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Public journalism: an agenda for future research

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Abstract

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The journalistic reform movement known as “public” (or “civic”) journalism has inspired much scholarly research.¹ Indeed, since the mid-1990s, when the first empirical studies appeared, more than 80 studies have investigated the practice of public journalism in the United States and, although to a lesser extent, elsewhere. While much is currently known about public journalism, many important questions remain unexplored.

This article summarizes the empirical research literature on public journalism as a means to articulate a broad agenda for future research. It does so for one important reason. Public journalism is at a critical juncture. Having been the subject of much journalistic experimentation and scholarly inquiry over the past decade and a half, such attention is gradually being displaced by a focus on the more recent, so-called citizen-based forms of journalism - or what some observers refer to as a shift from “public journalism” to the “public’s journalism” (see Friedland, 2003; Heinonen & Luostarinen, 2005; Witt, 2004) – like political blogs, hyper-local community web sites, and other Internet-based media projects. This is problematic given that, much popular speculation to the contrary, the empirical research literature shows that the news reporting of most of these citizen-based media projects not only runs counter to public journalism’s democratic ideals, but in fact falls far behind the movement’s actual accomplishments (see Haas, 2007a for a comprehensive review). Thus, to help strengthen public journalism’s standing – both vis-à-vis conventional, mainstream journalism and the more recent, citizen-based forms of journalism – it is important that scholars take stock of what is already known and what more should be known to secure the future vitality and growth of public journalism as a journalistic reform movement.

After a brief overview of the theory and practice of public journalism, the article proceeds to outline potentially fruitful areas of inquiry relating to three of the most significant research foci: (1) journalists’ attitudes toward public journalism; (2) differences between public journalism-inspired and conventional, journalistic newswork practices; and (3) public journalism’s wider impact. Following this discussion, pedagogical implications of some of the issues raised are examined. The article concludes by considering the most important questions that future research on public journalism ought to address.

The Theory and Practice of Public Journalism

Public journalism is based upon the underlying assumption that journalism and democracy are intrinsically linked, if not mutually dependent. While public journalism advocates acknowledge that the practice of journalism depends upon certain democratic protections, most notably freedom from government intervention, they maintain that a genuine democracy depends upon a form of journalism that is committed to promoting active citizen participation in democratic processes (see, for example, Charity, 1995; Merritt, 1998; Rosen, 1999). Conventional, mainstream journalism’s lack of commitment to such citizen participation, advocates argue, has contributed to widespread withdrawal by citizens from democratic processes, as manifested by declining voter participation in political elections and, more generally, by declining civic participation in local community affairs. It also has contributed to declining public interest in, and perceived relevance of, journalistically mediated political information, as evidenced by declining newspaper readership. Put differently, advocates perceive contemporary society as being riven by two

widening, but not irreversible, gaps: between citizens and government and between news organizations and their audiences. To help alleviate, or at least reduce, those gaps, advocates argue that journalists should see their primary responsibility as one of stimulating increased civic commitment to, and active citizen participation in, democratic processes. As Glasser and Lee (2002, p. 203) put it: "Public journalism rests on the simple but apparently controversial premise that the purpose of the press is to promote and indeed to promote, and not merely to report on or complain about, the quality of public or civic life." Rosen (1998, p. 54) makes a similar point, arguing that journalists should "help form as well as inform the public."

While public journalism scholars agree about the importance of stimulating increased citizen participation in democratic processes, they disagree about how far journalists should go in trying to further this ideal. Some scholars argue that journalists should be concerned with the processes, but not with the outcomes, of citizen deliberation; refrain from endorsing specific politicians, candidates for office, and political proposals; and avoid partnering with special interest groups that seek to further particular political interests. Other scholars argue that, under conditions of widespread social inequality, journalists should be concerned with whether both the processes and outcomes of citizen deliberation serve the interests of marginalized social groups; endorse politicians, candidates for office, and political proposals that would promote those interests; and partner with special interest groups that seek to further their particular interests (see Haas, 2007a).

