the information would allow people to make more informed and educated decisions about engaging with civil society and institutions, whether that be government or private enterprise. The value proposal had a dual nature under this sub-theme. Journalists invited the audience to make use of the information they were being given to hold powerful public and private institutions accountable and to be more engaged in government and politics beyond procedural democracy, but they also proposed to fill that role for the audience themselves by reporting on these institutions. The latter appeals often made use of tropes related to investigative journalism, and concepts such as "watchdog" or accountability journalism and journalism being important to democracy.

Mack Male said their audience would be "people that are already very engaged in the community… similar to the way I was, so on boards, committees, things like that, or even just the folks that are active on social media discussing civic [issues]." Jeremy Klaszus also described their audience as "civically engaged Calgarians, so they're people who are interested in what's going on in local politics."

Joey Coleman thought their financial supporters were motivated by a desire for there to be a "watchdog" type of journalist focused on Hamilton City Hall. Coleman said that for their financial supporters, "what matters for people is they're happy if I'm watching, if I'm getting the tones and the currents of what is going on." Coleman's value proposition to potential financial supporters was to provide "information for the citizenry to enact their responsibilities of engaged citizenship" and "force City Hall to be transparent" because Coleman was "going to be there with the camera so you can see what is happening at City Hall." Coleman describes themselves as practicing watchdog, accountability journalism. Coleman also felt the role of their journalism was to help create an informed citizenry:

> Ultimately, in my mission statement, it talks about providing the information for the citizenry to enact their responsibilities of engaged citizenship[…] going to these board hearings is trying to explain to people, here's how government actually works, and therefore you can start getting engaged in government effectively.

Darren Krause approached their journalism in a comparable way, saying that their aim was to "give you the information, we'll try and paint the fuller picture for you, so you can actually make an educated decision on it." Krause said that they thought appealing to desire to be informed about civic issues has been a factor in successfully gaining financial supporters:

> I think that we've gained more and more people when they start to realized [we] aren't just doing hot takes about how bike lanes are shitty in Calgary or something like that, [we]'re actually giving an explanation about where some of the challenges are with the bike lanes, here's how much we've spent on it, here's where there's some connection issues that really trouble local bikers.

Mack Male described how they decided to produce journalism that would be allow their audience to make more informed choices in the context of the demise of local media, closures of newspapers and the declining market for news media:

> We thought a lot about what is it that, when those things happen, people are actually lamenting, and we realized it's not usually the who, what, when and where, there's lots of places to find out what happened today… What they really miss is the how and why. So, how does this happen, or how did this come about, or why does this matter, how does it impact me?

CR1 said they thought audiences were looking to the news media for information on "politics and what decisions are being made around the government." As an example of valuable journalism work, CR1 said using freedom of information requests or research to show that a

government communication is making untrue claims, or if the reporting work shows that a product being sold is dangerous. CR1 said that this kind of journalism work demonstrates value because "it shows the power of knowing," and that when crafting appeals to potential financial supporters they "try to impress upon people that by subscribing you're helping to fund investigations and news reporting and features that are going to be really important to understanding your world, so that we hope that they will subscribe." CR1 also extended this logic to the realm of private enterprise, providing the following example:

> Corporate and consumer information… if a best-selling product is actually extremely harmful to, and hazardous to health, I think that is the kind of information people do rely on.

The Public Good

The concept of "service" was applied along a varying spectrum between the individual and collective conceptualizations of the public and citizenship**,** using terms such as "public interest," (R2), "community good" (R3), "public good" (R5), "public benefit" (R7) to describe how they communicate the value of their journalism.

Coleman said the concept of the public good, or community good, was especially important to how they communicate the value of their journalism. Coleman said their financial supporters look at their journalism as a community good and phrased it this way: "Why do people participate in community clean ups?... People do that all the time at the local level, they contribute to the civic commons, and it's a key part of the communications I make." In contrast to Ethan Cox, Coleman's concept of public service journalism adhered to the non-partisan ethos of traditional journalism ethics. As Coleman said:

> You don't see me refer to myself as a progressive news editor. You don't see me refer to myself as an urbanist news outlet. I refer to myself as a common good, and that enables me to get [financial contributions] - I know my funders and there is no particular political orientation that makes up the majority.

Coleman added that their journalism work is intended to "serve public information."

Mack Male said they adopted the concept of service journalism early on to explain their value proposition to their potential audience. Service journalism is a concept popularized by journalism scholar Jeff Jarvis. For Male, providing a service to the public through journalism was about providing information: "We wanted to come up with a model that would allow us to actually truly serve them, which means we need to find out what it is they want to know and

what they need to know." This approach to information also led Male to their "roundup" email newsletters idea, in which they curate important information about the beats they cover rather producing original journalism. Nonetheless Male says it provides something or worth to their financial supporters:

> We have realized that [it] has value to members, we are saving them time, and we are keeping them informed about things that they really care about. They could find everything that is in that newsletter on their own, but they would have to be scouring all the news sources.

Many respondents linked the idea of altruism with journalism being a public or community good. Ethan Cox said that there was an element of altruism involved when their audience members contribute financially because there is no paywall being used - audience members don't get access to additional content as a perk or reward when they contribute financially. Chelsea Murray also said that they didn't think perks were a main driving factor motivating their financial supporters. Joey Coleman said about half of their financial supporters are motivated by altruism:

> They contribute because there is no paywall, because they're buying the news for other people. Whereas, if I had a paywall, I think I would only be able to get 10 dollars a month out of people. Whereas without the paywall, I'm averaging 18 dollars 11 cents.

Ethan Cox believed that staking a strong position on the side of public interest journalism aided their success in crowdfunding, because they think that there is "a big population of people out there who are frustrated with the media, who wanted to see something different, something non-profit, public interest, journalist-run." Cox said he believed it "certainly helped with the appeal" when they were "talking about being on a side, representing a side, balancing out an imbalance in the public square." Cox also said they think "there is a big audience reaction and desire for journalism that takes a side and that side is public interest, the underdog, fighting the good fight."

Cox juxtaposed crowdfunding with corporately owned media, saying that crowdfunding gives people the power to create news that serves their interests:

> The alternative to that is that people pay for it themselves. Somebody is going to pay for the news, and it's either going to be you and then the news represents your interests, or it's going to be somebody else and the news represents their interests.

Thus, Cox appeals to potential financial supporters on the idea of taking ownership of media from corporations with conflicted interests, so that the news can serve the public interest. Ethan Cox's ideas about public-interest journalism and taking a side were related to the sub theme of Social Issues and Topics as well; for Cox, to do public-interest journalism was to take a side in a political argument related to the power of government and private capital, and the media's role in maintaining the "status quo." Similarly, Emma Gilchrist used the term "people-powered media" to describe their outlet.

Taylor Lambert also made appeals during their crowdfunding campaign centered around the idea of journalism being a public good, saying that "part of my pitch was this was a social good that we need to have, as is all journalism." Lambert had tried to appeal based on the connection between a lack of reporting for important stories in Calgary, and what that lack of information means for Calgarians' ability to understand their community, saying that "if we want to understand ourselves, we need to have these stories as part of our public conversation."

Under the two sub-themes of Civic Engagement and The Public Good, respondents described how they pitched the value of this journalism around a constellation of ideas related to civic and democratic participation, the public and public-interest, accountability journalism, and service journalism. While some respondents saw their emphasis on public-interest journalism as a political stance against a disingenuous claim to objectivity and neutrality, others saw it as decidedly against politically partisan approaches to the news; this latter interpretation of the public-interest evokes the choice-making, rational individual who is empowered through better information.

Social Issues and Topics

Under this subtheme, respondents described how they appealed to potential financial supporters based on specific social issues, such as the environment, or by narrowing their coverage by topic without necessarily having a social issue attached.

Ethan Cox planned to fund a media outlet that would take a specific political editorial stance toward social issues, responding to what they saw as poor coverage of the 2012 Quebec Student Strike in English-language media. Cox believed this approach aided their success and that "it certainly helped to be talking about having an explicitly left-wing editorial position." Cox related this to the media bias of false balance, or "bothsidesism," where news media present all sides in a policy debate as equally valid arguments, a consequence of journalism's conventional

approach to balanced coverage and aspiration toward objectivity. They described this false balance as "really a very artificial construct, and a relatively recent one in journalism," because "historically journalism has been about speaking truth to power, comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable. Journalism should be activist, journalism should be seeking to change the world, to make things better, otherwise, what the hell's the point?" Cox said they think there is "a lot of frustration in this country about the lean of all of the mainstream media", citing that "they are all owned by major corporations, and that they all have a very strong status quo bias, and what is often talked about as impartiality is, in fact, just partiality towards the status quo." Thus, Cox viewed the journalistic principle of objectivity as a denial of inevitable biases; Cox believed that being open about editorial leanings was more appealing to news audiences. Cox said they thought a big part of what makes crowdfunding successful is that for the audience it "reflects their values and their interests."

The idea of being able to support a cause that aligns with one's values was a common way that respondents appealed to potential financial supporters. CR1 conceptualized the value being offered by their outlet as being related to the issues and stories they reported on that have to do with social inequality. Furthermore, CR1 said that for their financial supporters: "supporting a cause they believe in is a huge motivating factor for not just [media outlet – redacted] but most publications."

Jeremy Klaszus began with journalism that was focused on a municipal election in Calgary. Typically interest in municipal politics is higher during an election, so this was an example of appealing to people with general interest in civic engagement. In later editions of their "pop-up" outlet, Klaszus has focused on socials issues such as climate change, as the next logical place for their journalism to go after a focus on municipal politics.

Lindsay Sample's media outlet began as a company focused on social issues – such as "gender, climate, sustainability, reconciliation, education" – and would partner with non-profits and institutions interested in these issues; in the last two years they have shifted emphasis to local news, focusing on a specific geographic community, Cowichan Valley, on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. Although, Sample said their outlet remained focused on important social issues within the context of local news and "in that transition... we wanted to hold on to this idea of in-depth, issue-based coverage and there still being a centre, a central hub that supported this network of local reporters." As they put it, "it was both things at the same time."

Emma Gilchrist built their media outlet around the social issue of climate change and environmental issues. They expressed that people looked at journalism as a way that action can be taken regarding social and political issues:

> I think people, they feel disenfranchised, and there aren't a lot of ways for them to grapple with the very large issues that we're facing, and being able to donate to make a certain story possible, or to support independent journalism in general helps them counter that. It gives them something that they can do, that is tangible, and I think that makes them feel good.

Gilchrist's advice to journalists endeavouring to crowdfund a new media outlet was to specify by issue or topic. Gilchrist also connected successful crowdfunding with having a specific, niche beat or topic area to report on and the subtheme of Community: "I do think it's easier to do this when you have a clear niche too, and having a topic area like we do really allows us to build a community around it."

On, the other hand, as mentioned, Joey Coleman said they strive to be politically non-partisan, rather than catering to audiences at the left and right political extremes. Coleman also said that their non-partisan approach meant that their audience fell along a broad political spectrum:

> I do have a large number of people who are NDP, but Hamilton is also a place that elects NDP MPs. But I also have conservatives, usually Red Tories, I don't have anybody who is a Blue Tory. But I can move between those political lines because I have not branded myself with a political affiliation as *The Public Record.*

Coleman contrasted their work with *Rabble* Media, a political left leaning news organization, as an example of a politically partisan journalism outlet: "*Rabble*, they are funding a media outlet with a political viewpoint because they like those ideas, they believe in those ideas, they believe in the importance of that type of coverage." However, Coleman believed their crowdfunding success depended on remaining as politically non-partisan as possible.

Darren Krause also had consciously gone in the opposite direction, going against the trend of targeting market segments based on specific social issues and basing their appeal on reaching a traditional mass news audience. Krause said they were doing crowdfunded journalism in response to legacy media targeting fragmented audiences on the basis of politics:

> What media companies have done, and I know this because I was part of the conversation, is they realize that going after special interest groups and targeting the content that appeals to those people are what people are willing to pay for.

Krause related this to the subtheme of deficits in existing media, saying the financial crisis in legacy journalism has caused it to turn away from traditional objective journalism and be more politically partisan:

> We haven't found a way to do objective journalism and get paid for it. So, what do we have to do? We have to cater to the people who get all hyped up about these progressive or conservative issues and then we ask them for their money. And that's what the media companies are doing now.

Krause said the audience they were appealing to "don't want to be told what's important and they don't want to be told how to think about what's important." Krause communicates the value of their journalism to potential financial supporters as being for people who want ostensibly fact-based reporting and conventionally objective North American journalism. Typically, this is characterized by striving to present news without interpretative bias, or political partisanship. Also, similarly to Joey Coleman, Krause described their media outlet as "apolitical" and says they provide the kind of information that helps people understand local issues better, such as transportation and biking infrastructure:

> [We] aren't just doing hot takes about how bike lanes are shitty in Calgary or something like that, they're actually giving an explanation [of] where some of the challenges are with the bike lanes, how much we've spent on it, where there is some connection issues that really trouble local bikers, we try to paint that bigger picture.

Unlike Coleman, however, Krause was not appealing to people that have a keen interest in highly detailed reporting on municipal politics, but an audience that nonetheless wants to be kept abreast of important current affairs locally. Krause had begun to have second thoughts about their ability to turn their target audience into financial supporters, after not meeting their revenue expectations from crowdfunding:

> How I felt initially was 'hey there are a lot of people who are looking for the information. Just the facts, ma'am.' That's what we're after, we're after the facts with some good writing, something that informs me about my community. How I feel about it today might be something a little bit different, and that's what makes the whole process slightly disheartening is, I don't want to admit that the CEO's of the media companies are probably right. If you are going with a straight online publication… they realize that the only way to capitalize is by giving people exactly what they want to hear.

The need for independent journalism itself was an issue to which many respondents alluded. Chelsea Murray said that their media outlet was focused on producing good narrative journalism, they "start with a story" but that the goal is to demonstrate the story is "connected to

the world we live in… what does it say about society, or us… [it's] connected to something more than just the story itself." They also thought that part of a journalist's job was to:

> Show people what the state of media is and what the state of the news is and that they need to support it if they want to get that really important information that matters to their lives even if they don't see it, because it matters to democracy, and it matters just to society functioning, but I don't think it's something that necessarily everyone realizes at this point.

Taylor Lambert also felt that a broad appeal based on the general idea of the public value of journalism was not that effective:

> I may have just assumed that this idea will sell itself, and if anyone cares at all about local journalism, or independent journalism, I'm the only guy doing it. Nobody else is stepping up to do it, so if you want to do this, here's your chance, I'm the guy.

