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TWITTER'S IMPACT ON SPORTS JOURNALISM PRACTICE: WHERE A NEW MEDIUM MEETS AN OLD ART

by

KYLE SEARS

Under the Direction of Greg Lisby

ABSTRACT

This project aims to determine if and how the relatively new journalistic tool of Twitter is impacting journalistic decision-making and news production as a legitimate tool amongst sports writers. Using the methods of qualitative textual analysis and in-depth interviewing, this project analyzes the words and tweets of nine journalists at prominent U.S. newspapers in an attempt to fill a void in research among the topics of journalistic decision-making, sports journalism, and Twitter and to answer questions that arise from the marriage of a certain type of journalism and a particular new media platform.

INDEX WORDS: Journalism, Decision-making, Sports, Twitter, Textual analysis, In-depth interviewing

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by

KYLE SEARS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2011

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Kyle Sears
2011

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iv

LIST OF TABLES viii

1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 The "changing face of sports journalism" 1

1.2 A history of change 3

1.3 The "Twitter generation" 9

1.4 Asking questions about journalistic decision-making 13

2 LITERATURE REVIEW 19

2.1 Journalism and decision-making 19

2.2 The decision-making practices of sports journalists 22

2.3 Decision-making and new "journalisms" 24

2.4 Twitter and journalism 26

3 METHODS 36

3.1 Qualitative textual analysis 36

3.2 In-depth interviewing 37

3.3 The participants 41

4 RESULTS 43

4.1 When they began using Twitter 43

4.2 Why they began using Twitter 45

4.3 Why they continue to use Twitter 46

4.4 How they use Twitter 47

4.5 Twitter as a source of information 51

4.6 Twitter as a source of journalistic content 54

4.7 Other uses of Twitter 56

4.8 Benefits of the relationship between sports journalism and Twitter 58

4.9 Pitfalls of the relationship between sports journalism and Twitter 60

4.10 Twitter's impact on journalistic decision-making 64

4.11 Twitter's impact on the quality of sports journalism 66

4.12 The potential long-term impact of Twitter 68

4.13 Twitter and sports journalism as a unique marriage 69

4.14 A look at their Twitter feeds 70

5 DISCUSSION 80

5.1 Twitter's three hallmarks 82

5.2 Twitter's impacts on journalists 83

5.3 Twitter's impacts on journalism 87

5.4 Looking toward the future of work on Twitter and journalism 90

5.5 Limitations and suggestions for future research 91

5.6 Conclusions 92

REFERENCES 94

APPENDICES 103

A Top 25 newspapers by circulations in the U.S. in 2010 103

B Preliminary 23-question interviewing script 105

C Mary Schmitt Boyer interview transcript from March 7, 2011 107

D Paul Buker interview transcript from February 27, 2011 114

E Ken Davidoff interview transcript from March 7, 2011 122

F	**Helene Elliott interview transcript from March 2, 2011**	129
G	**Stephen Holder interview transcript from March 2, 2011**	136
H	**Lindsay Jones interview transcript from March 2, 2011**	153
I	**Colin Stephenson interview transcript from March 2, 2011**	166
J	**Adam Thompson interview transcript from February 28, 2011**	180
K	**Mike Wise interview transcript from February 28, 2011**	186

LIST OF TABLES

4.14.1 Twitter data 71

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The "changing face of sports journalism"

The phenomenon known as Twitter has taken hold of American culture in a relatively short amount of time. Twitter is a microblogging service created in 2006 through which users send 140-character messages, or "tweets," responding to the queue "What's happening?" One of the professions that has certainly been impacted by tweeting, retweeting, hashtagging, and the several other functions associated with the platform is journalism. Recent research presented at the International World Wide Web Conference in May of 2010 suggested that Twitter's uses have begun to fit the definitions of more traditional media, such as websites, newspapers, television, and radio, rather that social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook (Gonsalves, 2010, para. 2). Sports journalism, in particular, seems to be a realm where Twitter has assumed much influence as a journalistic tool, perhaps for such reasons as a highly routinized news cycle and dedicated fan following. At a recent Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication panel on "Social Media and the Future of Sports Journalism," *Denver Post* writer Lindsey Jones said, "Twitter has completely changed our beats. I can't remember what the job was like before it. The whole mentality has changed. Who cares when you get it on the website? Twitter is what matters" (Schultz, para. 5). As evidenced by Jones' 11,000 followers and demanding schedule of tweeting from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., Twitter has become an integral component of sports journalism practice.