Despite of this scholarly disagreement, the actual practice of public journalism exhibits a remarkable consistency. Without going into too much detail here (the empirical research on public journalism's newswork practices is described in more detail below), the practice of public journalism can be said to fall within three overarching categories: (1) election initiatives; (2) special reporting projects; and (3) efforts to make public journalism an integral part of routine news operations. Briefly put, some news organizations focus their election reporting on problems of concern to voters rather than on the campaign agendas of candidates for office, such as by identifying voter concerns through telephone surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions; elaborating on voters' opinions and where they differ from those of candidates; and organizing and reporting back on town hall meetings between voters and candidates. Other news organizations carry out a wide variety of special reporting projects on problems of concern to residents of particular localities, such as by reporting on those problems from the perspectives of residents rather than local government officials, experts, and other elite actors; offering residents opportunities to articulate and debate their opinions in the news pages; and organizing actual sites for resident deliberation and action in the form of roundtable discussions, community forums, and local civic organizations.

Aside from these project-based initiatives, some news organizations have made public journalism an integral part of their routine news operations. While a few news organizations have restructured their newsrooms from conventional beats revolving around institutional sources of information to include multiple geographically-based or topic-based teams focusing on particular localities or problems of concern to local residents, many more news organizations meet up with groups of residents on a regular basis to discuss which problems they would like to see covered, report on those problems, and subsequently invite residents to evaluate their coverage.

Journalists' Attitudes Toward Public Journalism

Since 1988, when the first public journalism initiative was launched by the *Ledger-Enquirer*, a local newspaper in Columbus, Georgia (Rosen, 1991), more than 600 such initiatives have been carried out in the United States and elsewhere (Friedland & Nichols, 2002; Haas, 2006). Although dozens of television and radio stations, both public and commercial, have been involved with public journalism (Dinges, 2000; Potter & Kurpius, 2000), the vast majority of initiatives have been conducted by newspapers, especially local newspapers. Indeed, Friedland and Nichols (2002) found that, among the more than 300 newspapers that have been involved with public journalism in the United States (about one-fifth of the approximately 1,500 daily newspapers), almost half (45 percent) have a circulation of 100,000 or less, with only 6 percent of a circulation of 500,000 or more.

While it is known which kinds of news media practice public journalism, little is known about why certain kinds of news media are more involved with public journalism than others. First, why do more newspapers practice public journalism than television and radio stations? Should the extensive involvement of newspapers be attributed to a comparatively stronger public service ethos than among their increasingly more commercially-oriented broadcasting counterparts? Or is it attributable to the efforts of major newspaper companies to promote public journalism among their properties? Indeed, many scholars speculate that the emergence and spread of public journalism as a journalistic reform movement owes much to the endorsement of major newspaper companies such as Cox Enterprises, Gannett, and Knight-Ridder (see, for example, Nichols, 2004; Rosen, 1999; Sirianni & Friedland, 2001).

Second, why do more local newspapers practice public journalism than their regional and national counterparts? Should the extensive involvement of local newspapers be attributed to their comparatively closer ties to their local communities? Or is the limited involvement of regional and national newspapers a manifestation of their unwillingness to risk compromising one of the major sources of their cultural capital and authority: their privileged access to elite sources of information? Indeed, one of the defining features of public journalism, as previously mentioned, is journalists' efforts to focus attention on problems of concern to citizens and to do so from their perspectives rather than those of government officials, experts, and other elite actors.

More generally, much remains to be known about how public journalism is being introduced into newsrooms and how editors and reporters, the ones ultimately responsible for designing and carrying out given public journalism initiatives, react to it. The answers to these questions could help determine what, if anything, can be done to increase news organizations' support of public journalism. After all, while more than 300 newspapers in the United States have been involved with public journalism, the vast majority have not. And among the former, only 45 percent have practiced public journalism continuously for five or more years (Friedland & Nichols, 2002). Thus, whether on the basis of philosophical principle or short-term experimentation, most newspapers in the United States remain fundamentally unchanged by public journalism.

Research shows that, although the majority of journalists approve of many of the practices associated with public journalism (see, for example, McDevitt, Gasset,

& Perez, 2000; Payne, 1999; Weaver et al., 2006), journalists are attitudinally most comfortable with the practices that differ the least from those of conventional, mainstream journalism. While most journalists agree it is their responsibility to focus their reporting on problems of concern to citizens, incorporate citizens' views on those problems in their coverage, and provide information on local civic organizations that work on those problems, few agree it is their responsibility to sponsor fora where citizens can deliberate about and formulate possible solutions to problems, try to help citizens reach consensus on how given problems should be resolved, and work directly with local civic organizations to help implement actual solutions to those problems - the latter three of which lie at the very center of public journalism (see, for example, Dickson, Brandon, & Topping, 2001; Jeffres et al., 2001; Voakes, 1999). Indeed, journalists, including those who work for news organizations practicing public journalism, continue to adhere strongly to conventional, journalistic practices, such as to investigate government claims, provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems, and get information to the public quickly (see, for example, Arant & Meyer, 1998; Bare, 1998; Gade et al., 1998); that is, practices which tap into what Weaver & Wilhoit (1996) call journalists' "interpretive/investigative" and "disseminator" role functions, respectively.