Jeremy Klaszus also used the issue of journalism's relationship with democracy to appeal to potential supporters, but they also tried to form a community around this idea saying: "That's really been the pitch throughout it, which is, journalism is important, but also, be a part of this, and join the community." Klaszus expressed some skepticism of using the concept of the democratic value of journalism to make a financial appeal to their audience:

> All that stuff is true, it resonates with a certain group of people but I think that group of people is quite small, is the reality, whereas if you are putting out content that people are sharing, then it's like, 'oh this is actually giving me something I'm not getting elsewhere,' it catches people's attention and then they're like, 'oh, yeah, sure, five bucks a month that seems reasonable.'

Chelsea Murray said they received much support from people who were enthusiastic about the media in general. Lindsay Sample also said that many of their financial supporters are "media reinvention super fans."

Mack Male said supporting journalism generally was a motivating factor for many of their financial contributors:

> Some people maybe strictly just want to get the information, but I think for the majority of our members it would be a combination of 'I'm going to get some value here', but 'this is also something I believe in, something I care about.' I don't think we're at the point where the majority of our members are strictly transactional, I would say a majority of our members are motivated, at least to some extent, by 'I want to support journalism in my city.'

While Emma Gilchrist said that supporting independent journalism allows people to do something about issues they care about, they also said in their experience an appeal based solely on the value of independent journalism was less effective, explaining that "sometimes we fundraise more generally around the role of independent journalism, but more often it's around some particular environmental issue."

Social issues were also related to the idea of urgency in raising money through crowdfunding. Gilchrist explained that "another huge thing, when it comes to fundraising, it needs to provoke emotion, good fundraising is not cold hard and rational, it's emotional, and you need to make people feel things." Murray also said it is important to create a sense of "urgency," and that is why it is best to choose a shorter campaign length. Empowering the audience, focusing pitches on "making them the hero," not to become too "organization-centric" and what the organization wants to do compared to what the audience can help achieve. Ethan Cox said you have to talk about something that "lights a fire in people."

Under this sub-theme, respondents described how they believed that news audiences are looking to support journalism that allows them to address social issues that are important to them; respondents believed that news audiences feel they can do something to address these social issues by financially supporting journalism that covers that issue. This was related to the sub-theme of civic engagement and the public good yet tends to be more overtly political than value propositions couched in terms of public interest and accountability. For example, Joey Coleman, who considered themselves to be a "watchdog" journalist consciously strives to be non-political but is still concerned with covering important civic issues, yet through the prism of traditional dispassionate journalism. Coleman has successfully met their crowdfunding targets on this basis. On the other hand, Darren Krause is making a value proposition on a similar basis as Coleman, but not successfully meeting their goals.

Community

Eight of 10 (CR1, R1, R2, R4, R6, R7, R8, R9) respondents said the idea of community played a role in their crowdfunding success. The concept was described in broad terms by respondents and was often not precisely defined, but generally referred to a higher level of social interaction between media outlets and financial supporters, beyond just reading the journalism published. Chelsea Murray used storytelling events to raise awareness of their media outlet, because it was focused on long-form narrative journalism. Rather than being built around a

geographically specific community, or community of civically engaged people, Murray's community was "more about creating a feeling between people, between strangers, or people who have a love of stories." Comparing standard subscription models with crowdfunding, Murray said:

> If you're offering subscriptions, you're selling a product, but if you are offering membership, or you're doing a crowdfunding campaign, that's more of a community interaction, or building a feel like they're helping build something that's important.

Murray concluded the following:

> People who really tap into a sense of more tangible regional communities tend to have more goodwill and more success in raising money than other publications that don't. That's something that we're looking to do more and to develop more in the future too.

Jeremy Klaszus expressed similar sentiments about transactional subscription models of funding media:

> I think people had, and still have, a sense of being part of something, so it's not just like The Athletic, for example, where, [it is] 'here's my subscription and now I get this premium content,' this stuff is happening anyway, so it's not behind a paywall, but I want to be part of it.

When asked about advice they would journalists who want to try crowdfunding, Klaszus emphasized how focusing on local news was conducive to creating a feeling of connection with a community: "People aren't necessarily hungry for more information, but what they are hungry for is community, especially in a city, when you're doing something smaller scale than *Canadaland,* I can do a lot more of that community angle on things." Emma Gilchrist said that community was influential on their crowdfunding success as well:

> I think it's huge, and I think that is something that did really change when we launched *The Narwhal*. We created all the swag, and people loved that. Now we have a premium offer, people become a monthly member for $20 a month, they get a t-shirt or a toque, and that has been really effective as well. People are searching for a sense of belonging and *The Narwhal* is something that many people want to belong to, and I think that sense of community is really important.

Gilchrist also described the relationship with their financial supporters in terms of a personal connection:

> We've tried hard to foster the sense of connection with us as individuals and we try to make all our reporters real people too, and so we have photos of them, and we have

personal notes from them, and I think that sense of connection with us as humans is also really important in the whole scheme of our communications with people.

While Gilchrist said that focusing on what the audience can do through making a financial contribution and "making them the hero" creates a sense of urgency to act, by consciously trying to not become too "organization-centric," Gilchrist is fostering that sense of inclusion with a media outlet's activity that helps achieve a sense of community among financial contributors, particularly around a specific social issue.

Ethan Cox also felt that the idea of community was "critical" to success in crowdfunding, describing crowdfunding as trying to build a community to collectively achieve a goal:

> You're trying to build a community around a project. That's exactly what it is. You're saying, look, if you reach into your pocket, and you support this project, and you become part of this community, then we can do more together than we can individually.

Cox linked their ideas on community to flaws in existing news media and a lack of public interest journalism. They said they were using crowdfunding "to say, we've identified a need, there's a hole here, we as a community, our democracy, our public interest requires something here, you want to fill this hole, you [can] help us." Thus, Cox's use of community in crowdfunding revolves around journalism that serves the public interest, and it frames crowdfunding as a way for people to come together and advocate for the public interest in the context of an established media that has conflicted interests. Cox also said that they had not been as successful as they would have liked in adding financial supporters due to not having anyone to fill the role of "community manager."

Those that contributed financially to Mack Males's media outlet became a "member" and obtained access to a website called the "Story Garden" where they could suggest ideas for stories to report on and other members could comment. While Male said that community "is a word that gets used for a lot of different things," within their media organization it primarily refers to members who have access to the Story Garden platform, and "people that are engaged more actively in the work that we're doing." Male was inspired by websites like *De Correspondent* from the Netherlands that has a community-focused ethos and emphasizes participation from the audience. Male chose a membership-based model of crowdfunding because they wanted to have an "ongoing relationship" with the audience they built. Male felt that being able to engage with

their audience regularly was the best way of understanding how best to "serve" their audience with *Taproot*'s journalism.

Lindsay Samples's organization had shifted to local news in the past two years, and had also found, through A/B testing on several types of appeals on social media, that "prompts that were about community connection performed the best." Sample's outlet had recently decided to focus on just one specific local area, Cowichan Valley, and planned to continue testing how well appeals based on community performed.

Darren Krause also described their journalism as "community journalism" in the context of their work being "apolitical." Krause described the genre of their journalism as "community" news, and as similar to the type of news he had produced at Metro, a free daily commuter newspaper, prior to it being purchased by Torstar. Krause said that their target audience were people that "care about things that are going on in their community." Thus, Krause's use of the term community was dissimilar from how the other respondents used it; here, community is used to indicate a mass public audience or the events happening in immediate surroundings of where one lives but does not indicate the desire to build a social community as part of the media outlet itself. Krause said they did not emphasize engagement with their audience, and that when communicating with potential financial supporters they were "just going to tell you that we're going to produce community journalism, and you can make the decision whether that is valuable to you or not." Krause defined their community journalism work in opposition to spending time developing stronger relationships with specifically their financial supporters, asking "how far down the road do I want to go with that? How far do I want to go to appease just specifically patrons when I should dedicating my resources to doing good community journalism?"

Chelsea Murray felt that crowdfunding generally lent itself more to creating a sense of community around a media outlet than traditional forms of news media; with crowdfunding you can "tug on heartstrings a little bit more."

This subtheme shows how community in crowdfunded journalism depends heavily on bringing together people with a common interest; moreover, it demonstrates how crowdfunded journalists lean toward appealing based on emotion and getting people excited or impassioned about something.

Length-Depth

All respondents focused on longform journalism, in-depth reporting, or investigative reporting, as opposed to daily news or *fait divers* type of news. Many of the journalists were trying to explicitly avoid competing with existing legacy media organizations or competing to cover daily news, thus were interested in taking a long-form, depth investigation approach to journalism.

The journalism produced by Mack Male's outlet leans toward highly researched, in-depth investigative journalism, focusing on deeper reporting rather than daily news brief journalism. Male said that the daily news market was too competitive and crowded:

> There are lots of places to find out what happened today, so if that's the pitch, then, I think it puts your crowdfunding efforts in competition with everybody else who is doing local journalism coverage in your community. There are far fewer people doing that sort of thoughtful, investigative type of journalism, and I think that's a clearer value proposition for members for sure.

Thus, Male did not think it would make an effective value proposition to offer the same type of journalism that is ubiquitously available for free to the general public; rather, Male was producing journalism that provides better understand of the daily news. Jeremy Klaszus also did not believe it was effective to crowdfund for an outlet that producing the same type of news produced freely, and said they produce more deeply reported journalism to avoid competing with daily news:

> Part of it is letting the daily people do their stuff. It's almost like *The Sprawl* is not in direct competition with them in a way, because we're not trying to beat them on any story, really. We bring more depth, or context, it's about slowing it down and seeing it a bit more of the big picture.

Taylor Lambert said the type of journalism they wanted to crowdfund for was meant to provide deeper understanding of daily news, and not compete with producers of daily news, saying they wanted to create "long-form journalism, deep dives into issues, focused on local issues, strictly the local level, but more in-depth than daily news outlets allow for because they have limited resources and their first priority is the daily news grind." Darren Krause also said they were aiming to provide more information and context than what was provided by daily news:

> We'll compete where we need to, just to have that presence, but our goal is to either give people a better understanding rather than what typically is done, which is hot takes, and agenda journalism, and we actually want to give people the information and, again, like I

said, we'll give you the information, we'll try and paint the fuller picture for you, so you can actually make an educated decision on it.

Trust

Some respondents described the primary deficit of existing news media offerings to be that of trust. As such they considered showing a higher level of commitment to ethics and transparency to be a primary way of communicating the value of their journalism to potential financial supporters. Joey Coleman thought the public was generally not trusting of the media because it is "seen as a proxy for the elite" and "too close to power," and "the public distrusts the elite because the elite have broken the social contract." Coleman addressed several issues related to journalism's relationship to power, such as using prevaricatory language in similar ways as politicians do, saying that that "because language is used in spin all the time" journalists face challenges in getting the public to trust them because journalists "work with words" and are seen as "word wizards." The feeling that journalists and the media engage in prevarication with their use of words was one example, Coleman said, of how "the social contract has been broken."

Another example Coleman gave of the media and journalism being perceived as elitist by the public was their entrenchment in the large metropoles of the country and their presumption to have authority over establishing what is considered the truth for people in quite distant geographical areas. Coleman used the example of "fact-checking" journalism, which corrects misleading or false statements made by public figures, which he did not think was effective because:

> The ultimate problem is those fact-checkers are going to be in Toronto, Ottawa, and for the Francophone population, Montreal, Quebec, and the people in East Hamilton aren't going to be getting the message from the *Toronto Star*, they don't follow the *Toronto Star* on social media, they don't know who the *Toronto Star* person is, it's just another person saying I am a journalist, I am the voice of God, here is what is fact.

Accordingly, Coleman linked trust with local news and said being a local journalist and focusing on local news worked to their advantage when crowdfunding, because local news was where "people get to know the journalist, the journalist is not the other, the journalist is not the abstract." As they described:

> The journalist is the person that goes to the same grocery store they do, gets their coffee at the same coffee shop they do, lives in the same physical environment that they do. And if people can trust their local journalist, they can start trusting journalism again.

Coleman saw the process of re-establishing trust as "convincing those people that we are looking out for their interests by watching government," and thus by providing public service, or being a public good. Coleman emphasized how important being transparent about their editorial and correction process was for building trust.

The subtheme of trust was also related to the subtheme of reputation and credentials, which is a subtheme under the Promotion theme. Respondents touted their previous career experience in journalism to convince potential financial contributors to trust that the respondents would use their money to produce the journalism they said they were going to. It assured their potential audience they could deliver on what their crowdfunding campaign was promising. Mack Male believed the earlier journalism work they had done in Edmonton helped people be more willing to become financial supporters:

> [It] removed another barrier that people have, when they are presented with, 'hey give us 10 dollars a month', right? You don't know anything about the person, you've got to find a way to trust them, in our case we already had some profile and so it probably was a little easier for that initial group of people to give us money.

The journalists in this study also established trust by demonstrating to potential financial supporters that had already developed ideas for the stories they wanted to begin reporting on if their crowdfunding campaign was successful. Chelsea Murray said that demonstrating there were stories waiting to be written and reported on if they raised enough financial support helped in meeting their crowdfunding targets:

> We were ready to go as long as we got the money, so I think that really helped, because when we did talk to people who are friends or coworkers in media and then also people in the community, that they saw how much planning we had done and what our vision was and they could really imagine it with us, that really helped too.

Taylor Lambert said they had less of a reputation in their community and this hindered the success of their crowdfunding campaign. Lambert also linked this to being able to demonstrate a capability to produce journalistic content. Lambert had not produced any journalism work prior to their crowdfunding campaign, nor developed concrete ideas of the stories that would be reported if their crowdfunding campaign was successful. Without a clear vision or a preliminary body of journalism work already produced, Lambert thought it was more difficult to develop trust:

> I was basically asking, If you think this sounds like a good idea, trust me to do it, give me your money, and then I will show you what I am going to do, and then you can decide to give me more money.

Lambert's conclusion was that "you have to show them the work first before asking them for money." Lindsay Sample described the biggest obstacle to getting someone to pay for news in a similar way as Lambert, saying the challenge is coming up with an "upfront investment to build the trust and to build the content, and to do the work that at the scale that is needed for people to recognize you as something that they need and that they're willing to pay for."

Both Ethan Cox and Joey Coleman spoke of a neutral set of journalism ethics that formed that basis of quality journalism regardless of the political orientation. As Coleman said:

> If we have a large number of media outlets that are ultimately working in good faith, and they may have different ideologies, we all end up with a competitive news system. We end up with the government being held to account, we end up with people more engaged.