Twitter's popularity among sports journalists begs the question, "If—and how—is this new medium impacting this old art?" Among those who have attempted an answer is Eric Goodman, a contributor to the sports-oriented social media website *Courtside Post*, who

authored a blog post on January 5, 2010, entitled, "Tweet, Tweet! Sports Journalism Has Changed." In this post, Goodman (2010) suggests that "in today's tech savvy world . . . the way we receive our sports 'news' has changed drastically" (para. 1). He goes on to detail the war of words that had taken place recently between Cincinnati Bengal wide receiver Chad Ochocinco and New York Jet cornerback Darrell Revis through their respective Twitter accounts, @OGOchoCinco and @revis24. The author compares this exchange to the more traditional way of obtaining quotes from players via press conferences: "A heated Twitter exchange between two opposing players is a lot more entertaining than reading dry copy about how Player A said such and such after practice and then having to wait until the next day to read the opposing city's paper to see if Player B responds" (para. 6). Goodman's sentiments about how the social media platform Twitter is causing journalists to reevaluate their sources are on the mark. However, there is another side to this "changing face of sports journalism," as well—one that Goodman fails to address (para. 3).

Twitter certainly has emerged as a valuable source for sports journalists due to the number of athletes who maintain active accounts. But the platform has also emerged as an equally valuable outlet for these journalists to provide their own content, whether they are reporting on the banter of two NFL prima donnas or information of more relevance to the sporting world. This is the second half of how Twitter is changing the face of sports journalism, and Goodman has not been the only person to overlook it. Media companies across the board previously made the same mistake—focusing on Twitter as a source and overlooking it as a means of providing content—during the first few months of 2009. As their executives came to realize this misjudgment, they began to craft and release social media policies in the latter months of the year, dictating what their employees could and could not do on sites like Twitter.

1.2 A history of change

To substantiate Goodman's claim that Twitter was a catalyst for "the changing face of sports journalism" and that such a change was taking place not only in terms of sourcing, as he asserted, but also in terms of content creation, a brief history is helpful. In order to provide that history, news accounts have been selected according to a search of major world publications via LexisNexis digital database for articles containing both the search terms "sports" and "Twitter" over the course of a one-year period from January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2009.

As the year 2009 was ushered in, media coverage of the intersection of Twitter and sports cast the relationship between the two as little more than an entertaining fad. The *New York Times* ran an article, entitled, "All a-Twitter About Stars Who Tweet," on January 5, explaining the novelty of sports stars making use of Twitter. The piece juxtaposed two of media consultant Kathleen Hessert's clients. On one hand, NBA superstar Shaquille O'Neal made use of the platform "to reach out to his fans," while on the other hand, LPGA tour member Natalie Gulbis' made use of it "to promot[e] her appearances, both professional and commercial" because "golf, particularly women's golf, sorely lacks media coverage" (Cohen, 2009, paras. 13-15). The media's fascination with Twitter as a source of information from athletes continued into the months of May and June. O'Neal continued to be a focal point of this fascination, as a *Washington Times* article, on May 26, included the text of two tweets posted to his account, @The_Real_Shaq, while he experienced his first hailstorm: "Sounds like a bunch of rocks coming out of the sky" and "Run aaaaaaaaghgn run aaaaaaaagh I'm scared" (Lemke, 2009, paras. 1-3). On June 9, 37-year-old founder of athletetweets.com, David Katz, was quoted as calling Twitter "the ultimate reality show for sports fans" (Fox, 2009, para. 12). Despite such dismissals of the worth of Twitter, its popularity continued to grow to a point where, in the midst

of Wimbledon, *The Guardian* of London posed the following question in a headline: "Is Twitter taking over sport?" (Ronay, 2009).

As the media gave attention to Twitter as a source of information regarding athletes over the first half of the year, they also seemed to trivialize it. The aforementioned *Washington Times* article read: "There is some question about whether Twitter's content is too trivial to sustain interest. A recent study from Nielsen Online revealed that only 40 percent of Twitter users in a given month return as active users a month later" (Lemke, 2009, para. 21). Even *The Guardian's* seemingly serious question about Twitter taking over sport was downplayed by author Barney Ronay's claim that Twitter's significance perhaps would be in "the end of certain bits in papers, chiefly the celebrity sportsperson interview where either (a) a cheeky chap asks what brand of marmalade a famous snooker player likes or (b) a heavily-eyebrowed über-hack tries to 'really get' some ball-whumper or racket-flailer by asking about their childhood, using long words and having a chin-stroking byline photo" (Ronay, 2009, para. 2). Whether or not the usefulness of Twitter for sports journalism could be summed up as Ronay saw it—as a new site for product placement and puff pieces—the media were not the only ones downplaying the platform's potential impact.