If journalists, as outlined above, are attitudinally most comfortable with the public journalism practices that differ the least from those of conventional, mainstream journalism, and continue to adhere strongly to conventional, journalistic practices, does this imply that public journalism is being forced upon reluctant, if not resistant, journalists by news media owners and managers? As previously mentioned, many scholars speculate that the emergence and spread of public journalism as a journalistic reform movement owes much to the endorsement of major US newspaper companies. Or do journalists agree to practice public journalism on their own volition? It is possible that, while public journalism is being met with resistance by journalists when first introduced into newsrooms, journalists begin to see its merits once they gain actual experience with it. Indeed, journalists' approval of public journalism's practices has been found to be higher among those who work for news organizations that have been involved as opposed to not involved in actual public journalism initiatives as well as among those who work for smaller as opposed to larger news organizations - the primary site of public journalism (see, for example, Arant & Meyer, 1998; Dickson, Brandon, & Topping, 2001; Voakes, 1999).

Nonetheless, the fact that many journalists, including those who work for news organizations practicing public journalism, adhere to public journalism-inspired and conventional, journalistic practices might suggest that journalists continue to doubt public journalism's merits, even after having gained actual experience with it. Thus, future research ought to redouble its efforts to investigate how public journalism is introduced and received in newsrooms and with what effects. The answers to these questions could help specify what, if anything, can be done to eliminate, or at least reduce, journalists' resistance toward public journalism. Indeed, a consistent research finding in both the United States and elsewhere is that the news organizations most successful at sustaining their commitment to public journalism over time are those with a high level of support on the part of news management *and* rank-and-file journalists (see, for example, Friedland, 2003; Romano, 2001; Ruusunoksa, 2006).

Public Journalism's Newswork Practices

Although (public) journalists are not fully convinced about its merits, research has found that the news reporting of news organizations practicing public journalism differ in important respects from that of mainstream news organizations more generally. Quantitative content analyses of public journalism-inspired election initiatives, special reporting projects, and daily news coverage shows that news organizations practicing public journalism: (1) carry longer, more staff-written, and more locally-oriented stories; (2) focus more attention on substantive policy issues than on isolated political events; (3) report more on possible solutions to given problems under investigation; (4) emphasize candidates' issue positions, qualifications for office, and policy records; (5) de-emphasize campaign-managed events and candidates' strategies and image-management techniques; and (6) feature less horse-race coverage and who's-ahead-and-who's-behind public opinion polls (see, for example, Evatt, 1999; Meyer & Potter, 2000; Reynolds, 1999).

Moreover, research shows that these news organizations: (1) carry more election-related mobilizing information, such as information about how to register to vote and where to go to cast one's ballot, and more information about how to become involved in local, citizen-based problem-solving efforts, such as by including contact information for local civic organizations working on given problems under investigation; and (2) display such mobilizing information more often in visual form, including through the use of prominent graphics (see, for example, Blazier & Lemert, 2000; Coleman & Wasike, 2004; McMillan et al., 1998).

Finally, research shows that news organizations practicing public journalism feature more ordinary citizens, including women and minorities, as sources of information than do mainstream news organizations more generally. Yet, when it comes to the overall sourcing pattern, the results are more mixed. While some news organizations quote more citizens than elite actors, other news organizations quote an equal amount of citizens and elite actors, or even quote more elite actors than citizens (see, for example, Kenamer & South, 2002; Massey, 1998; Moscovitz, 2002).