Cox emphasized although their media outlet had a specific political point of view, or took a stance in favour of the public interest, the journalism they produced still adhered to the principles of fair reporting, saying their outlet was "not different from any other media outlet." As Cox described:

> We have the same or higher standards in terms of our journalistic content, what is different is that we have a different editorial position, and so it's very disconcerting for people at mainstream media outlets to see you have a different editorial position, but there's nothing that changes the validity of your journalism.

Thus, Cox argued that taking political stances editorially was not a reason for people to distrust the legitimacy of the journalism they produced, rather there were independent journalistic principles and ethics that remained in force. Generally, respondents gave credence to journalistic ethics and standards to guarantee journalism acted in good faith.

Overall, under the first theme, respondents discussed ways in which they made value propositions to their audience and potential financial supporters. The overarching context in which respondents were formulating these value propositions was the decline of their industry in general. Many of the value propositions proposed to restore something that had been lost or to some degree has been always lacking in existing news media, such as information to facilitate civic engagement, accountability journalism in the public interest, journalism on certain social

issues or specific topics that do not get enough coverage, depth of coverage and a sense of trust with the practitioners and owners of journalism outlets.

Promotion

Under the second theme, Promotion, respondents discussed how they communicate with potential and current financial supporters and the ways they raise awareness about their crowdfunding campaigns. Many of the journalists interviewed utilized standard promotional and public relations strategies, as well as strategies typical of crowdfunding - for example, the use of pre-existing social or professional networks to spread awareness, and using networks of former colleagues and associates from the journalism industry to help promote, primarily through social media.

Promotional activities were considered by all respondents as something that required precise planning and execution and needed to be tailored to the audience being targeted with the value proposition. All respondents said that promoting crowdfunding campaigns was a significant addition to their journalism workload. Some respondents expressed that they had underestimated how much self-promotion would be necessary to complete a successful crowdfunding campaign; others had anticipated promotion would require a lot of work and attention.

In terms of changing promotional strategies in response to what resonated with the potential audience and what appeals seemed to resonate and which didn't, most respondents didn't have a formalized way of carrying forward lessons learned from previous crowdfunding campaigns. Murray said they did not carry forward an understanding of the people who had contributed to their first crowdfunding campaign to the task of adding recurring subscribers. Ethan Cox said they did not really change the basic assumption of their promotion strategy after their first successful crowdfunding campaign. CR1 said their organization's assumptions about best practices for promotion have remained "quite similar" since the first campaign. Joey Coleman said their promotional strategy has "largely stayed the same."

Networking

Six out of 10 respondents (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5 and R8) said they relied on a network of professional contacts and journalism friends developed over the course of their journalism career and those contacts established social media audiences for spreading awareness of and promoting

respondents' crowdfunding activities, more so than they relied on networks of friends and family.

Ethan Cox relied on networks of supporters developed through their previous political organizing during the Quebec Student Strikes in 2012; they had organized volunteer teams in the three largest cities in Canada to help with promotion. Cox said they also accessed networks of niche interests on social media platforms, such as groups on Facebook; these networks consisted of people interested in similar social issues. Cox explained that building a network to aid with promoting a crowdfunding campaign for a new media outlet involved three levels of supporters: 1) ordinary individual supporters, "ambassadors," 2) like-minded community organizations, and 3) high-profile, well-known endorsers. Together the crowdfunding campaign can tap into all pre-existing social networks associated with these levels of support and promote the crowdfunding campaign through these networks. Cox felt personal networks were important in the beginning, but their promotional campaign moved out of those immediate networks quite quickly:

> In any crowdfunding campaign, your first and most important audience is your own networks. Those are the people who are going to give you money no matter how good your pitch is, it's getting people outside of your network to give you money that requires a good pitch.

The network subtheme also intersected with the subtheme of civic engagement under the theme of Value; both Joey Coleman and Mack Male networked with contacts developed through civic participation. Coleman said they promoted their journalism work among the network of people they have built by being civically engaged in their local community, but that it is a quasi-professional network:

> The people that I walk down the street and I shake hands with… that I chat with at the market, that I see at the library, that are in neighbourhood associations, that are chairs of neighbourhood associations. But ultimately those friends are also engaged citizens, so it's a question of what comes first, chicken or the egg, right?

Coleman's relationship with this network of social contacts was more casual than that of immediate friends and family. This also meant they focused on local news, and the promotional strategy for their crowdfunding was initially on small scale and directly personal. Male worked in a similar fashion:

> We would reach out to new people, meet them for coffee and try to get them to become a member, and reach out to existing members and go for coffee and see what they liked and

what they didn't... those real, critical conversations came face to face over coffee. It's hard to replicate, it's hard to scale, but it's super valuable.

Chelsea Murray said that someone would struggle to succeed at crowdfunding a media outlet without a network of media professional associates to engage. They emphasized the importance of having a network of contacts for promotion in the response advice they would give to others. In a similar fashion to Ethan Cox, Murray asked like-minded people within their regional literary and journalism community to ask them to help promote their crowdfunding campaign through their networks.

Taylor Lambert, who did not successfully meet their crowdfunding target, said that their ability to use their professional networks was hampered by them being terminated by a large newspaper in Calgary in response to them launching their crowdfunding campaign. Lambert says they were terminated because their employer, Postmedia, considered it competition. However, Lambert did rely on their network of professional contacts to promote their crowdfunding campaign. They credit this with the initially substantial number of contributions they received at the beginning of their crowdfunding campaign, although they did not maintain that momentum in the long term and did not hit their crowdfunding goal.

The Discourse's first crowdfunding campaign had been on FrontFundr Sample, an equity investing crowdfunding platform that allows contributors to invest starting at $250. *The Discourse* had previously partnered with foundations and non-profits to produce journalism on a specific topic or social issue of interest to the partnering group. Sample said that they tapped into their network of previous partners and contact made through that previous work to appeal to during the FrontFundr campaign. They were people who "care about the future of journalism," what Sample called "media reinvention superfans." They also had friends and family make contributions, or investments, in the campaign.

Reputation and Credentials

The importance of building a relationship with their potential audience and developing the organization's credentials prior to being able to successfully crowdfund from that audience, appeared frequently in respondents' answers. Often this took the form of institutional credentials.

Chelsea Murray partnered with a local Alt-weekly called The Coast because they had "a lot of clout in the community." The Coast was known for producing high quality long form journalism, which was the kind of journalism Murray wanted to do at *The Deep.* Murray said,

"we saw an opportunity for us to align ourselves with them would be really beneficial to us, but then we would bring their name out beyond Halifax."

CR1's media outlet had grown from a small, regionally focused blog; the blog produced work for free over a period of around five years. CR1 said they drew on this existing audience when they used crowdfunding to expand the scope of the journalism being done at the blog: "A lot of people have been reading our content for years and will actively spread the word about our crowdfunding campaign if there is one."

Joey Coleman felt their crowdfunding success benefited from having a long standing relationship with the local community they were reporting in and the people that lived there, having grown up there from a young age: "People were willing to invest in me because there was this history of school board committees, refereeing, Boys & Girls Club, neighbourhood association." Coleman said their reputation as a resident of the city contributed to their crowdfunding success because "in reality, the reason I succeeded was not because of the messaging, it was because people like me, people know me. They were willing to invest in me and let me be quirky." Coleman spent time each day "out in the community." Crowdfunding first came to Coleman's attention because people within the local community where they worked as a journalist wanted them to stay within the community rather than seek employment elsewhere. Their daily routine includes visiting the local farmers market to interact with locals and eating lunch at various neighbourhood casual eateries around the city.

Additionally, Coleman expressed that there had been negative pressure exerted on the number of potential financial supporters they attracted after a legal fracas involving them and a member of city council strained their credibility with employees at city hall, people who normally would be interested in the kind of news they are producing. However, this had unintuitively improved their relationship with other potential audience members and financial supporters. Coleman explained how there are two perceptions of them in the city they work:

> [There is] the one that I've chosen, which is that informed, in-depth, mechanisms of government to help you be engaged, that I'm a proxy for you as a citizen as City Hall. The other is the result of council going at me as much as they have, and the other media going at me as much as they have, which is that I'm the outsider that City Hall hates, therefore people like me, I go places and people go, 'oh you're the guy that city hall hates, we like you.'

Coleman had also recently been accepted to a prestigious journalism fellowship; they planned to also study civil engineering courses to give themselves more credibility when talking about municipal infrastructure issues: "I'm not aware of any other journalist with some engineering education background writing about municipal government." They believed that a hands-on scientific course of studies would endear them to their "working-class" audience. Additionally, Coleman was successful because someone from an audience they previously built through publishing written work on a personal blog had made a large financial contribution to their first crowdfunding campaign to ensure the campaign hit its target. Thus, previous work as a journalist and having an existing public profile helped Coleman succeed in crowdfunding.

Taylor Lambert felt that they didn't have enough name recognition within the community, or enough of a relationship built with their potential financial supporters. They said they felt that "the biggest failure was I was asking for money first, to do the work second. I have some minor notoriety in Calgary and Alberta, but I'm not a household name, I'm not an icon of journalism." Lambert set up an all-or-nothing crowdfunding campaign and did not intend to proceed unless they hit their target, which would have covered expected costs for two months. They recalled that while promoting the crowdfunding campaign on the Reddit subforum for Calgary, a poster had asked pointedly how the public knew they would produce good journalism if they had no real prior knowledge of them or relationship with them.

Based on advice from Lambert to "build the crowd first" when it comes to crowdfunding for journalism, Klaszus did an inaugural rendition of their pop-up media outlet for free and asked the audience to become recurring contributors on Patreon simultaneously. Klaszus said that a major decision they struggled with was choosing the right timing to ask, or intensity with which to ask their audience to become financial supporters. They were concerned that asking their audience to contribute financially too prematurely, without having had produced enough work to establish their credentials, would hinder the success of their crowdfunding campaigns. Klaszus said that crowdfunding prior to producing any journalism work was like providing a "proof of concept" and they wondered if that was enough to justify soliciting financial contributions.

The first iteration of Emma Gilchrist's media outlet was called DeSmog Canada, and *The Narwhal* was a revamp of that website. DeSmog Canada was part of an international network of websites dedicated to being a "source for accurate, fact-based information regarding global warming misinformation campaigns" (DeSmog Canada). Thus, Gilchrist drew on these existing

credentials and the existing supporters of DeSmog Canada when they started a crowdfunding campaign to relaunch DeSmog Canada as *The Narwhal*. Gilchrist said:

> We literally kept our email lists and our website just started redirecting to a new website, so it was the same audience but bigger so that was really to take what we were doing at DeSmog and to broaden it and to grow it.

Darren Krause thought that their prior standing in the community as a journalist was "essential" because "nobody has to question, "who are you?", " who are you with?", they all knew when I launched, okay, well, now we've got another media player in the market." Krause did not assign as much emphasis on developing a community or developing an ongoing relationship with the potential audience and contributors, as compared to simply the core work of producing journalism.

Mack Male said having a reputation from their prior work in journalism aided their success:

> We had built up enough credibility over the years through our previous ventures and efforts that people felt more comfortable trusting that we weren't just going to take their money and run, we were going to try to do something with it.

Communication Expertise and Engagement

Respondents that successfully met their goals for crowdfunding campaigns often relied on more conventional media relations campaign tactics. Being able to deploy a sophisticated media relations and social media campaign (having all video, graphic and copywriting assets in place beforehand, for example), and using traditional media for promotional purposes was considered important by half the respondents. The other half spoke more in terms of engagement with their audience as their communications expertise.

Ethan Cox felt that having the high-profile endorsements was part of the overall higher level of communication and public relations experience their team had:

> We were started by a team of journalists and communication experts and often journalists are not experts at communication, distribution, and social media. So, it was a very young team, it was a team that was very adept at social media and promotion.

Cox mentioned having a planned schedule, and previously made video and graphic assets for their social media promotional campaign ahead of time had been helpful. Also, like most of the respondents, Cox did not have a budget for paid media advertising for their promotional efforts. However, they gained enough promotional traction to gain exposure on larger mass

media properties such as CBC Radio and the Globe & Mail. Cox believes that happened simply because there were few precedents for journalism crowdfunding campaigns. It was novel and attention worthy. They believe that crowdfunding for journalism has become more difficult because the idea of crowdfunded journalism is no longer novel.

Endorsements from influential, well-known people also played a role in the sophistication of a respondent's communication strategy. For Chelsea Murray this meant "people that are looked up to in the region" and they secured an endorsement via Twitter from a prominent Member of Parliament for the region they were serving. Cox also relied on endorsements from people who are influential with their target audience, broadly people interested in progressive and leftist politics, such as Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein. The endorsements largely took place on social media, and so these high-profile names were able to promote Cox's crowdfunding campaign to their large audience of social media followers.

Jeremy Klaszus did not have a well thought out communication strategy and didn't rely on a team of communication professionals or particularly sophisticated level of communications/PR expertise. They also said finding the right messaging was important and they focused on a positive tone - inviting people to contribute to something important that was happening in their community. Like Gilchrist, Klaszus focused on emphasizing the positive impact an individual could have, what they could help achieve through their financial contribution.

Taylor Lambert largely worked on a social media strategy on their own without a team. They felt they did not have a strong social media strategy:

> I was posting a lot of recycled stuff, it was the same post over and over again like, 'Hey, I'm doing this thing. Hey, have you heard? I'm doing this thing,' and I feel like this was not a strong social media strategy there.

Krause focused their promotional messaging strictly on the value of the journalism being produced. Krause acknowledges they did not approach their messaging from a professional public relations or communications point of view because they and their partners had "just been journalists going, 'yes, no, what do think about this? Do you think this resonates with people?'" Essentially, they crafted their message based on their journalism experience, rather than based on marketing insights. Krause said marketing professionals have given them feedback "but at the end of the day maybe we're just not very good at marketing." Krause had also hoped to

capitalize on the attention being given because they had recently left the Metro newspaper, but thought that more work on perfecting their messaging would improve their success: "It comes back down to the message, maybe people don't care about this kind of stuff, and we got to find a different message that will compel people to make that commitment."

Other respondents relied more on what could be described as engagement, which is something that primarily concerns an audience that is already highly engaged with the media outlet; they may be subscribed to a free newsletter and interested in the journalism work being produced, but not yet a financial supporter, or they may have been a one-time financial contribution previously and are now being asked to become a monthly recurring financial contributor. For many of the respondents "really strong engagement with your membership" (R2) was important for success. Ethan Cox, CR1, Emma Gilchrist, and Mack Male had ways of regularly engaging with people who have shown interest in their journalism but not yet become a financial supporter.