In addition, the *Inquirer* noted that "Twitter has burst on the scene so quickly that none of the four major pro sports leagues has rules prohibiting athletes from participating" (Fox, 2009, para. 16). This would soon change, however, as the leagues were among the first to recognize the impact of Twitter not only as a source, but also as an outlet for content. On July 17, *The New York Times* reported that the NBA was poised to become the first professional sports league with one million followers, as it was also the second-biggest corporate account, behind only Whole Foods (Beck, 2009, paras. 1-2). The league achieved this status by offering a mix of journalistic

and promotional content, consisting of "scores, news, video links, trivia and exclusive offers" (Beck, 2009, para. 4). Also worth mentioning were earlier attempts at semi-journalistic uses of Twitter by NBA Commissioner David Stern and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, as Stern tweeted news about the All-Star weekend in February and Goodell tweeted news about the draft in April (Lemke, 2009, para. 9). Additionally, professional tennis star Jim Courier live-tweeted updates during changeovers at a mixed-doubles match against John McEnroe in May (Lemke, 2009, para. 24). The *Washington Times* offered University of Kansas professor Nancy Baym's analysis of Twitter: "It can be a very powerful and rewarding thing for the athlete and the fan to have that kind of personal connection" (Lemke, 2009, para. 27). Though the journalist had yet to be recognized as a participant in sports-related exchanges over Twitter, that perception would soon change, as well.

With Twitter having been recognized in the media as a source—for fans and journalists alike—the platform slowly began to be recognized as an outlet for journalistic content. One of the earliest examples of professional sports journalism being practiced on Twitter was cable network TNT's coverage of the NBA playoffs in April. An article in *Adweek* on April 8 began: "Turner Sports is following the lead of Time Warner sibling CNN by diving headlong into social media" (Morrissey, 2009, para. 1). Turner set up Twitter accounts for NBA on TNT studio hosts Ernie Johnson and Kenny Anderson, as well as reporter Craig Sager, in addition to NBA TV host Rick Kamala and analysts Chris Webber, Gary Payton, Steve Smith, and Eric Snow. By the end of April, tweeting by television sports analysts, announcers, and journalists had caught on, as *USA Today* reported, "It was only in recent weeks that much twittering from announcers at sports events appeared. Now the tweets are coming in torrents" (Hiestand, 2009a, para. 4). The article cited NFL Network host Rich Eisen, ESPN women's college basketball analyst Rebecca Lobo,

as well as FOX Sports NASCAR announcer Larry McReynolds and MLB announcer Joe Buck among those who adapted Twitter's format to their own journalistic purposes. Additionally, CBS College Sports Network was identified as the latest adaptor, as it was set to have announcers live-tweet from softball and baseball games the following weekend. With each additional adaptor, Twitter was being looked upon more seriously as an outlet for professional journalism to the point where, in August, St. John's University became the first university to award a media credential to someone who would cover one of its sports teams solely on Twitter (Belson, 2009, para. 1).

As evidence of Twitter catching on in such a way, *Washington Times* staff reporter Howard Kurtz asked his followers what they valued about the platform. Among the responses was one from @Newsjunkie365 that summed up why Twitter and journalism have the potential to be such a compatible pair: "Since Twitter my web surfing for news has greatly decreased. Now the news comes to me" (Kurtz, 2009, para. 17). On July 30, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran a front-page story, publicizing the notion that Twitter should be taken seriously, as "recent evidence suggests that Twitter has gone from laughable to respectable" (Timpane, 2009, para. 4). Among those who came to this realization were the media executives whose employees were pioneering Twitter journalism, and this newly-gained sense of seriousness was accompanied by a wave of regulation.

Early regulation of Twitter was primarily informal. For example, the NFL simply pointed players to its preexisting guidelines on public comments to govern their use of Twitter. Journalistically, companies such as ESPN seemed to initially operate on a case-by-case basis of issuing restrictions on Twitter. During April's NFL Draft, producer Jay Rothman banned tweeting by its on-air talent, citing Twitter as an unnecessary distraction: "We don't get ratings

from tweeting. We have to focus" (Hiestand, 2009a, para. 11). For whatever reasons, the same ban did not seem to apply to the following NFL Drafts, as ESPN insiders Adam Schefter (@Adam_Schefter) and Chris Mortensen (@mortreport), who were featured on-air, often tweeted teams' picks anywhere from a couple of minutes to a few seconds before the picks were formally announced onstage.