While much is known about public journalism's newswork practices, many important questions remain unexplored. First, little is known about whether news organizations practicing public journalism only promote local problem-solving, or whether these news organizations also promote problem-solving of a larger (e.g., regional or national) scope. Although most public journalism initiatives to date have been carried out by local news organizations, especially local newspapers, many larger-scale news organizations have been involved with public journalism, including national newspapers such as *Asahi Shimbun* (Japan), *Clarion* (Argentina), *Dagens Nyheter* (Sweden), *El Tiempo* (Columbia), *Helsingin Sanomat* (Finland), and *La Nacion* (Argentina), and national broadcasting outlets such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (Australia), the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (Malawi), National Public Radio (the United States), the Public Broadcasting Service (the United States), the Swaziland Broadcasting Corporation (Swaziland), and the Swaziland Broadcasting and Information System (Swaziland) (see Haas, 2006).

Second, little is known about why news organizations practicing public journalism do not consistently quote more citizens than elite actors as sources. Is this a function of public journalists' continued adherence to public journalism-inspired *and*

conventional, journalistic practices? Or should it be attributed to news media owners' and managers' economic concerns with keeping the information-gathering costs as low as possible? Certainly, it costs considerably less in terms of journalists' time and energy to solicit information from elite actors than to gather citizen input through telephone surveys, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and other means (see Loomis, 1998; Meyer, 1998; Potter & Kurpius, 2000). Relatedly, little is known about how citizens are quoted. Do journalists highlight citizens' underlying reasons for espousing certain opinions? Or do they merely offer citizens opportunities to state their opinions on given issues but without substantiating their claims? Are citizens presented as embodied beings who speak from specific social locations? Or are they presented as disembodied beings who do not speak from any particular vantage points? Finally, do journalists offer citizens opportunities to introduce and comment on issues that traditionally have been rendered off-limits of public deliberation? Or do they only solicit citizen commentary on a limited range of pre-defined issues?

Third, little is known about whether the various differences in news reporting outlined above are also characteristic of news organizations outside the United States. Indeed, the only non-US-based, quantitative content analyses carried out to date have focused on the practice of public journalism in Australia and New Zealand (see, for example, Ewart, 2003; McGregor, Comrie, & Fountaine, 1999; McGregor, Fountaine, & Comrie, 2000).

More generally, while much is known about public journalism's newswork practices on the news pages, little is known about its off-the-news-page efforts to promote citizen-based deliberation and problem-solving. This is both surprising and unfortunate considering that more than half (58 percent) of all public journalism initiatives in the United States (Friedland & Nichols, 2002) as well as many elsewhere (Haas, 2006) feature various kinds of news-media-sponsored, deliberative fora. Thus, future research ought to investigate the structure and foci of such fora as well as the moderating roles journalists play. For example, do news organizations sponsor multiple fora in given localities where members of different social groups can deliberate about their particular concerns among themselves? Or do news organizations sponsor more encompassing fora in which members of various social groups are encouraged to jointly deliberate about problems of presumed common concern? And to the extent that the latter rather than the former is the case: Do news organizations make special efforts to promote participatory parity among members of different social groups, such as by helping to foreground the concerns of the most marginalized social groups?

Public Journalism's Impact

As is the case for public journalism's newswork practices, much is known about the wider impact of public journalism. Research shows that public journalism initiatives have various positive effects on citizens' civic knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. In terms of civic knowledge and attitudes, public journalism initiatives have been found to enhance citizens': (1) interest in, knowledge of, and concern for election-year issues and local community problems; (2) trust in others; (3) willingness and perceived ability to take part in public problem-solving efforts; and (4) positive attitudes toward participating news organizations. In terms of civic behaviors, such initiatives have been found to enhance citizens' inclination to: (1) engage in

interpersonal discussion of election-year issues and local community problems; (2) volunteer for and/or donate money to local civic organizations; (3) establish new civic organizations; (4) contact public officials about local community problems; (5) register to vote; and (6) vote in elections (see, for example, Bowers & Walker, 2003; Denton & Thorson, 1998; Meyer & Potter, 2000).

Moreover, research has uncovered a number of design features that, if incorporated into given public journalism initiatives, tend to strengthen their impact on citizens. Briefly put, public journalism initiatives are most effective when they are: (1) carried out as multiple-media partnerships between two or more news organizations than by individual news organizations working on their own, (2) focused on a single problem over a sustained period of time rather than on multiple problems for shorter periods of time, and (3) aimed at involving citizens in efforts to solve problems rather than merely to deliberate about problems (see Nichols et al., 2006; Thorson, Friedland, & Anderson, 1997; Thorson et al., 1998).