Emma Gilchrist describes a systematic "ladder of engagement," starting with free content on their website, and then asking visitors to sign-up for a free newsletter. People receiving the free newsletter become an audience that can be solicited for membership through various appeals. People who contribute receive a handwritten thank-you card. They compared this to what a large charitable organization would do to regularly contact you if you had made a donation:

> Thanking is really important, for any fundraising professional knows that; your process of thanking and following up and reporting back is essential to ever getting another gift. Your most likely donor is someone who has already given, so there is a lot that we put into donor stewardship.

Gilchrist believed that crowdfunded journalism outlets only needed to have an employee with this kind of communication to successfully generate revenue through crowdfunding:

> There's a formula to it and you just need to follow that formula, so I think bringing in someone with fundraising expertise who knows all about best practices would put a lot of organizations in a great place.

The Narwhal maintains an organized database to help with engagement and make sure the proper thank you notes, and perks are sent to financial contributors. Gilchrist said they consider attempting to tailor communications with individual contributors is helpful, and that a "personal

touch and communication specifically around what people have given and what it is making possible is super important."

Gilchrist came from a non-profit fundraising background and believed having an organized outreach strategy was key to sustainability. Gilchrist felt that a crowdfunded media outlet could be successful if it could mimic the fundraising strategies of charitable organizations. They described how charitable organizations are highly systematic about maintaining regular personal contact with their list of people who have previously contributed financially or shown interest in the organization:

> When you sign up, you're going to get a series of emails from them, if you donate you're going to get something in the mail, you're going to get regular progress reports. You go into their donor stewardship system immediately. With the really big organizations it's less personal.

Gilchrist also thought their outlet was "doing journalism a little bit differently" because a big part of their public relations strategy was putting the personalities of the founders "very much in the foreground as young women running an online news outlet."

CR1 said they dedicated much of their time to using newsletter email lists and social media to engage with the part of the audience that is interested but not yet paying and emphasized the importance of regular engagement via email and social media.

Lindsay Sample said engagement was important at *The Discourse* for getting "immediate feedback from the people that you are trying to serve" and that with crowdfunded media, "it's not just, you don't just post something and not know if it's having an impact or not."

Ethan Cox said that when they did their crowdfunding campaign it was easier to get engagement on social media than it is now: "social media has changed a lot, how you generate engagement on Facebook has gotten a lot harder without pumping money into it, people's fatigue with crowdfunders is a lot higher."

Content

Many respondents expressed that a factor contributing to their success was having a strong vision of the content, or journalism work they wanted to publish. Four respondents' (R3, R5, R6, R7) advice to journalists who were considering doing a crowdfunding campaign was to produce journalism prior to trying to crowdfund, or to "build an audience." Coleman said to "start working on the work before you crowdfund it. People need to know that you're going to deliver a product, people need to know that you are serious about it."

Chelsea Murray said, "we knew exactly what we wanted to do, we had ideas for stories in mind already, that we would be ready to assign as soon as we knew we were going to have the money." Murray did not have any work published when they launched their crowdfunding campaign, which ultimately met its financial goals. However, other respondents, such as Taylor Lambert and Jeremy Laszus, thought it was necessary to have journalism work already published to demonstrate value before trying to crowdfund.

Lambert felt that "showing the work" would be the best way to invite people to continue contributing financially, or to increase the number of the audience contributing financially; however, the seed money to launch the venture also depended on crowdfunding, and failing to get the require amount to budget properly, they could not go ahead with producing the journalism work. Ultimately, Lambert decided that was the main reason their crowdfunding campaign failed and "main flaw" in their plan was that they were "asking for money first, to do the work second."

Klaszus said that creating journalism that gets shared on social media is the most sustainable way to attract people willing to make a financial contribution. They recommended as a best practice to have content already published, or ready to be published before the crowdfunding campaign starts. Klaszus believed that content was what drove people to contribute financially to their media outlet, explaining that

> When we have a really good story, tons of people will sign up. The content drives membership sign ups. And, so, it's at the top and bottom of every article, and beginning and end of every podcast, there's that appeal.

Klaszus also said their advice for journalists trying a crowdfunding campaign would be "try and hit the ground running, so in other words, launch your content at the same time as your crowdfunding campaign if you can, just because that's very powerful, when people see that you're actually doing the work."

Ethan Cox also said that an important part of promoting crowdfunding campaigns for media outlets is producing material that is shared widely on social media, and which will "generate organic traffic." Cox also said your content needs to be engaging and likely to be shared a lot on social media, which will "generate organic engagement." Cox said that the content being published by the media outlet must be engaging too, and that the journalism work itself does the bulk of attracting new financial supporters for their media outlet:

We haven't been as active about fundraising as we could have been, but we do bring in a fair bit of money because when we have big scoops, big stories, we put appeals in them and that's mainly it, at this point we're mainly recruiting new donors when people see journalism they really like and see a little note that says help us pay for it.

Cox also said that "bonus content" can be used as rewards for people who contribute financially; however, Cox was largely against the idea of using paywalls on reporting work, indicating that the content used for rewards would be supplemental in nature, a "behind-the-scenes thing," such as journalists writing personal missives about the investigative reporting process. Emma Gilchrist also factored in how audience perception of the importance of the journalism being produced drives a cycle of crowdfunding revenue, saying that "it's all a matter of providing coverage that's attracting traffic, that's creating newsletter subscribers, which in turn are becoming donors, essentially. It's a big virtuous circle."

Mack Male did not have story ideas prepared ahead of time. A big part of the pitch for *Taproot* was that paying members could contribute story ideas: "we were offering something that we didn't yet have, to some extent." Male used content to attract people in a more "scalable" way; they began publishing newsletter roundups of important local news and information within a certain sector, healthcare, or tech, or the arts for example. Now people can sign up for free to gain limited access to the newsletters. This provides a consistent point of contact between Male's media outlet and people who are interested but not yet committed to contributing financially:

We've definitely shifted our focus a bit more toward, how do we build on the traction that we're getting with the roundups, how do we grow the number of people that read these things for free, how do we convert those people into paying members.

Lindsay Sample alluded to the journalism itself being an important part of successful attracting financial supporters, saying that "a good prompt on a story page was better than a good prompt just on Facebook."

Darren Krause felt that they hadn't done enough to demonstrate what kind of journalism their media outlet was going to produce prior to launching their crowdfunding efforts:

We wanted to launch our minimum viable product and just start producing news, and we would over the course of three to six months start to determine exactly who we were and exactly what we wanted to deliver, when what we really should have done was we should have come up with here's exactly what we're doing, and who we're trying to be and then just market that, because for a lot of people we just ended up looking like another news site.

Thus, Krause did not have a clear vision of what their media outlet was going to be focused on and hoped that would develop organically.

Under this major theme of promotion, respondents talked about how they promoted their crowdfunding campaigns. Relying on networks of professional contacts was important for half the respondents. Others built reputation and credentials through doing journalism work funded by other means, often from the non-profit or charitable sector. The contacts built through this prior journalism work is relied upon as the initial audience to whom to direct crowdfund appeals. There was one instance of friends and family playing a significant role and that was an equity based, investment crowdfunding campaign.

Audience

This theme covers when respondents talked about specific qualities that are unique to building an audience for crowdfunding. Respondents discussed which *type* of audiences are most conducive to crowdfunding. Under this theme they described audience characteristics that most likely result in successful crowdfunding.

Four respondents were confident they could develop an audience (R1; R2; R5; R6). Taylor Lambert felt confident and was "confident in the argument that I was making." Mack Male also felt confident, but said that "you never know for sure." Joey Coleman did not feel confident they would be successful, comparing it to "throwing a party and I didn't know if anybody was going to show up." Four (R2; R4; R5; R6) felt there would be an audience for their media outlet because of deficit media and the existing state of contraction going on in the news media industry with frequent closures of existing news outlets. Using data to get a demographic profile of your audience was used by R1, R2, R8 and R9.

Ethan Cox expressed that overall, the number of crowdfunding campaigns had increased over the last five years resulting in "donor fatigue," making it harder to successfully meet crowdfunding targets. Lindsay Sample said the target audience must be specific and it must be engaged directly on terms resonate specific audience.

Many respondents said it was helpful to have a clear vision of what they wanted their media outlet to look like, and what its purpose and goals would be. For example, Chelsea Murray said:

> We had a really fleshed out idea of what we wanted to do, we knew exactly what we
> wanted it to look like...we knew exactly what we wanted to do, we had ideas for stories in

mind already, that we would be ready to assign as soon as we knew we were going to have the money, so we were ready to go as long as we got the money.

Conversely, Krause has not regularly met their financial crowdfunding goals and had a less defined vision at the beginning, saying they "wanted to launch our minimum viable product and just start producing news, and we would over the course of three to six months, we would start to determine exactly who we were and exactly what we wanted to deliver." Krause's experiencing not of having unsuccessful crowdfunding campaigns had caused them to question whether that had been the right thing to do:

> What we really should have done was we should have come up with here's exactly what we're doing, and who we're trying to be and then just market that, because for a lot of people we just ended up looking like another news site.

The sub-themes covered in this section are: willingness to pay, local news (frequently cited as the type of news that is best for crowdfunding, because local news has a more solid connection with the immediate geographic community, but also because it provides a way to narrow the scope of journalism work to aid in keeping operations sustainable), non-profits, paywalls and adaptation.

Willingness to Pay

Five out of 10 respondents cited free news was an obstacle to getting people to pay for news. Chelsea Murray said that the existence of many free sources of news creates the impression among the general public that news isn't something that needs to be paid for. Murray said that while journalists recognize the importance of asking questions like "what's going to happen to democracy if all of the community newspapers [disappear], who is going to be at city hall? Who is going to be talking about the things that are hidden behind closed doors?" Murray says the general public is "just taking care of their lives, as they should be and they're not necessarily seeing it from an insider's perspective."

CR1 said after the shift away from print, and the disruption of the longstanding print-based model for newspapers broke the habit of the people being willing to pay for news:

> Everybody had to pay for news at one point because of print, and then it became, with the internet, there was a stretch of years when everything was free and even people surveyed in Canada were, I think, a majority of them said they didn't want to pay for news.

CR1 thought that educating the general public about the importance of quality journalism and the expense of producing was important to creating more general willingness to pay among the public: "That may have shifted by now, but it's now about getting people back into the mindset that if you want reliable, accurate news, that does cost money and it is something you need to pay for."

Taylor Lambert echoed that idea that the public fell out of the habit of paying for news and have "been trained to expect to get it for free." Lambert listed the various places someone can get free news, explaining that people know all the places they can get news for free so don't feel like they should care about paying for news:

> CBC is a free website, so you can go there to get all your local news. And, a lot of places, I know Postmedia dabbles with a paywall, but local news radio stations or Global, or CTV, the local coverage for those outlets, it's all free, so it's hard to convince people to pay for this journalism production over here, when they can say, 'why do I care? I can go over here.'

Darren Krause also cited the many places the public can get news for free and related it to the use of paywalls being used by legacy media websites. Krause observed that even news websites that have paywalls typically allow some access for free:

> There is still a lot of content they're giving away for free because they know at the end of the day people don't want to pay for that information, especially when CTV is delivering it for free on the evening news, so is Global, so is CBC, CBC radio is doing it for free, 770 news is doing it for free, 660 is doing it for free.

Jeremy Klaszus related the issue of high volume and ubiquity of free journalism on the internet to the idea of information overload, not necessarily that free journalism lowers the value other in-depth journalism but that people already have too much media to consume so do not the logic in paying for additional news:

> The biggest thing is people are not experiencing a lack of information, it's in fact the opposite, they're experiencing too much information and they're experiencing a torrent of information, so it becomes hard to then go to people and be like, 'we have another thing to add to your plate for you to read at some point.'

Klaszus believed that using positive messaging when talking to the public about these issues was the most effective, explaining that "the way we've done it is instead of lecturing people about like, okay, here is why this is so important, you should be paying for news, but take a more positive and upbeat approach." Klaszus concluded that getting people interested in reading the

journalism being produced was one step, but it was another step to get them to be willing to pay for it.

Darren Krause also expressed that there was a disconnect between the level of people reading their website and the number of financial supporters, saying that "the feedback and the traffic, and the level of effort we are putting in is not commensurate" with the number of financial supporters they had acquired. Krause wanted to focus on daily broadsheet type news, rather than appealing to "niche" audiences, but with a more limited publishing schedule; they also wanted to appeal to a "apolitical" audience and avoid the kind of politicized, polarized news environment like which Joey Coleman also described. The publication Krause had previously worked for, *Metro*, a free daily commuter newspaper, had adopted an overt strategy of targeting specific "market segments" after being purchased by Torstar, a strategy which Krause believes upended a financially successful editorial strategy of focusing on community news. Due to their experience with not being successful in crowdfunding their media outlet, Krause concluded that targeting specific audiences was necessary to meet crowdfunding targets in journalism. Thus, for Krause, the biggest obstacle to getting people to pay for news was the decline of a demand for dispassionate, traditional-style journalism.

Emma Gilchrist emphasized the importance of building an active communicative channel with potential supporters first through regular email, for example, before asking them to contribute financially. This is achieved through Gilchrist's engagement strategy of publishing content without a paywall, so it is accessible for free, building email lists and sending regular emails about the journalism being published and the work the media outlet is doing. Gilchrist explained that of all the people that read the journalism on their website, a small percentage of them will sign up for the email list, and a small percentage of that amount will respond to financial appeals and become financial supporters. Lindsay Sample described a comparable situation. *The Discourse* made their choice to focus on the Cowichan Valley community because many of the people subscribed to the Cowichan newsletter were willing to pay: "Our conversion rates were great for the campaign but we didn't have a big enough pool to start. So, that's what we're focused on now." The idea being to grow the size of the audience with the best conversion rate, rather than the largest overall audience.

Local News

Six out of 10 (R3, R4, R5, R6, R8, R9) respondents thought local news was the best type of news for which to crowdfund. Joey Coleman said focusing on a local audience makes an equation for optimizing the individual contribution amount of money to ask from each supporter; with a smaller potential pool, on average each contribution needs to be higher than drawing from a national audience. Coleman said that their success was ultimately because of their long relationship with the community they are crowdfunding from.

Taylor Lambert thought there was a lack of good local journalism in their community, and it was peoples' desire for local news that gave them confidence to proceed with crowdfunding: "I really truly believed that there were a lot of people who were not satisfied with the existing media options for local news in Calgary." Lambert said that each local community would require a unique way of being appealed to: "Each city has its own needs, each audience has its own needs, the demands are different, the competition is different." Lindsay Sample echoed this idea of each community having unique needs, saying that "we really do need to treat each community as its own entity." Sample's organization had made the decision to switch to local news a few years ago and had narrowed down from three communities to one to focus even more on one local news market. Sample expressed that focusing on local news expanded the size of their organization's potential audience. In the context of service journalism, Mack Male said that this type of journalism is more easily communicated to a local audience: "our city region is the right size for a journalistic effort that's focused on local," adding that "we think journalism, and in particular local news, can still be a viable business."