In a July 30 *USA Today* article, however, *ESPN the Magazine* senior writer Tim Keown, citing a false report linked on another journalist's Twitter account, brought to light the possible negative repercussions of a lack of formal regulation: "Speculation is not a crime. . . . But from a journalistic sense, it seems that Twitter—and whatever technology comes next—is becoming a place that you can be wrong without consequences" (Emerick, 2009, para. 7). Exactly one week later, *USA Today* ran an article detailing ESPN's release of its new "Guidelines for Social Networking" (Hiestand, 2009b). By late October, Canada's national newspaper *The Globe and Mail* was reporting on "the growing move to put a muzzle on Twitter," citing the NBA, professional tennis, and the *Washington Post* as case studies (El Akkad, 2009).

While ESPN's social media guidelines were officially released on Wednesday, August 5, they leaked a day earlier, allowing several employees to take parting shots at their employer on Twitter before their accounts would be restricted. NBA analyst Ric Bucher summed up his interpretation of the guidelines, tweeting that ESPN was "prohibiting tweeting info unless it serves ESPN" (Hiestand, 2009b, para. 3). Journalist and noted on-air personality Kenny Mayne offered the following response: "Was informed 2nd hand of Taliban-like decree against further Twitter" (Hiestand, 2009b, para. 3). The preamble to the guidelines began by calling social media "important new forms of content" and demanding the same standards "across TV, radio, [ESPN's] digital platforms" (Van Grove, 2009, para. 9). It also mentioned ESPN's plan to

publish Facebook and Twitter posts to its multiple web platforms including ESPN.com, SportsCenter.com, and Page 2, which is a platform dedicated specifically to humor and commentary. Following these two paragraphs, 12 "specific guidelines" were listed. Among their purposes, the guidelines banned the use of personal websites and blogs, required permission to engage in social networking, dictated that content must be limited to "ESPN sanctioned efforts," and discouraged discussing internal policies, defending work against those who challenge it, practicing media criticism, and disparaging colleagues or competitors (Van Grove, 2009, paras. 11-23).

ESPN was just one of many media companies to release such guidelines in the latter half of 2009. Several companies did so in response to specific actions, such as an AP reporter criticizing McClatchy Newspapers on Facebook or *Washington Post* editor Raju Narisetti's appearing to favor healthcare reform on Twitter. These guidelines generally reminded employees that social media content should be assumed to be public, while also positively reflecting the employer and not displaying bias or representing information that would not be released on another of the company's platforms. *The New York Times* had established social media guidelines as early as fall of 2008. However, those guidelines almost exclusively addressed Facebook. In May of 2009, Craig Whitney, the *Times'* standards editor, said that the newspaper's Facebook ethics guide should be consulted in reference to other social media and that "it's not likely there will be a Twitter-only policy developed" (Koblin, 2009, para. 21). In late June, the AP released a policy that The News Media Guild called "perhaps the strictest it had seen," pointing to the following passage: "Monitor your profile page to make sure material posted by others doesn't violate AP standards: any such material should be deleted" (Kravets, 2009, paras. 4-8). In late September, *the Washington Post* released its social media guidelines,

which senior editor Milton Coleman said he had been working on since May (Alexander, 2009, para. 10). In November, *the Los Angeles Times* revised its guidelines on social media that had been originally released in March, referencing "a few new situations that have arisen in the last several months," perhaps drawing upon aforementioned examples (Edgar, 2009, para. 4).

1.3 The "Twitter generation"

While 2009 was certainly a crucial year in the marriage of Twitter and sports journalism, in the early months of 2010, such guidelines were still being released, such as those added to Reuters' "Handbook of Journalism" in March (Bunz, 2010, para. 1). Also, in late April, MLB.com ordered all of its beat writers to cease tweeting about all non-baseball topics, citing not wanting such non-baseball tweets to show up on the website's Twitter aggregator (Gleeman, 2010, paras. 1-4). In the light of such recent history, Twitter can better be seen as the mainstay that has reporters managing their sources and content constantly for thirteen hours a day, as part of the changed face of sports journalism.

Sports journalists on ESPN shows, such as "Around the Horn" and "Pardon the Interruption," make it clear on a daily basis that this is the "Twitter generation." Alongside such an acknowledgment, it becomes vital to acknowledge how exactly Twitter's rise impacts the practice of journalism, as radio, television, and the Internet have previously done. The primary concern that has arisen, it seems, is how the use of Twitter is influencing journalistic decision-making. For example, "Around the Horn" panelist Woody Paige of *the Denver Post* made the following comment about fellow panelist Tim Cowlishaw of *the Dallas Morning News*: "I think Cowlishaw's so wrong he should have tweeted that information" (Wolff, 2010). Such a joke connecting the medium of Twitter with the prevalence of false information exemplifies the

current state of affairs in which journalists are still working their way through what exactly it means to be of the "Twitter generation." Some, such as Paige, offer playful one-liners, while others, such as Paige's aforementioned colleague at *the Post*, Lindsay Jones, offer in-depth analysis. Furthermore, others continue to underestimate the influence of the platform, as *Washington Post* columnist Mike Wise did.