Finally, research shows that, in terms of their wider political impact, public journalism initiatives prompt government officials to make more public funds available for existing efforts to address given problems, and even to change their public policies toward those problems (see Friedland, 2000; Friedland & Nichols, 2002; Nichols et al., 2006).

While much is known about public journalism's impact, many questions remain unexplored. Most importantly, although a number of useful design features have been identified, little is known about which of public journalism's newswork behaviors (both on and off the news pages) are responsible for which outcomes. For example, should citizens' enhanced interest in, knowledge of, and concern for local community problems be attributed to the increase in locally-oriented stories? Or is it attributable to the increased use of ordinary citizens as sources? Similarly, should citizens' enhanced inclination to vote in elections be attributed to the increased emphasis on candidates' issue positions, qualifications for office, and policy records? Or is it attributable to the increased inclusion of election-related mobilizing information?

Second, and relatedly, little is known about how the effects of given public journalism initiatives are distributed within particular localities. Does public journalism reduce differences in political interest, knowledge, and participation among dominant and marginalized social groups? Or, does it stabilize, or even widen, any pre-existing differences among different social groups? Similarly, do the solutions that are eventually enacted by citizens and/or government officials benefit all social groups within a given locality? Or do those solutions favor the interests of certain dominant social groups?

Third, little is known about which of public journalism's newswork practices, both on and off the news pages, are responsible for the impact on government officials. For example, is government officials' inclination to support existing efforts to solve given problems, or even to change their public policies toward those problems, attributable to the heightened public attention to, and concern for, those problems? Or is it attributable to particular features of given public journalism initiatives, such as the hosting of news-media sponsored, deliberative fora on those problems?

Finally, little is known about what impact, if any, public journalism has on the participating news organizations themselves. While research shows that involvement in given public journalism initiatives enhances citizens' positive attitudes toward the participating news organizations, little is known about whether their internal operations also change as a result. On one hand, there is reason to believe that involvement in public journalism has only limited internal impact. Aside from the fact that journalists who work for news organizations practicing public journalism continue to doubt public journalism's merits, only a few news organizations have challenged mainstream information-gathering practices, such as by substituting the conventional beat system with multiple geographically-based or issue-based teams focusing on particular localities or problems of concern to local residents. On the other hand, many news organizations have made it a routine part of their news operations to meet up with groups of residents on a regular basis to discuss which problems they would like to see covered, report on those problems, and subsequently to encourage residents to evaluate their coverage.

Pedagogical Implications

If journalists, as previously discussed, continue to resist public journalism's more activist practices, an important question for future research is whether there is anything journalism educators can do to help ensure that future generations of journalists will embrace public journalism more fully. Certainly, the problem is not a lack of commitment to public journalism instruction on the part of journalism schools. According to the most comprehensive study to date, while 12 percent of US journalism programs have specific courses devoted to public journalism, public journalism is a topic for discussion or is taught as a journalistic practice in 84 percent of programs (Dickson, Brandon, & Topping, 2001; see the web site of the *Public Journalism Network*, www.pjnet.org, for information about the teaching of public journalism around the world).

Rather, there is reason to believe that the way in which public journalism is currently being taught does not sufficiently take into account students' need for a sense of professional identification. Research shows that students, like practicing journalists more generally, are much more favorably disposed toward public journalism's less activist practices and, more importantly, that students' resistance toward public journalism's more activist practices are highest among those who have had practical newsroom experience, such as by working for campus newspapers or interning at local news organizations (Anyaegebunam & Ryan, 2003; McDevitt, Gassaway, & Perez, 2002; Rauch, Trager, & Kim, 2003).

In a series of articles reflecting on students' attitudes toward public journalism, McDevitt (2000, 2002, 2003) speculates that students' resistance toward public journalism's more activist practices, especially among those with practical newsroom experience, could be attributed to students' developing need for a sense of professional identification; that is, a sense of identification with mainstream journalistic norms and practices. Given that these norms and practices run counter to public journalism, students, especially those with practical experience in mainstream newsrooms, are likely to resist public journalism.