Non-profit

Only one respondent, Ethan Cox, thought that being a non-profit was strictly important to crowdfunding for news media. Cox thought that news media was no longer profitable and thus was obliged to operate as a non-profit and that being a non-profit was "indisputably helpful" when crowdfunding for news media. Cox sees crowdfunding as a way for "people to pay for it themselves" when it comes to the news, so they know the news represents their interests alone. Being a non-profit is a further way to demonstrate an outlet's commitment to the audience's interest and providing public service value.

Conversely, Mack Male said they had considered whether to launch their media outlet as a non-profit but believed that there was still a way to make news a profitable business. Male said

they thought that non-profits will continue to be an important part of the news media system, citing ProPublica as an example, but that a diverse news media ecosystem would most benefit journalism overall, so the importance of non-profits "doesn't mean that there isn't room for for-profit businesses to do this as well." Male said that to make a profit in journalism there must be a clear value proposition and they thought service journalism was the best way to achieve that. As they said:

> We talked a lot early on about service journalism, and it's this concept that Jeff Jarvis in particular has written quite a bit about, and truly serving the people that we hope to reach out to, so our audience, our community.

Emma Gilchrist's organization was structured like a non-profit, but they did not believe that was totally necessary to having success in crowdfunded media, pointing to *Canadaland* as an example. Rather, Gilchrist said as long as the media outlet is providing "public benefit" then it is possible to make a pitch to your audience for financial contributions: "I think it can help in creating a narrative, a cohesive narrative, about your niche and how you're different and how you're doing journalism differently than corporate media, for instance, but honestly, looking around I don't think that it harmed any of the outlets that I see fundraising that are not non-profits, like *The Tyee*, like *The Discourse*, like *Canadaland,* as long as they have a public benefit statement that's clear and they're good at fundraising then people don't really seem to mind."

Paywalls

Nine out of 10 respondents did not use paywalls on their websites. CR1 was the exception. When their media outlet launched it was not paywalled, but recently they had put of a metered paywall, which asks you to subscribe after viewing a certain number of articles. Seven out of 10 respondents explicitly said they believed that using paywalls was counterproductive to raising revenue through crowdfunding. Ethan Cox said using paywalls has a negative influence on potential audience: "you're shrinking your audience and you're shrinking your influence." Cox thought that only large journalism institutions like *The New York Times* could get away with having a paywall. Mack Male agreed that it is counterproductive to put journalism behind a paywall. Male also said that they knew a portion of their financial supporters did so because there was no paywall to access the journalism they produce:

> We know for sure there is a subset of those that are very intrigued by our lack of a paywall. We're very intentional about not putting our journalism behind a paywall, we think if you're going to put the resources into doing a good story, you want it to have the

broadest impact possible, so you shouldn't artificially limit the audience by putting it behind a paywall.

Joey Coleman said that not having a paywall was motivation for some of their financial supporters "because they're buying the news for other people." Taylor Lambert also thought paywalls were a bad idea, saying that "I don't think paywalls work, fundamentally. I think that we do have to encourage people to pay for journalism, but I think that the paywall is not the best way to go about that." Darren Krause also thought paywalls were a bad idea and limited the size of the potential audience.

Adaptation

Most respondents said they emphasized keeping their media outlet "nimble" (R1), and keeping their media outlet in a state of "constant evolution" (R8), so they could quickly adjust the journalism they were producing in response to audience feedback, or tailor the way it is presented in some way, using different forms of digital media to repackage their journalism in different ways. This often involved trying many new iterations at a rapid pace. Lindsay Sample's organization, for example, put extensive attention into tweaking their outlet's focus based on audience feedback, and credit their success to this:

> Truly the most important thing is having a culture of testing and learning, and failing and, I think that is something that is easier for newer, for digital-first innovators to build in from the beginning, is 'okay, what are we testing this week, okay, what works, what didn't work, what failed'.

Mack Male also emphasized iterating versions of the media outlet in response to audience feedback. Male set out with the goal of starting a media outlet that elevated audience participation. *Taproot* was designed to have audience participation; in a section of the member website called the "Story Garden" members can suggest topics and ideas for stories. Male wasn't sure if members would feel comfortable suggesting ideas without a prompt. In order to continually give their audience new information so the audience would have follow-up questions, *Taproot* developed a series of "round-up" email newsletters that focused on topics such as "arts, business, city council, food, health innovation, media." Members of the audience have expressed curiosity about stories that have appeared in the round-up newsletters and have had an online location to post those question, which have generated some of the reporting features that *Taproot* has produced. Male said that adapting and changing based on audience response was a key to their success:

I would say that the thing that we've done well is iterate; we didn't start and then stick steadfast to what we started with, we gathered feedback and learned, and so if you're going to build a membership based site, I think that has got to be built into everything that you do.

Crowdfunding Practices

This theme describes a host of practices that respondents felt were necessary for creating financially sustainable media outlets through crowdfunding. These practices were deemed important for success but were not necessarily related to respondents' understanding of who their potential audience was or the best ways to motivate that audience to contribute financially. Outside of value propositions based on the media product itself, these were strategies for optimizing the chance of crowdfunding success. However, these practices also included considerations about the workload involved in starting a crowdfunded media outlet. Respondents said that they were constantly making ad hoc choices to balance operating costs with the financial resources they had available from their crowdfunding efforts, often changing their plans for the amount and type of journalism work that would be produced.

Sustainability

Many respondents were at a stage in their crowdfunding work where they were trying to move toward asking their audience to become recurring monthly contributors, compared to having crowdfunding campaigns at intermittent intervals and asking the audience to make one-time contributions. Many respondents launched their media outlets on crowdfunding campaigns that asked for one-time contributions, which then successful created a pool of "seed money" to get the media outlet off the ground. Thus, even those initially successful in launching their outlet through crowdfunding seed money were required to put thought into how to increasingly ask for recurring contributions.

The need to maximize the revenue they acquired through crowdfunding often lead to respondents taking on large personal workloads. Questioning whether such a dynamic of making up for budget shortfalls through personal sacrifice was sustainable arose often among respondents. Chelsea's Murray's example is illustrative of this. At the time of the interview Murray's magazine *The Deep* was on hiatus. Murray explained that what happened was they "launched our Kickstarter to get the initial seed money that we needed and our idea was that we would sustain the publication in the future through subscriptions, events and also native advertising." To make the operation of their outlet sustainable both Murray and their partner

were working full-time jobs in addition to running the magazine. After one year of working like that, they decided to go on hiatus as the workload had become too much. Murray said they think that new media outlets with smaller operations in general - not just those relying on crowdfunding for revenue - face increased challenges because those outlets tend to work with a limited staff size. As Murray said:

> For these smaller publications that are trying to raise money in alternative ways, it's just a few people doing all the things, and I think that makes it harder, it's not necessarily crowdfunding, I think that it's just getting funding for a small thing, with a limited number of staff.

Other respondents expressed similar sentiments. Ethan Cox said that when *Ricochet* started out "we wanted to make sure we were paying all of our journalists, so the model we adopted was one where we didn't pay our editors, which is obviously not very sustainable." Ethan Cox said that their biggest mistake was that they hadn't initially planned on asking for recurring donations:

> I think that is something that is really critical for ongoing projects in journalism, one-off crowdfunders on platforms like IndieGoGo or Kickstarter really don't work because no matter how much money you raise, you're just then burning through that money without a replacement.

After *Ricochet*'s seed-money crowdfunding campaign Cox said they began to focus on recurring contributions: "We built a platform on our website to solicit people to give monthly $5, $10, $20 dollar donations, and that's where most of our budget comes from now." Cox explained the issue of getting recurring revenue through crowdfunding this way: "It's a lot harder to get people to pay for something that exists now to continue existing than it is to get them to pay for something new, that doesn't exist. It's not as exciting."

Joey Coleman runs their media outlet completely alone and felt the workload they signed up for was unsustainable. *The Public Record* had committed to documenting all of Hamilton City Council's meetings and many of its sub-committee meetings. As Coleman said:

> What I'm warning against is the fact that I set myself up that I have to be at every meeting, so I'm stuck behind a camera all day. No matter if the meeting has news value or not, and so I'm stuck that I can't suddenly take two weeks off and work on business strategy.

Mack Male said that the longform type of journalism *Taproot* wanted to produce introduced questions about the sustainability of the labour involved: "These long-form

investigative stories are resource-intensive, they're expensive, they take a lot of time, and so our capacity to do those was not as big as we would like, obviously." This predicament led to product innovations such as *Taproot's* "round-up" email newsletters that curate news on a certain topic. In order to remain sustainable, Male had begun to adopt a strategy of turning their investigative and information curation skills into value for businesses:

> We realized if we're going to grow and if we're going to grow to the scale that we need to get to, it's got to be more than just individuals that we're reaching, and in the old days, obviously, businesses had a big impact, they bought advertising, that's how they funded newspapers.

Jeremy Klaszus purposely chose to create a media outlet that was limited in scope and intention. From the beginning all goals and planning for the media outlet were based on the idea that there would be limited revenue available. As Klaszus said:

> As opposed to trying to start this huge thing, this new journalism institution which just seemed like 'aw man, that's so big, how is anyone going to do that, how are you going to sustain it?' It was just, 'no, let's do something small.' So that led to this pop-up concept of just doing one thing at a time.

Klaszus launched *The Sprawl* to specifically cover the Calgary municipal election and was upfront about its intention to go into hiatus after the election and until the next project was decided upon. Crowdfunding for the project was a last-minute decision as Klaszus had not originally intended to try and bring revenue for the Calgary election project. Klaszus could afford to not have a salary on the first project and decided to do it for free to demonstrate the value of the work and then appeal to people for crowdfunding to do further journalism projects on other topics and events. Workload related to crowdfunding was described as contributing to the difficulty of sustaining a crowdfunded revenue model. Klaszus said that "crowdfunding is a heavy burden."

Darren Krause had tried to make *LiveWire* sustainable through crowdfunding. After various crowdfunding attempts, they were considering other means of revenue:

> Our goal, actually, isn't to go out and worry about the crowdsourcing, our goal is to provide good journalism and I don't want to sacrifice the type of journalism that I believe needs to be done, in order to make sure that I can focus on that niche audience because ultimately crowdfunding is a way for us to get started, but for us, it is not the long term solution to sustainability.

Krause said they would advise people starting a crowdfunded media outlet to set their aim low, in terms of the size of operation that can be financially sustained and compared themselves with Klaszus in terms of the workload. Krause expressed that they felt there was an element of random chance or luck involved in successfully crowdfunding a media outlet; moreover, generating positive feedback from an audience didn't guarantee financial success through crowdfunding, saying that "the feedback and the traffic, and the level of effort we are putting in is not commensurate" with the amount of crowdfunding they are achieving.

Preparation

Some level of preparation and prior research on promotional strategy and crowdfunding practices was deemed important by all the respondents. R1, R2, CR1, R8 and R9 all said the best piece of advice they had was to have a good plan on how to promote the crowdfunding campaign. Cox believed preparation was critical to success:

> You can't just launch it and then think about how you're going to promote it. That's absolutely backwards. If you're going to do a 30-day campaign, you should have spent at least 30 days of prep leading up to day one, that's more intensive work than maintaining the campaign.

Cox's campaign reflects the large amount of work required when planning a media promotional campaign, and elaborates on all the things that need to be arranged in advance for a successful promotional campaign:

> Videos, memes, designs, all of this stuff ready to go, endorsers, supporters, and figuring out how to keep making waves after people have heard about the project once, or twice, or three times, what is going to get them interested a fourth time?

Chelsea Murray felt that they hadn't done enough preparation for promoting the crowdfunding campaign. They said they felt like "we were learning as we were going for promotion" and they hadn't anticipated how much work it would be. Due to lack of preparation, Murray engaged in more reactive ways to promoting their crowdfunding campaign. Murray nevertheless was success in meeting their crowdfunding goals. Joey Coleman also put less emphasis on researching crowdfunding best practices, but rather came up with their own that was successful for them:

> It was more using my communication strategy, meeting people, having coffee with people, selling it to people, writing about it on my site. I didn't really look elsewhere

because there was, at that point, there were no examples of local journalism being crowdfunded in Canada.

Coleman said that their success was "80 percent preparation, 20 percent just dumb luck." Jeremy Klaszus also took what they called a "see what happens" approach to preparing and successfully met their crowdfunding goals. They had initially not intended to do a crowdfunding campaign for their project and set up a Patreon account the night before the project launched. However, Klaszus's preparation did include asking advice from other journalists who had tried crowdfunding previously.

Taylor Lambert and Darren Krause utilized a more reactive strategy for their crowdfunding campaign. Lambert relied on publicity garnered from leaving their job at Postmedia. Krause relied on publicity from leaving their job at Metro newspaper.

Emma Gilchrist came from a background of fundraising in the non-profit sector. They explained that in charitable fundraising organizations they must forecast budgets and then plan to raise those funds. They attributed significant importance to preparation for having a successful crowdfunding campaign. *The Discourse* also does a lot of work prior to crowdfunding campaigns to maximize success. Lindsay Sample said they engage in "a lot of conversations about our media outlet, a lot of user interviews, we used social media promotions to test different messaging, and what was resonating more with people."

Six out of 10 respondents attributed importance to having a clear target, or trying to calculate the optimal target for success, given that often a person's decision to contribute to crowdfunding campaigns depends how close to its target a campaign appears to be. Chelsea Murray reflected that setting a realistic target is important, but they felt that their crowdfunding campaign had seen so much support that if they had tried for a higher goal target amount to be raised, they could have reached it. Cox also felt that it's important to push for as high a dollar amount as is achievable and that "you want to get as much as you can without arriving at a point where it seems impossible to reach." Cox also felt it was important to achieve a large portion of your target - ideally around 20 percent - on the first day of the crowdfunding campaign. CR1 also said that to be successful, a crowdfunding campaign should try to raise 50 percent of their target in the first week. Joey Coleman and Taylor Lambert both struggled to hit their targets. Coleman was only at 75 percent of their target with less than 48 hours left in their first crowdfunding campaign and then a large contribution pushed them to their target. Lambert did not make it past

50 percent of their target and ultimately failed in reaching their target. Gilchrist also said it was important to have a clear goal because it makes potential financial contributors more confident in contributing. Darren Krause thought that setting small, achievable, realistic goals was the best practice.