Those who may continue to dismiss the real, lasting impact of Twitter on the sports journalism landscape should look no further than Wise and his so-called Twitter "experiment." Wise tweeted false information that NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell had reduced his suspension of Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger from six games to five at 9:01 a.m. on August 30, 2010. Two hours and 59 minutes later, Wise followed with another tweet: "As part of a bit on my show today, I tried to test the accuracy of social media reporting. Probably not the best way to go about experiment" (MikeWiseguy, 2010). Thus he expressed that he knowingly reported false information, which had already been picked up by several media outlets citing Wise as the source. As a result of this experiment, Wise was suspended by *the Post* for one month, and his case proved that information posted on a journalist's Twitter account holds the same gravitas as information posted on *the Post's* website or printed in the newspaper's daily edition. In a statement made on his radio show the day after his infamous tweet, Wise stated, "Sadly, I always believed that things said in stream of consciousness or typed on a whim for shtick on a radio show would somehow disappear in the ether, fly away in cyberspace. But everything I say and do on the air, on my Twitter, on TV or *the Post* has ephemeral qualities" (Steinberg, 2010, para. 13). In his reaction to the Wise situation, *Chicago Tribune* columnist Phil Rosenthal pointed out a key differentiation between Twitter and more traditional journalistic platforms: "There are no copy editors to save me from myself on Twitter"

(Rosenthal, 2010, para. 5). As the case of Wise and the response of Rosenthal show, journalists are being presented with a unique—and important—struggle between the informality of Twitter as a platform and the formality of the expectations for journalistic content released through that platform.

Wise revealed in his interview as part of this project how his situation reflected just how big Twitter had become: "More people have read more about my suspension than they probably ever will do if I ever won the Pulitzer Prize… I will never be on the Yahoo homepage just because I won the Pulitzer Prize, but I was when I was suspended for screwing up on Twitter. That's sad, but it's also the reality of things." Though his is an exemplary case study of journalism in the Twitter generation, he is certainly not alone in his journalistic experimentation on Twitter. Some other interesting examples include *Sports Illustrated* senior NFL writer Peter King giving away tickets to a Boston Red Sox game: "Anyone want 2 good seats to Sox-Mariners today at 1:35 at Fenway? Swarmed with work. You'd have to come to Boston's South End to pick up (SI_PeterKing, 2010a). King also used Twitter to try and fill out his fantasy football league: "Need 1 player in the only fantasy lg I'm in. You must be able to draft tonight at 9:15 pdt [sic], 12:15 am Eastern. Anybody?" (SI_PeterKing, 2010b). Another NFL writer, ESPN's Adam Schefter, called upon his Twitter followers to locate a prominent player, which is a technique also known as crowdsourcing: "Serious question to test the power of Twitter: Has anyone seen Darrelle Revis in the past 24 hours and if so where? Trying to track his whereabouts" (AdamSchefter, 2010). Furthermore, Atlanta sports radio host and national college football analyst David Pollack highlighted the interactivity of the platform by tweeting: "Anyone got any football ?'s I shld have sometime [sic] to answer them" (davidpollack47, 2010). While Georgia Tech beat writer for *the Macon Telegraph* Coley Harvey displayed the flipside of

Twitter's interactivity: "Thanks to Twitter and your updates, this drive is zipping by. Feel like I've got 5 TVs on at once, seeing #cfb scores" (macontechtalk, 2010).

Sports journalists have also used Twitter as a sounding board for their personal theories of what the Twitter generation means for their profession. Some examples include Atlanta Braves beat writer for *the Atlanta Journal-Constitution* David O'Brien responding to a slew of follower remarks regarding an erroneous in-game tweet: "Folks, just trying to update with quick line b4 hurrying to clubhouse. It's a Twitter comment, not a game story in paper or online. Relax" (ajcbraves, 2010). ESPN personality Bob Ley, host of the network's investigative reporting show "Outside the Lines," retweeted—which is a Twitter function equivalent to quoting—the following from *New York Times* investigative reporter Don Van Natta Jr.: "The appeal of #Twitter is simple and even a bit old-fashioned: It's the urgent thrill of being the Town Crier" (DVNJr, 2010). Later, on December 2, 2010, Ley reflected upon his use of Twitter as FIFA announced the host countries for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups: "[C]onflicting media reports all over… but.. [sic] the Twitter is proving invaluable at this moment" (BobLeyESPN, 2010). Additionally, eleven days after Ley's tweet, ESPN and Baseball America writer Jerry Crasnick offered the following question, suggesting that just under two years after Twitter hit the pages of *the New York Times* as a novelty used by athletes like Shaquille O'Neal and Natalie Gulbis, it had irreparably ingrained itself into the practice of sports journalism: "Seriously, what was sports journalism like in the days before we had to worry about 'Fake Tweets?'" (jcrasnick, 2010).