Future research could put McDevitt's (2000, 2002, 2003) reasoning to the test by comparing student attitudes among those whose public journalism instruction has involved collaboration with news organizations practicing public journalism, such as through the joint design and implementation of given public journalism initiatives, and those whose public journalism instruction has been confined to the classroom. Indeed, one might speculate that the opportunity to work directly with journalists committed to public journalism, an important feature of many journalism programs in the United States and elsewhere (see Haas, 2007b), would inspire in students a stronger sense of professional identification with public journalism's practices. Similarly, future research could compare student attitudes among those whose public journalism instruction has been an integral part of their educational experience and those whose public journalism instruction has been confined to particular courses. For example, it is likely that students enrolled in the University of Alabama's master's degree program in public journalism, a program where students receive extensive instruction in public journalism-inspired news reporting methods while putting their learning to practical and repeated use at the *Anniston Star*, a local newspaper with a long history of public journalism experimentation (see Haas, 2007a for details on this and other similar programs), would be more favorably disposed toward public journalism's practices than would students whose experiences with public journalism have been limited to one or a few courses.

Conclusion

The prior discussion shows that while much is currently known about public journalism - how journalists feel about it, how its news coverage differs from that of conventional, mainstream journalism, and what its wider impact is - many important questions remain unexplored. The answers to the questions outlined in the preceding sections are significant, not merely as means to obtain a more complete picture of the practice of public journalism, but, more importantly, to help secure the future vitality and growth of public journalism as a journalistic reform movement.

First, it is important to investigate why many journalists, including journalists who work for news organizations practicing public journalism, continue to doubt public journalism's merits. While numerous news organizations in the United States and elsewhere have practiced and continue to practice public journalism, the ones most successful at sustaining their commitment to public journalism over time are those with a high level of support on the part of news media owners, managers, and journalists. Thus, future research ought to redouble its efforts to investigate what can be done to secure - and maintain - journalists' support of public journalism.

While figuring out how to strengthen journalists' support of public journalism is crucial to the movement's continuing vitality and growth, it is no less important to investigate what can be done to ensure that public journalism's newswork practices are consistently applied across participating news organizations. Although it is heartening to know, for example, that these news organizations quote more citizens as sources than do mainstream news organizations more generally, it is troubling that many of these news organizations continue to rely more heavily on elite actors for information. Thus, future research ought to identify the factors that stand in the way of news organizations relying more fully on citizens as sources.

Finally, but not least importantly, it is essential that future research more precisely determines which of public journalism's newswork practices, both on and off the news pages, are responsible for which outcomes. Such investigations would help public journalism's newsroom practitioners better aim their efforts toward particular outcomes and, hopefully, also enhance their social relevance. For example, it would be very useful to know which of public journalism's newswork practices tend to reduce pre-existing differences in political interest, knowledge, and participation among dominant and marginalized social groups.

Notes

- 1 While no review of the empirical research literature on public journalism can claim absolute comprehensiveness, I followed a number of procedures to obtain as complete a selection of studies as possible. First, I consulted all of the academic books on public journalism, especially those which either reported on or contained references to empirical studies (e.g., Eksterowicz & Roberts, 2000; Lambeth, Meyer, & Thorson, 1998; Sirianni & Friedland, 2001). Second, I conducted a comprehensive search of the major academic search engines, including, but not limited to, Academic Search Premier, Communication Abstracts Online, and Communication and Mass Media Complete, as well as popular search engines like Google (including Google Scholar), Lycos, and Yahoo, using the search terms "public," "civic," and "participatory" journalism. Third, I consulted the programs from the annual conventions of the major communication and journalism-related scholarly societies (from 1995-2007), including, but not limited to, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the International Communication Association, the Journalism Education Association, the International Association for Media and Communication Research, and the National Communication Association. Finally, to broaden my selection of studies of public journalism in the non-English-speaking world, I consulted a number of relevant review articles (e.g., Paulussen et al., 2007; Pauly, 1999; Mwangi, 2001), monitored closely particular journals in which such studies were likely to appear, notably the *Global Media Journal* (all editions), the *Journal of Development Communication, and Media Development*, as well as contacted all of the scholars who have written about the practice of public journalism outside the United States. Nevertheless, while public journalism has been and continues to be practiced in many non-English-speaking parts of the world, including Africa (Malawi, Senegal, Swaziland), Europe (Denmark, Finland, Sweden), and South America (Argentina, Columbia, Mexico) (see Haas, 2007a for a comprehensive overview), virtually all of the scholarly writings about these initiatives are descriptive accounts rather than empirical studies proper.

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