Lindsay Samples's organization had to adjust their plans after not meeting their crowdfunding goal during a campaign in May and June 2018. The goal had been to add 1000 new subscribers and they added just over 500 during the campaign. However, in the last few years, their organization had changed its journalism to focus on local coverage and the campaign was targeting three different communities. The data from the crowdfunding campaign demonstrated that one of the three communities did better than the other, so the campaign served as an indication of which community to focus limited resources on.

Taylor Lambert chose an all or nothing crowdfunding campaign because they didn't want to compromise the goal by trying to succeed on less budget than originally envisioned. CR1 said a lot of the preparation focused on deciding on the optimal length of the crowdfunding campaign; not letting it go on too long but giving it enough time to have success.

Seven out of the 10 respondents said the ease with which people can make financial contributions increased the likelihood that they will contribute, particularly if a media outlet is seeking recurring monthly contributions on a platform like Patreon. Ease was evaluated as a function of the financial technology underlying the online transactions of crowdfunding campaigns and the interface financial contributors used to make them.

Recurring or One-time Financial Support

Seven out of 10 respondents (CR1, R1, R2, R3, R5, R8, R9) had successfully launched their media outlet with a one-time crowdfunding campaign, and then moved toward acquiring monthly, recurring financial contributors. Six out of 10 (CR1, R2, R3, R7, R8, R9) respondents currently offer the option to become a recurring monthly financial supporter or to make a one-time financial contribution. Jeremy Klaszus and Mack Male only accept recurring monthly contributions. Overall, respondents thought that growing the number of recurring monthly financial supporters was the best way toward sustainable funding, as opposed to regularly occurring one-time crowdfunding campaigns.

Some respondents proposed a hybrid model of asking for recurring contributions and then also having special projects that are funded through crowdfunding campaigns asking for one-

time donations. Cox recognized the need for recurring monthly contributions, but they also believed the most successful type of journalistic crowdfunding had to be project-based and described a "hub and spoke model" where distinct journalism projects are crowdfunded through one-time campaigns and also contribute to the overall operating budget of the media outlet. Cox said,

> If you have successful side projects that are feeding content back into the main outlet, and kicking back a percentage of money to be able to cover operating costs, I think that in a lot of ways is the more sustainable thing than what we see a lot of, especially in the U.S., which is just perpetual crowdfunding to support outlets.

Cox explained that the issue with perpetual crowdfunding appeals was that the become annoying, describing it as "constant whiny emails about how we're going to shut down if we don't get $5,000 by tonight, which they thought "really turns people off."

Emma Gilchrist of *The Narwhal* believed that to crowdfund the overall operation budget of a media outlet, the total annual budget needed to be broken down into specific projects or tangible items that could be crowdfunded as individual campaigns and said, for example, that "one of our more successful appeals was to fund an Alberta reporter position." Gilchrist described this as being able to communicate the "core costs" of their organization to their audience, and said they considered this itemized approach to be the most successful strategy even when asking for monthly recurring contributions. Gilchrist said this ability to communicate core costs was important to their success, and that "the magic of fundraising" in their mind is "how you communicate all these bits and pieces that need to come together to run a news outlet, how you break it down into parts that are fundraise-able for."

Lindsay Sample referred to *The Narwhal*, saying they believed the organization was successful at having frequent "one-time" crowdfunding campaigns for specific items within their operating budget. Sample also agreed that specificity makes crowdfunding more successful, and being able to point to a specific cost or expense - whether salary for a journalist or equipment and travel costs - creates more specificity than a pitch based on a general premise of keeping the outlet's operation budget funded generally.

Joey Coleman also felt that specific and discrete crowdfunding campaigns were the most successful: "I've had campaigns where it's 'Keep me at City Hall for the next three months' and those fail. Help me buy equipment to do a better job of covering City Hall, which succeeds."

Coleman has sustained themselves on a mixture of monthly recurring donations and larger, one-time donations that constitute several months.

Jeremy Klaszus mainly relied on recurring crowdfunding and had started out on a recurring platform, Patreon. Klaszus had been influenced by other crowdfunded media, and examples set by them about the importance of recurring monthly contributions. Klaszus says they have considered and likely will in the future use one-time, limited individual campaigns to raise funds for discrete things such as a reporter's salary. This is a similar kind of budgeting strategy as Emma Gilchrist uses, breaking down their overall budget into more discrete individual items. Klaszus said that it was also more difficult for them to retain monthly contributors because their organization would go on hiatus in between projects when they would not be producing much content. Klaszus, like Coleman, accepted both people signing up for monthly contributions and people who wanted to make larger one-time contributions.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

In this thesis, I analyzed the personal perspectives of 10 Canadian journalists who have attempted to crowdfund the creation of new news media outlets. The motivation for this study was the lack of existing literature specifically asking what crowdfunded journalists think is the best way to appeal to potential financial supporters. The available literature had looked at some ways that journalists compel their audience to become financial supporters, by offering rewards for example (Hunter, 2016). Some have looked at what motivates people to participate in crowdsourced journalism, which typically involves volunteering resources or labour, rather than money; however, there is some overlap as the existing literature shows that primary motivations for contributing to both crowdfunded and crowdsourced news included having an impact on social issues, ensuring accuracy of news and decreasing power asymmetries (Aitamurto, 2015b).

Comparison with the Literature

The results showed that the respondents were crowdfunding often to bring into existence a media outlet that would not be able to exist otherwise due to the prevailing economic and market conditions of the journalism industry. Using structuration theory, these results show an example of journalists trying to influence the larger, overarching political-economic structures of the news media industry. That will be discussed further below in the theory section of the discussion. In comparison to the literature, these results fit with previous findings which describe crowdfunding as often allowing funders to pool their resources for the realization of something the existing consumer markets cannot provide (Aitamurto, 2015a). Respondents' value propositions were made in the context of a contracting media industry, where many media properties are ceasing operations. The respondents felt there were various elements of value that had declined in existing news media, which they asserted they would bring back or replace. It was described as filling a gap or a hole in the media ecosystem or landscape. This fits with Jian & Shin's (2015) conclusion that contributors to crowdfunded journalism are motivated by a desire to fill a gap in existing media.

Respondents' value propositions rested on communicating the basis on which their media outlet would provide quality news, replacing the quality that declined in existing news media; this touched on themes of important stories being underreported or not reported at all, the depth or breadth of coverage, the issues and topics addressed in the coverage and the degree to which the information contained in the journalism allowed someone to be a more informed and engaged

citizen, and trust of the journalism outlet. As Hunter and Di Bartolomeo (2018) have observed, journalists who crowdfund media outlets are often trying to address social issues they feel are underreported and that represent a deficit in current media offerings. For example, they analyze crowdfunding campaigns that are establishing media outlets for women's issues.

This thesis shows that social issues, the public interest, and civic engagement were prominent value propositions for the respondents. This fits with what Hunter (2015) observed, that "many journalists think of themselves as providing a public service – they consider themselves watchdogs, holding governments and corporations to account" (p. 283). Hunter (2015) also found that among crowdfunded journalists "the objectivity norm was less enthusiastically embraced" than the autonomy norm; the results here reflect both the respondents' desire to be free from the strictures of corporately owned or institutionalized news media and thus have more autonomy, they also demonstrate the journalists in this study are willing to eschew the journalist normal of objectivity. The objectivity norm was not universally embraced by the respondents, but not universally rejected either. Some respondents still believed in objectivity as a guiding principle for producing quality journalism. Darren Krause was explicit about his belief in adhering to the principle of objectivity as opposed to being guided by a sense of social responsibility. Others, such as Ethan Cox, saw it as normalizing the status quo, and often only represented one narrow definition of many possible, legitimate interpretations of objective truth, and therefore the objectivity principle could stand in the way of conducting robust public interest or public service journalism.

These results also fit with Aitamurto's (2011) hypothesis that "advocacy, cause-driven, or problem-solving journalism is more meaningful for the community than neutral, value-free journalism that provides information but not the means to solve problems" (p. 442). Aitamurto (2011) found that donors on Spot.us "wanted to participate in a good cause, and they donated to the common good, hoping to make a difference in society. Furthermore, the donors wanted the story to have an impact on society" (p. 442). Elsewhere, Aitamurto (2015b) found that "influencing society; affecting power structures" and "contributing to the journalistic process and to the larger knowledge universe with their knowledge" (p. 3535) were two main components compelling people to contribute to crowd*sourced* journalism.

Aitamurto suggested that if cause-driven journalism was the better value proposition then crowdfunded journalism should engage in "cause marketing, the term applied to marketing

efforts by non-profits working for social change"(2011, p. 442) At least one respondent, Emma Gilchrist, explicitly said they used engagement and supporter outreach strategies from the world of non-profit fundraising successfully achieve their crowdfunding goals, and recommended other crowdfunding journalists do the same. Furthermore, Aitamurto (2011) hypothesized that "if we gave readers the possibility of seeing the impact of a story, for example changes in legislation or societal practices, readers would be more interested in following up the story process, and maybe, even more interested in paying for the story" (p. 443). CR1, for example, said that being able to demonstrate how their journalism impacted government policy, or how it could prevent corporate malfeasance was a primary value proposition for their media outlet. Ethan Cox, Jeremy Klaszus and Lindsay Sample also made value propositions based on social issues. Mack Male did not explicitly crowdfund based on social issues, but they oriented around a service journalism mentality which meant they produced journalism on topics that their audience considered important and felt they needed to know more about. Joey Coleman viewed public knowledge of government as an important issue with which they motivated their financial supporters.

Overall, the results show that respondents found success by positing the value of their journalism as relating to positive social change or social causes and having impact on government policy or societal practices. The results broadly coincide with the literature which shows that people contribute to fundraising efforts if they believe it is in the public interest, as well as the role of prosocial behaviour in contributing to fundraisers. Providing a public service through journalism or having a clear "public benefit statement" was considered important to successful crowdfunding for journalism. Belleflamme et al. (2013b) showed that organizations structured like a non-profit have more success at crowdfunding. While the respondents in this research did not think being a non-profit was essential to having success in crowdfunding for journalism, the results of the study affirm that it is advantageous for a crowdfunded journalism organization to be seen as an not primarily motivated by profit but rather public service. Responses to these structural changes tend to emphasize either the accountability reporting and public watchdog role of journalism, or the business side of the news industry.

The existing literature on the financial crisis in journalism puts emphasis on how the crisis represents a problem for the functioning of democracy and prevention of government corruption (McChesney & Pickard, 2011), and recommends policy interventions to ensure

continued production of quality news (Gasher, et al., 2016; Jones, 2009; Public Policy Forum, 2017). The results of this study demonstrate that these concerns are quite prominent in the minds of crowdfunded journalists. In fact, concern for the erosion of journalism's role in healthy civic participation and an informed citizenry was largely what prompted the respondents in this study try to produce news media independent of existing financial structures. Moreover, it was a primary reason upon which respondents made value propositions to their potential supporters. However, the need for public policy intervention was not a prominent part of respondent's answers. Rather, for the respondent's crowdfunding represented a way to directly use their agency to create journalism that serves the public interest.

Many respondents attributed importance to creating a sense of community with their financial supporters, but few had a very precise definition of what "community" meant in the context of crowdfunded journalism. One respondent, Mack Male, said that community is a term that is overused and applied too broadly. This fits with what Gehring & Wittkower (2015) have said about community being a symbolic value used in crowdfunding; it can mean a range of things but indicates increased intimacy, inclusion, and may mean increased participation in the journalistic process. Aitamurto (2011) also found that while people who financially support crowdfunded journalism do so based on their personal values, it does not result in a prominent level of engagement with the story process itself but rather "creates a sense of belonging to the community. It seems that donating serves as an act to create a sense of connectedness to society" (p. 443). The results of this research affirm that a sense of connectedness to society is important as many of the respondents made value propositions based on the journalism having an impact on social causes or changing public policy and societal practices.

The way that the journalists in this study conceptualized the value of their journalism largely revolved around the concept of journalism as an information product, one that provides vital information about social, political, and civic issues. This was conceptualized as either taking a particular political stance on the issue, and motivating potential supporters through ideas of "taking action" about issues they care and are passionate about, or from a more dispassionate point of view of providing the raw informational material for people to be civically engaged in an ostensibly more objective manner. While some of the literature indicates that there is a divergence between journalists and their audiences over "newsworthy" journalism versus lighter content such as arts & lifestyle, sports, technology and crime stories (Boczkowski et al., 2011;

Boczkowski & Peer, 2011; Ladson & Lee, 2017; Lee & Chyi, 2014), the journalists in this study were trying to connect with their audiences on the basis of important issues and in-depth journalism.

The literature on product-based and typical entrepreneurial crowdfunding showed some overlaps. Agrawal et al., (2014) found that participating in a community and supporting an idea are common to many types of crowdfunding. Gafni et al. (2017) found that entrepreneurs of artistic projects tend to pitch themselves and a personal connection more so than the project itself. This fits with the results that show the journalists in this study emphasized a more personal connection with their audience than traditional media.

Trust was also a basis for value propositions. Respondents all expressed some form of the idea that the mass public is frustrated or disenchanted with existing news media as an institution, connected with a larger malaise and disillusionment with political and social institutions. Having developed an audience for one's journalism through a career in legacy media, or through other independent journalism was important in many cases to achieving financial targets and developing credentials.

In terms of promotion, respondents in this study used social networking techniques, but contrary to much of the literature on crowdfunding (Horvát et al., 2015) they did not rely on networks of family and friends, but rather networks of colleagues and professional contacts. Journalism is a profession that tends to generate large networks of professional contacts, so this largely eschews the need for friends and family. Having a sophisticated social media strategy was cited as important to success for most of the respondents; the most successful leveraged the skill sets and time of a team of people. Planning ahead on how to promote a crowdfunding campaign was deemed essential to most respondents - developing a publishing schedule and strategy and developing media assets in advance.

The sophistication of the media campaign, social media promotion and the messaging strategy relates to success or failure. The most successful respondents were those that understood communications and PR or had experience in fundraising messaging campaigns from the non-profit sector. So, while the idea of your media outlet may be compatible with many people, having those people finally financially contribute could have more to do with the tone of the messaging, the variety of the messaging, the number of times someone needs to be pitched to before they commit, things that PR professionals would be skilled at.