The aforementioned tweets are just a small fraction lifted from the feed of a Twitter-savvy sports fan over the course of a few months, but, taken together, they help illustrate the rapid rise of Twitter as a platform for sports journalism. In light of such a rise, this project will

investigate this platform's impact on the practice of sports writing. This project follows work such as that by Susan Robinson, who investigates another relatively recently developed platform—the journalism weblog—as a "new form of postmodern journalism" by asking such questions as: "Do blogs rate as journalism according to traditional standards? How are 'truth,' credibility, independence, and authorship established in the online environment? And finally, how do journalists negotiate and (re)interpret traditional news frames and journalistic authority in the online medium?" (Robinson, 2006, pg. 69). In the current journalistic landscape, such questions could—and should—be asked of Twitter, rather than journalism blogs.

1.4 Asking questions about journalistic decision-making

In order to situate the journalistic decision-making that takes place in connection with the Twitter accounts of sports journalists, this project will rely on a tradition of theory that asks questions about the nature of communication that takes place between a producer and a consumer—also known as public discourse. Historically, such public discourse theory can be traced to seventeenth-century English poet John Milton and his concept of the "marketplace of ideas" (Arnett et al., 2008, pg. 100). The marketplace of ideas is "a public forum where all may speak, question, challenge, assent, and dissent" and a society evaluates "perspective[s] that might ultimately provide a path to the truth" (Good & Dillon, 2002, pg. 26). Modeled after literal marketplaces, or public fora, in which people gathered to debate their common affairs, today's marketplace, or common forum, is constituted by the media (Good & Dillon, 2002, pg. 26). This project will attempt to build relevant theory related to the impact on that marketplace of mass media usage of the new platform of Twitter. Methodologically, this project will employ a combination of in-depth interviews with sports journalists who are active on Twitter, as well as

qualitative textual analysis of those interviews and tweets by the interviewees. This analysis will seek to determine how journalists' decision-making in the "Twitter generation" might be defined, how that definition might differ from those of previous generations, and how this process of redefining might be helpful in navigating the future of journalism on Twitter or any other new media platforms that might arise.

Ultimately, this project asks the question, "Is the use of Twitter as a journalistic tool impacting traditional journalistic decision-making and news practices, and if so, how is that being done?," as journalists engage with what *New Yorker* columnist Eric Alterman (2008) evaluated just two years ago as "a fractured, chaotic world of news, characterized by superior community conversation but a decidedly limited level of first-rate journalism" (pgs. 17-18). In the midst of this world, a dichotomy exists between what might be called the professionalization of news and citizen or "grassroots" journalism, which is often characterized by amateur, independent reporting disseminated via new media. While professionals certainly use Twitter, the platform itself would likely be viewed as a product of citizen journalism due to its openness and interactivity. What, then, do the journalists who use Twitter aim to accomplish through its use? Where do they side on this debate between professionalism and amateurism?

Such a debate is nothing new. In the first half of the 20th century, early media theorists Walter Lippmann and John Dewey argued both sides of the same debate. Reflecting on the failure of the democratic media in his book *Public Opinion*, Lippmann (1922) made an extreme argument for the professionalization of journalism, calling for "intelligence bureaus," which would "assemble the facts in a way suited to the diplomatic problem up for decision" (pgs. 246). This view might be called extreme because it is unclear whether the rationale for such decision-making would even be revealed to the public. What is clear is that Lippmann had lost faith in this

public in an environment "refracted in many ways, by censorship and privacy at the source, by physical and social barriers at the other end, by scanty attention, by the poverty of language, by distraction, by unconscious constellations of feeling, by wear and tear, violence, monotony" which "combine with the obscurity and complexity of the facts themselves to thwart clearness and justice of perception, to substitute misleading factions for workable ideas, and to deprive us of adequate checks upon those who consciously strive to mislead" (pgs. 48-49).

Dewey (1927) countered Lippmann in the book *The Public and Its Problems*: "A class of experts is inevitably so removed from common interests as to become a class with private interests and private knowledge, which in social matters is not knowledge at all" (pg. 207). He also offered a particularly apt analogy: "The man who wears the shoe knows best that it pinches and where it pinches, even if the expert shoemaker is the best judge of how the trouble is to be remedied" (pg. 207). In other words, while Lippmann advocated for his "intelligence bureaus," Dewey harkened back to something like Milton's ideal marketplace in which every voice is heard and considered. Perhaps another way to look at this debate is elitism versus pluralism. However it is labeled, journalistic decision-making is often highly dependent upon which side of the debate they claim, especially on a medium like Twitter.