Respondents said that being able to show a working model of the journalism outlet you are trying to fund, having a "clear vision" or a "proof of concept," or "showing the work" by producing and publishing journalism work before launching a crowdfunding campaign will help the campaign be more successful. Thus, to maximize success for crowdfunding a media outlet, journalists would need to have some way to fund the outlet prior to crowdfunding. However, this could also mean a small group willing to work for free for a period while keeping all other production costs to a bare minimum. Journalists would work for free in the hopes that demonstrating their value will compel enough of their audience to pay them. This is a phenomenon that Hunter (2016) has documented under the term "hope labour." This thesis demonstrates that hope labour to a considerable extent remains at the basis of crowdfunded journalism economics. All the respondents thought that the value of their journalism had to be demonstrated in some way to get people to contribute financially. This is achieved through producing journalism that has information that is valuable in some regard, usually because it is of a public service nature or allows for more informed civic engagement. The literature on crowdfunding divides fundraising between ex-ante funding, which raises money before a project begins, and ex post facto funding, which raises funds after a project begins (Aitamurto, 2015; Bannerman, 2013). The results of this study indicate that crowdfunded journalism has most success with ex post facto funding.

Perks and rewards were used; they were not considered to play a major role in convincing people to become financial contributors, but signified belonging to the community of people who support the media outlet. Belleflamme et al. (2013b) found that it was rare for anyone to contribute to a crowdfunding campaign without at least a "token of appreciation" being exchanged. Ladson and Lee (2017) found that increasing rewards options could account for a 40 percent variation in the success of crowdfunding campaigns, however the respondents in this study did not assign rewards or perks particular importance. They were seen more as a minor tactic in an overall larger strategy to appeal to potential financial supporters.

It was difficult to manage the workload associated with promoting a crowdfunding campaign. The respondents structured their crowdfunding practices around a paradigm of being minimally financially sustainable. Their practices reflected an ongoing ad hoc cost-benefit analysis that determined their crowdfunding strategies based on maximizing revenue return compared to resources used for crowdfunding promotion. The literature on crowdfunding found

that longer campaign durations were associated with higher performance (Burtch et al., 2013). However, respondents in this study felt that a shorter campaign created a higher chance of success.

Chyi (2012) found that people were generally reluctant to pay for news and noted paywalls can have the effect of locking out most people that visit a news website. This fits with how the respondents in this study felt. Only one respondent used a paywall on their website, and it had been a recent addition. Chyi (2005) found that people were reluctant to pay for news because of the prevalence of free alternatives. Some of the respondents in the study said the amount of free journalism available is an obstacle to getting people to pay for news; however, for the most part respondents thought that if the value of the journalism could be communicated properly, people would pay for it. Thus, respondents considered educating the public about the economics behind news and how much it costs to produce to be one element in creating more general willingness among the public to pay for any kind of news, including crowdfunded news.

Generating recurring funding versus one-time seed money was a prominent topic among the journalists in this study. Most of the respondents began with a single crowdfunding campaign to generate seed money and planned to develop recurring funding over time. As Aitamurto (2015a) describes: "in these instances, crowdfunding brings in the essential seed funding to the journalistic operation. A substantial amount of funding can also carry over to the operations so that with the crowd's contributions, the news operations can be run for a while" (p. 199).

Many were working through the problem of compelling people to be recurring financial supporters without the use of a paywall. Chyi (2005) thought that a reluctance to pay meant "the subscription model is not working and may not work well in the future" (p. 140). Nonetheless, respondents believed it was possible to develop an audience of regularly recurring financial supporters.

A failed crowdfunding campaign could still be considered worth it for a new media outlet to raise awareness about it generally. As *The Discourse* demonstrates, a "failed" crowdfunding campaign can be used for critical audience and market feedback. While they didn't reach their goal for the crowdfunding campaign, the subscribers they did add made a clear indication of which community of subscribers they should focus on. If such feedback can be used to improve the success of future crowdfunding campaigns by focusing on the most receptive audience, then it becomes difficult to categorize any individual crowdfunding campaign as a success or failure.

Rather, each campaign is part of an iterative process. Many respondents did express that their idea of success is not limited to financial terms; often crowdfunding will play just a part in the long-term revenue scheme. However, respondents expressed that crowdfunding, the promotional elements and the audience development effects can be useful even if not a financial success. An unsuccessful crowdfunding campaign can still provide data to reiterate and change the media outlet in response to audience feedback. It can build a profile for the media outlet that can contribute to generating momentum toward some other kind of revenue model.

Theory

Structuration theory can provide an overarching concept for understanding how the respondents in this study are generating value propositions within the context of changing political economic structures within the journalism industry. As per Mosco, structuration is "the process of creating social relations, mainly those organized around social class, gender and race" (2008, p. 2). As a means for understanding the socio-economic forces at play within respondents' experiences, structuration theory is an alternative to neoclassical economic analysis by emphasizing that "rational" actors operate "within the limits set by wider structures," or social rules and resources; thus, political economy "starts with sets of social relationships and the play of power" (Murdock & Golding, 2005, p. 62). As discussed in the methodology section, structuration theory describes how, according to Mosco, "social life is comprised of the mutual constitution of structure and agency; put simply, society and the individual create one another. We are the product of structures that our social action or agency produces" (2009, p. 185). In addition, "structures are produced and reproduced by human agents" (p. 186). Below, the results will be analyzed within the context of human agency, and the production and reproduction of social structures as it is formulated within structuration theory.

Aitamurto (2015a) explains that "crowdfunding disrupts some of the traditional structures in journalism" (p. 194). The results of this thesis show that crowdfunded journalists in Canada are often responding to the economic restructuring of their industry, something which is taking place at a level far beyond their control. The respondents in this study are recursively making use of existing journalistic tropes such as governmental accountability and the public interest, but giving them new meaning within the context of the contracting economic structure of the journalism industry in order to develop value propositions for their crowdfunding campaigns.

The respondents in this study are both disrupting traditional structures in journalism and being disrupted by the industry's economic decline.

The results of this study show how the respondents work within a context shaped by the structuring actions of agents outside of their individual sphere of influence, but they also use their own agency to push back on these impersonal forces and offset some of the impacts of structural changes. Respondents' use of crowdfunding to launch independent media outlets that exist outside prevailing corporate or legacy media structures represents an attempt to creature new political-economic structures within the news media industry. These news structures of financing and cultural production create new class structures by changing the power relations dictating the flow of capital and financing within the journalism industry.

Crowdfunding and crowdsourcing have been conceptualized as allowing access to the wisdom of the crowd and collective intelligence or a democratizing of production, in this case cultural production (Bennett, Chin, & Jones, 2015; Brabham, 2008; Loosen & Schmidt, 2012; Mollick & Nanda, 2016; Muthukumaraswamy, 2010; Wexler, 2011) . The respondents in this study are drawing on the crowd to democratize cultural production by giving the public a direct away of supporting the creation of new media, and thereby creating more diverse news media options. Respondents are consciously making value propositions based on replacing or filling the gap in existing news media structures. Respondents found that it was possible to build community around the idea of independent or "people-powered" media, the collection of financial supporters were thought of as a community of people opposed to the existing, legacy news media and the quality of journalism it provides.

Thus, in the context of structuration theory, respondents are appealing to their audience by highlighting how the audience can collectivise their agency to make changes to the social structure around in terms of the news media and information they have. Respondents also appealed to their audience by offering them information that would grant them more agency within the realm of civic engagement and institutional accountability. Respondents believed in the connection between healthy democracy, civic engagement, and the public good and appealed to their audiences based on the democratic value of news and information. The respondents in this study were responding to the ways in which news media structures are been changed by the acts of other social agents, the public shifting toward digital consumption, the decisions of advertising media buyers, newspaper CEOs, tech companies and hedge fund managers.

However, it is worth noting that in structuration theory, social structures are a "medium" through which practices occur, and "structure enters into the constitution of the agent, and from here into the practices that this agent produces. Structure is thus a significant medium of the practices of agents" (Stones, 2005, p. 5). In the context of the results in this study, this insight illuminates how the respondents are using existing ideas about journalism's relationship to democracy and information, ideas that they think have currency with their audience because they are familiar.

Hunter (2016) has argued that crowdfunded journalists are engaged in a kind of audience commodification, as many crowdfunded journalists are hoping to use successful crowdfunding campaigns to demonstrate to advertisers that they have a dependable audience. However, Hunter also acknowledges that the idea of audience commodification is controversial "principally around the question of whether audiences actually work" and because it "downplays audience agency" (p. 220). The question of audience resistance, or "how audiences freely exert and organize resistance to institutional media power" (Biltereyst, & Meers, 2011, p. 429) is a critical one to this thesis. The results show that respondents' financial contributors have agency, and the respondents are proposing to collaborate with them to amplify their agency and influence the existing social and economic structures. Moreover, the results yielded little indication of respondents planning to sell advertising based on their audience size. On the other hand, what respondents said about how they appeal to their audience shows that they are trying to emphasize the value of the product they are offering. Although respondents did not use paywalls, they were not offering a "free lunch" in the sense that the term is used in audience commodification theory.

Additionally, the results show that respondents are building community around the idea of pooling their resources to create journalism that serves them and try to influence or change the prevailing social and economic structures dictating the diversity and distribution of news media. In fact, respondents were in large part appealing to their audiences on the basis that financially contributing to their media outlet would allow them to do something, or have an impact on, a social issue or belief that is important to them, even if that belief was simply in the democratic importance of well-funded journalism. Conversely, if audience commodification rests on the idea of the audience performing labour, then the behaviours involved in crowdfunding on the part of the financial contributor, when they are seeking to fund a type of media that market conditions have not produced, could be considered labour to bring in existence news media that serves their interests.

As Mosco (2009) says, "structures constrain individuals by using economic, political, and cultural power" (p.209). The respondents in this study used agency to respond to the constraints put on them by shifting structures of the journalism industry's economic decline. The made value propositions to their potential supporters that were deeply informed by this context. They offered to their audience a restoration of the assistive and beneficial elements of journalism that had been eroded by those shifting structures and proposed to them that they could themselves have impact by doing so.

Conclusion

The journalists in this study were appealing to their audiences and potential financial supporters based on the belief in a shared set of values that are bound up in journalism's traditional role as the fourth estate, and journalism's relationship with democracy via the concept of the informed citizen, civic engagement, public interest and the public good. Additionally, they were appealing to the audience's attachment to specific social issues. Within the context of an economically declining news industry, structuration theory illustrates how the respondents are adopting new behaviours in response to the shifting political-economic structure of the existing news media industry; the gap and holes that are created within this changing economic structure become common ground on which to communicate to their audience the value of their journalism. This was also the context in which respondents expressed the value of their journalism based on restoring the public's trust in news. These communication strategies are not wholly new and draw on longstanding connotations of independent journalism as opposed to corporate or government media. The following points can be concluded from the results:

1. **The journalists in this study all believed demand still existed for high-quality news products, and that there is still an audience for news despite overall declining revenues in the news industry.** Moreover, they believed they were filling a gap or hole that existed in current Canadian media offerings, holes that have largely developed due to the contracting economic size of the news industry.

2. **Respondents were reacting to the perceived gap in existing media in a few ways.** They were providing a specific kind of news product, for example long-form news magazines, where the existing media industry had not produced any, or a lack of non-corporate media. The lack of non-corporate media also represented a gap of a philosophical nature, or a decline of specific social values audiences hoped to get from news, like government accountability. Also,

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respondents believed the lack of non-corporate media was creating gaps of trust, civic engagement, and the public good. Respondents hoped to restore this trust by being more transparent and accountable to their audience. Additionally, respondents believed that journalism stories provide important information to people about the world around them, particularly when it comes to interacting with government and political institutions. Thus, respondents were crowdfunding to report on stories they felt were important yet underreported.

3. **Thus, generally, what respondents in this study thought were the best way to appeal to potential financial supporters were:**

I. **Position your media outlet, the values of the outlet, and the goal of the journalism as antithetical to the current traditional structure of the news media industry, particularly corporately owned newspapers**. Respondents felt that these news institutions had become synonymous in the mind of the public with the overall decline of the industry.

II. **Respondents thought emotional appeals were more effective than purely rational appeals**; to convince people to become financial supporters crowdfunded journalists must excite people by appealing to values and passions related to social issues. Their journalism should create information that is primarily *actionable* information, and allow one to be a more informed citizen, to engage with civic and political institutions more effectively, or to simply be more knowledgeable about policy and other information regarding a specific industry or area one is interested in.

III. **Community can be formed around crowdfunded media that positions itself as antithetical to existing media structures**, and respondents found this was an effective motivating factor for their financial contributors; however; it was not the primary conscious goal in most cases, rather community "feeling" was often developed organically as an offshoot of the media outlets and their audience having connection through the common purpose or goal of the media outlet, whatever the express goal is in terms of addressing social or public issues.

4. **Respondents that had the most success with recurring funding were constantly thinking of ways to make small appeals for financial support for itemized costs, for example the cost of filing a Freedom of Information request, or they relied on breaking important stories to drive waves of financial contributions.** Moreover, the results demonstrate the being successful

in crowdfunding journalism is an iterative process. Respondents that were most successful were sensitive to audience feedback and would tweak their offerings in an ad-hoc way based on what the audience seemed to be responding to most positively.

5. **Respondents did not to a significant extent rely on family or friends outside of journalism to begin promoting their crowdfunding campaign.** Rather, all the respondents tapped into large networks of people they genuinely considered friends, but with whom they also had a professional journalism connection - that is to say they had met and become friends through working in journalism; but respondents also had access to more expansive networks of colleagues and professional contacts they knew less well through their establish careers in journalism, which often a decade or longer already before the respondent tried crowdfunding.

Limitations and Future Research

The sample size in this study, at 10 people, is relatively small; this necessitated a focus on depth rather than breadth and thick description in the analytical approach to the data. A broader survey type of data collection on contemporary journalistic crowdfunding campaigns would complement the research here and give a more complete picture of attitudes prevailing among journalists who are practicing crowdfunding.

This research looked mostly at the first attempts of media outlets to try crowdfunding; it was concerned with media outlets "starting" through crowdfunding - but also asked questions about building recurring funding models. Further research into the characteristics of media outlets that have been crowdfunding for a long time would be useful, with a specific research question of whether there are differences in how crowdfunded journalists achieve success when they first launch a new media outlet, and how they achieve success in the long-term. Are their different considerations when they want to expand beyond their initial success? The limitations of this research were such that it kept its questions focused on what crowdfunded journalists believed about making successful value propositions during crowdfunding campaigns. Thus, it is difficult to draw general conclusions about what role crowdfunding would play in filling the structural gaps that are emerging in existing news media. The results of this research can only conclude that the respondents are consciously responding to and appealing to their potential financial supporters within the context of, the larger structural economic decline of the journalism industry.

Aitamurto (2011) described the process of financially supporting crowdfunded journalism as part of the creation of a "valuesphere" of one's online activity which signifies the interaction of one's values and one's identity (p.443). Further research could focus on giving this idea more conceptual robustness. The specific details of which values predominant in crowdfund behaviour could be articulated more precisely. This thesis goes some way to doing that, showing that civic participation, government accountability and social causes such as Indigenous rights, migrant issues and environmentalism are paramount. However, Aitamurto is describing values in strictly the sense of personal values and beliefs. However, this thesis indicates that when it comes to news as a product, personal values and "value" in a sense of worth or usefulness intersect. The worth that respondents' financial contributors derived from what they gave was a sense they had done something to impact an issue important to them.

Chyi (2005), thought that people's reluctance to pay for news because of free alternatives "indicates a failure of product differentiation under intra- and inter-media competition" (p. 140). Further research to explore how crowdfunded journalists can differentiate their work from free news sources would also be useful.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

First interview guide

The purpose of the research is as follows: to gain an understanding of how journalists craft crowdfunding campaigns and appeals to their audience, journalists' thinking behind the choices they make when crafting crowdfunding campaigns, what role the decisions they made when crafting their crowdfunding campaigns played in the success or failure of those campaigns, and how their perception of what motivates their audience to contribute financially changed (or stayed the same) based on the success or failure of those campaigns.

The interview recorded today will be transcribed and then deleted, the transcription documents will be stored locally on my own computer. So, unlike with interviews for journalism, you will be sent a copy of the transcript of the interview and you can remove or change any part of it.

So, you can end this interview at any time.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to answer any questions you do not want to.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

You will be asked about your relationships with your funders, and may be asked about subjects you would not like funders to know about. Additionally, you understand that you will be asked about your crowdfunding strategies and that such strategies will be discussed in any publications that arise out of this research.

No Direct benefits

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will gather the following information as part of this research: name, title, city, associated journalism endeavours and projects, strategies used for and approaches taken to, crafting your crowdfunding campaigns.

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

If you choose to participate confidentially, any identifying information (including name, title, city, and any other anecdotes or details about your journalistic endeavours that could identify you) will be omitted from the transcription.

DISCLAIMER: We cannot guarantee that those choosing confidentiality will remain non-identifiable, due to the small community and public nature of crowdfunding campaigns and journalism. However, all efforts will be undertaken to respect and maintain participant choice.

And then in the consent form there are boxes for you to choose confidential or non-confidential and then sign and date.

A. Crafting crowdfunding campaigns

What are some factual questions I can ask to get started with?
When did you start?

So, to begin Can you describe your roles and responsibilities at the organization, perhaps walk me through a day in the life at work for you?

1. Tell me about how the idea for crowdfunding first emerged as a potential source of funding for your organization?
- What background research did you do to prepare for your first crowdfunding campaign?
- What resources did you find for educating yourself about best practices?

So, when you/your organization sat down the strategize how best to appeal to potential donors...

2. Walk me through your thought process when you crafted those appeals for your first crowdfunding campaign?
3. At the time, how sure or certain did you feel about the appeal strategies you decided on when crafting the promotion for your first crowdfunding campaign?
- How confident were you/your team about your understanding of how best to motivate potential donors?
4. Did your initial assumptions about best appeal strategies change based on your first crowdfunding campaign experience?
- Why or why not? If they did change, how?

   5) And how many additional crowdfunding campaigns have you done since the first?
- **Zero Additional / Failure:** Based on that crowdfunding experience, what would you change in your appeal and promotion strategy if you were to do it again?
- **More additional / Success:** How has your crowdfunding appeal strategy evolved during subsequent crowdfunding campaigns?
- <u>>>>>>></u>   Was there a process for carrying forward lessons learned from previous campaigns into the design of future campaigns?
- Can you describe it? How does it work?
- Can you describe the areas that needed the most ironing out or retooling?

6) What role do third-party social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, for example) play in your promotional strategy? What role do specific crowdfunding platforms (Kickstarter or Patreon, for example) play in your promotional strategy?

7) To what degree have you had to rely on friends and family to gain initial momentum in your crowdfunding campaigns?

8) Is crowdfunding the sole source of revenue for your organization now?

What is the division of labour like for crowdfunding at your organization? How many people work on it, how many hours per month is dedicated to it?

Thank you for your thoughtful answers on those questions, now I would like to focus on the role of community and prosocial behaviour in crowdfunding for your organization.

    B.   The Role of Community and Pro-social behaviour

5. How would you describe who your audience is? What methods do you use to gain an understanding of who constitutes your audience?

6. What role do you think the concept/idea of community has played in the success or lack of success, in your crowdfunding campaigns?

- Do you think people contribute financially to your organization because doing so makes them a part of a certain type of community of people?

7. How much communication does your audience expect in terms of transparency in the reporting of stories and being accountable to their feedback? What do you do to meet those expectations?

- How do you try to communicate to your audience the value of the journalism work you do and the news media you create?

8. To what degree do you think those that contribute to you financially are motivated by a sense of altruism?

    C) News Audience Motivations

9. Broadly speaking, what do you think are the priorities of contemporary news audiences? What do you think they are trying to "get" from their news consumption?

10. What do you think is the biggest obstacle to persuading news audiences to pay for the news they consume?

- Why do you think that?

TRANSITION?

D)   Before we conclude the interview is there anything else you would like to discuss regarding what you think influences crowdfunding success or failure?

- If you could give advice to a journalist who was about to have their first crowdfunding campaign, what would it be?

- Express gratitude and outline any plans for potential follow up.

- Do you know any other journalists who have used crowdfunding that would be interested in being interviewed?

Appendix 2

Revision of First Interview Guide

The purpose of the research is as follows:

to understand how journalists craft crowdfunding campaign promotional strategies and appeal or pitch the to their audience,

The choices they make when crafting crowdfunding campaign promotions,

What is the difference in the relationship between journalists and their audience when there is crowdfunding involved, and what role does navigating that relationship play in the success or failure of those campaigns,

How journalists' perception of what motivates their audience to contribute financially changed (or stayed the same) based on the success or failure of crowdfunding campaigns.

- The interview recorded today will be transcribed and then deleted, the transcription documents will be stored locally on my own computer. So, unlike with interviews for journalism, you will be sent a copy of the transcript of the interview and you can remove or change any part of it.
- So, you can end this interview at any time.
- Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to answer any questions you do not want to.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

You will be asked about your relationships with your funders, and may be asked about subjects you wouldn't want funders to know about.

You will be asked about your crowdfunding strategies and that such strategies will be discussed in any publications that arise out of this research, and you might consider that proprietary information.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name, city where you work, associated journalism endeavors and projects, strategies used for crowdfunding campaigns.

Only people directly involved in conducting the research will have access to the transcript. We will only use the information for publications related to the research

If you choose to participate confidentially, any identifying information will be omitted from the transcription.

BUT I cannot guarantee that those choosing confidentiality will ensure you remain non-identifiable, due to the small community and public nature of crowdfunding campaigns and journalism. However, all efforts will be undertaken to respect and maintain participant choice.\

C. Crafting crowdfunding campaigns

What kind of feelings were you experiencing when you first had the idea to start the media outlet?

So, what does a day in the life look like for you when you are working on the funding for the media outlet

11. How did the idea of crowdfunding first emerged as a potential way for funding the operations for the magazine?
12. What kind of conversations where you and your colleagues having around the idea of crowdfunding at the time?

3) What was the gameplan regarding promotion strategies for that first Kickstarter?
   - What was the thinking you and your colleagues had around what you thought were the best ways to reach potential donors?

4) Who did you think was the audience for this media outlet when you were doing the Kickstarter and do you still have the same impressions of your audience? What methods does the media outlet use to gain an understanding of who constitutes your audience?

5) At the time, how sure or certain did you feel that the appeal strategies decided on were the best strategies to reach your potential audience?
   - How confident were you/your team about your understanding of how best to motivate potential donors?

6) Did your initial assumptions about best promotion strategies change based on your experience with that crowdfunding campaign?

If they did change, how?

6a) And how many additional crowdfunding campaigns have you done since the first?
   - **Zero Additional / Failure:** Based on that crowdfunding experience, what would you change in your appeal and promotion strategy if you were to do it again?
   - **More additional / Success:** How has your crowdfunding appeal strategy evolved during subsequent crowdfunding campaigns?

 >>> what was the thinking these changes, why were these adjustments made?
   - >>>>>>   Was there a process for carrying forward lessons learned from previous campaigns into the design of future campaigns?
   - Can you describe it? How does it work?

- Can you describe the areas that needed the most ironing out or retooling?

6b) Is crowdfunding the sole source of revenue for your organization now?

The Role of Community and Pro-social behaviour

Thank you for your thoughtful answers on those questions, now I would like to focus on the role of community and prosocial behaviour in crowdfunding for your organization.

7) What role do you think the concept/idea of community has played in the success or lack of success, in your crowdfunding campaigns?
- Do you think people contribute financially to your organization because doing so makes them a part of a certain type of community of people?
- Do you think there is a robust community engaged with your media outlet, or mostly its people who enjoy it as individual readers/listeners/watchers?

8) To what degree do you think those that contribute to you financially are motivated by a sense of altruism?

9) How do you try to communicate to your audience the value of the journalism work you do and the news media you create?

10) Do feel any particular responsibility toward your audience because of the direct financial relationship? How much communication does your audience expect in terms of transparency with regards to finances and budgets? What do you do to meet those expectations?

11) What do you think is the biggest obstacle to persuading news audiences to pay for the news they consume?

C) **News Audience Motivations**

What is the division of labour like for crowdfunding at your organization? How many people work on it, how many hours per month is dedicated to it?

13. Broadly speaking, what do you think are the priorities of contemporary news audiences? What do you think they are trying to "get" from their news consumption?

- Why do you think that?

D. **MISC**

6) What role do third-party social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, for example) play in your promotional strategy? What role do specific crowdfunding platforms (Kickstarter or Patreon, for example) play in your promotional strategy?

7) To what degree have you had to rely on friends and family to gain initial momentum in your crowdfunding campaigns?

TRANSITION to the CONCLUSION

D) Before we conclude the interview is there anything else you would like to discuss regarding what you think influences crowdfunding success or failure?

- If you could give advice to a journalist who was about to have their first crowdfunding campaign, what would it be?

- Express gratitude and outline any plans for potential follow up.

Appendix 3

Consent form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT ON JOURNALISM AND
CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN APPEALS

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

STUDY TEAM AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Role	Name	Institution[†] / Department / Address[‡]	Phone #	e-mail address
Principal Investigator	Kenneth Gibson	Concordia University/ Journalism Department	(514) 730-3522	journokgibson@gmail.com
Faculty supervisor[§]	Andrea Hunter	Concordia University/ Journalism	(514) 848-2424 ext. 2485	andrea.hunter@concordia.ca
Committee member[ǀ]	Elyse Amend	Concordia University/ Journalism Department	(514) 848-2424 ext. 2466	elyse.amend@concordia.ca

A.   PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is as follows: to gain an understanding of how journalists craft crowdfunding campaigns and appeals to their audience, journalists' thinking behind the choices they make when crafting crowdfunding campaigns, what role the decisions they made when crafting their crowdfunding campaigns played in the success or failure of those campaigns, and how their perception of what motivates their audience to contribute financially changed (or stayed the same) based on the success or failure of those campaigns.

B.   PROCEDURES

If you choose to be a part of the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher exploring your experience using crowdfunding as a way to support your journalism endeavors.

The interview will be digitally recorded (audio and/or video) and that the recordings will be destroyed after the interview has been transcribed.

The interview is expected to last less than an hour, and you are free to end it at any time.

The interview will take place either in person, over the phone or through internet video conference.

The interview will take place at a time and place of your choosing.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to answer any questions you do not want to.

You will be given a transcription of the interview and given the opportunity to change or retract any information that you want to.

Brief segments (not the entire transcription) of your interview, after it has been reviewed and approved by you, may be used word-for-word in any publications that result from this research.

You can choose to disclose your identity or have your identity remain confidential.
If you choose to disclose your identity, your name, title, and other identifying information, such as the city you work in and the journalism projects you are involved with will be used in this study.

If you choose to have your identity remain confidential your name, title, or any other information that might identify you will not be used in this study; instead a pseudonym or general descriptor will be used.

C.   RISKS AND BENEFITS

You will be asked about your relationships with your funders, and may be asked about subjects you would not like funders to know about. Additionally, you understand that you will be asked about your crowdfunding strategies, and that such strategies will be discussed in any publications that arise out of this research.

There is no direct benefit to participating in this study.

D.   CONFIDENTIALITY

We will gather the following information as part of this research: name, title, city, associated journalism endeavours and projects, strategies used for and approaches taken to, crafting your crowdfunding campaigns.

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

The information gathered will be confidential or identifiable (meaning it will have your name directly on it) depending on your choice.

We will protect the information as follows:

You will be given a transcript of your interview and asked to review it. You will be given the opportunity to retract or change any information you wish. If you wish to retract information, this section of the transcription will be destroyed. If you wish to make changes, the original section will be destroyed and replaced with the changes you wish. In addition, once the interviews have been transcribed, the audio/video recordings will be destroyed. The transcriptions of the interviews will be the only remaining evidence of the interviews.

In addition, as mentioned, if you choose to participate confidentially, any identifying information (including name, title, city, and any other anecdotes or details about your journalistic endeavours that could identify you) will be omitted from the transcription.

Interview recordings will be stored locally on a password-protected computer that only the researcher has access to. Interview recordings will either be recorded directly onto the researcher's password-protected computer (if by phone or internet video conference) or recorded onto a portable recording device that only the researcher has access to and then transferred to the researcher's password protected computer and stored locally (if the interview is conducted in person).

For the participants who are participating confidentially, during transcription any information that might identify the participants will be removed and this information will be destroyed when the audio recordings are erased.

The transcripts of interviews will be stored locally on a password-protected computer accessible only by the researcher and his supervisor. Hard copies of the transcripts will be kept in a secure location in the researcher's office, to which only the researcher has access. This data will be kept indefinitely for future reference, specifically for the purposes of research.

We may publish the results of this research. Please indicate below whether you accept to be identified in the publications:

[ ]   NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in study results). I accept that my name and the information I provide appear in publications of the results of the research.

   [ ] CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity). Please do not publish identifying information as part of the results of the research.

We cannot guarantee that those choosing confidentiality will remain non-identifiable, due to the small community and public nature of crowdfunding campaigns and journalism. However, all efforts will be undertaken to respect and maintain participant choice.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher within 90 days of the interview taking place.

You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time without negative consequences up until three months after the interview has taken place. The data from this study may be published.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.