In the latter half of the 20th century, an extension of theory questioning the nature of public discourse in the form of journalism arose from a group of news production theorists. These theorists included the likes of Michael Schudson, who, among his many arguments, sought to clarify what he viewed as a misreading of the Lippmann-Dewey debate. Schudson argued that Lippmann was not nearly as much of an elitist as he had been characterized. Rather, instead of having experts replace the public, they "were to provide an alternative source of knowledge and policy to the parties and pressure groups" which "were fundamentally self-serving rather than

publicly minded" (Schudson, 2008, pg. 1040). In his book, *The Power of News*, Schudson held that journalistic practice must accommodate itself to a citizenry made up of some "rational, intelligent, active, and constant participants in the political process" and some who do not hold as dearly to these democratic ideals (pg. 223). He refers to such recognition as "the virtue of schizophrenia," which leads to both complication and opportunity (pg. 223).

Several of Schudson's colleagues address other instances that drive decision-making when it comes to producing news for what they view as a fractured public. Gaye Tuchman (1978) introduced the notion of "the web of facticity" that serves to establish journalistic authority by organizing information on a spectrum from fact to interpretation, much like a newspaper is divided into sections and pages that at first contain factual information, then specialized topics, and also opinions and editorials (pgs. 97-98). Over 30 years later, new media technologies, such as Twitter, seem prone to upset this web, as bits of information from many different points along this same spectrum are presented equally on a single platform.

Another news production theorist, Herbert J. Gans, offered a rationale for journalistic decision-making, which, similarly to Tuchman's "web of facticity," would seem to be challenged by Twitter. Gans (2004) argued that journalists' decisions rest on the "twin bases" of efficiency and power (pg. 334). Journalistic efficiency rests on staff, air time or print space, and production time, while power is divided amongst source power, which is the stronger, and audience power, which is the weaker (pg. 283). While Twitter is built to be an efficient medium, it is not necessarily in the sense of journalistic efficiency, as it has little, if any, connection to revenue, which is primarily based on advertising. Additionally, Twitter seems to undermine source power and increase audience power, as information is less restricted to formal, professional relationships and more open to informal, technological relationships.

Furthermore, a subset of news production scholarship focuses on the theory of "gatekeeping," which seems more directly echo the types of questions that drive this project. How and why do certain ideas make it into the marketplace, and how and why are others left out? Pamela J. Shoemaker and Tim P. Vos (2009) explained, "The basic premise of gatekeeping scholarship is that messages are created from information about events that have passed through a series of gates and has been changed in the process" (pg. 22). While gatekeeping has traditionally focused upon editors' decision-making, there are certainly many other gates through which news messages pass, and perhaps Twitter represents one of the most recent gates to be established, especially as it seemingly opens the door for writers to be more autonomous in their work. Facing such changes, Shoemaker and Vos issue a call to which this project responds, a call for scholars to "push their analytical tools to study the dynamic processes of both traditional and online media in an increasingly fast paced world" (pg. 132).

Such scholarship that responds to this call is exemplified by the work of Bowman (2008), who argued that new media have challenged the gatekeeper archetype of the journalist, which is "to place information in a proper cultural perspective and to assist clients in understanding their relationship to the sociopolitical process," with an advocate archetype, which "need[s] to adopt practices that assist disadvantaged groups to overcome socio-political barriers to change" (pg. 110). In other words, perhaps new media are asking journalists to become more involved with their readers than to simply present the facts and let them decide for themselves, which Bowman argued strays too far from "the core task of the journalist"—the gatekeeper model (pg. 110). Perhaps this is one of many changes that result from what Shoemaker and Vos identify as "the unique character of online content," which is "continuous change" (pg. 131). Twitter certainly

embodies the notion of continuous change perhaps more so than any other new medium, which begs for further research into more such changes.

From Milton, to Lippmann and Dewey, to news production—and particularly gatekeeping—theorists, the central questions remain of how and why decisions are made about what information is allowed to enter the public marketplace. The increasing popularity of Twitter certainly brings up many interesting, new possibilities regarding the answers to these questions. Drawing from two more news production theorists, David Machin and Sarah Niblock, such answers should be sought from what has heretofore been a mostly untapped source. Machin and Niblock (2006) wrote that the answers cannot simply be had from an outsider's view: "[W]hat we see, hear, and read through TV, radio, online and the press is the end product of a complicated process, subject to many influences and constraints normally invisible to the audience" (pg. 41). Therefore, the authors pointed out, "There has been a limited quantity of work from journalism academics on how journalists navigate their careers, and even less direct research into how these influences might impact on news content by these practitioners" (pg. 42). Shoemaker and Vos echo such sentiments in the closing words of their book: "It is our hope that media professionals pay attention to gatekeeping scholarship. If audiences are dissatisfied with the kind of news they get from the mass media, then journalists need to pay closer attention to why the news takes it present form" (pg. 135). This project seeks to respond to this call, as well, opening a dialogue between academic and professional realms regarding how a particular, new tool is impacting journalistic decision-making, news production, gatekeeping and the like.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The research questions that guide this project are "Is the popular use of Twitter as a journalistic tool by sportswriters impacting traditional notions of journalistic decision-making and news practices, and if so, how is that being done?" Therefore, to trace how previous theory might relate to these questions, some combination of journalistic decision-making literature and new media literature should be surveyed. The recent ascendancy of social media in the communication and mass media landscape has not allowed adequate time for a vast wealth of scholarship to be formulated regarding these media. Regarding this particular project's research agenda of investigating the decision-making of sports journalists who use Twitter for professional purposes, it seems that there may be several related research trajectories available from which previous work can be reviewed. The first of these is theory relating broadly to journalistic decision-making. The second is theory relating specifically to sports journalism and decision-making. The third is theory connecting new media journalism prior to Twitter—primarily via blogs—to decision-making. The fourth and final research trajectory is theory connecting Twitter to journalism practice, which has primarily been limited to non-scholarly, review articles up until this point in time. The void amongst all of these trajectories is the threefold connection between journalistic decision-making, sports journalism, and Twitter, which is the goal of this project.

2.1 Journalism and decision-making

Journalistic decision-making is a rather broad, boundless subject to be studied. Theoretically speaking, the standard for journalists has been the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, which has existed in some form or fashion since 1926. Practically, the

code may not be as widely recognized by journalists, however. The code lists four main tenets: seek truth and report it; minimize harm; act independently; and be accountable (SPJ Code of Ethics, 2010). Early in 2010, in the SPJ's bimonthly publication *Quill*, ethics committee chairman Andy Schotz authored an editorial delineating the intended use of the code. He wrote, "The SPJ Code of Ethics is a broad framework of principles and questions for journalists to consider as they make decisions. This code purposely avoids specifics in many areas. News organizations often go further in drawing boundaries for their employees" (pg. 30). This editorial highlights the lack of formality that exists within journalism decision-making, which seemingly allows for new developments in the field, such as Twitter, to impact the redrawing of the relatively thin lines that do exist for journalists to follow.

Recent scholarly work related to this field seems to echo the sentiment that journalists themselves are largely responsible for policing their own decision-making. Quinn (2007) argues that journalists should not only be driven by such external guidelines as the SPJ code, but also by "an internal view of professional ethics that utilizes an internalized moral psychology. . . based in virtue" (pg. 168). In his view, journalists should be driven by virtue ethics, which emphasize the importance of character above consequences (pg. 169). Such an ethical bent is preferable not only because "consequentialistic and deontological theories. . . fail to offer the correct moral judgment for all moral problems" but also because such a "habituated person who by disposition is prone to make good decisions" is "suited to journalism because of the profession's demands," which require quick thinking and moral clarity (pg. 184).

Similarly, Peck (2006) seeks to dispel a slant on John Stuart Mill's principal of utilitarianism that she sees as being typically taught to journalists and journalism students alike. She writes, "We have basic rules of thumb that guide us, but there are no absolute moral rules in

Mill's theory of utilitarianism. Morality must be 'a feeling in our minds,' Mill said" (pg. 211). Therefore, Peck sees journalists who claim Mill and operate under a succeed-at-all-costs mentality as misguided and lacking some basic moral guidelines that are necessary for journalism as it should be practiced. Like Quinn, Peck ultimately suggests that the journalist's primary duty is to make responsible decisions that serve the public (pg. 211).

Furthermore, in relation to journalistic decision-making, one recent popular press work bears mention, as well, if only because of Robinson's aforementioned derivative work, which is particularly influential for this project. In *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) list 10 guidelines that all journalists must follow. These guidelines are as follows: a primary obligation to the truth; a primary loyalty to the citizens; discipline of verification; independence from those they cover; serving as an independent monitor of power; providing a forum for public criticism and compromise; making the significant both interesting and relevant; keeping the news comprehensive and proportional; exercising their personal conscience; and recognizing the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

In view of the standards offered by Kovach and Rosenstiel, Robinson (2006), seeks to compare them to new media journalism in order to see if "blogs on mainstream journalism sites are a new form of postmodern journalism, or simply traditional news with traditional journalistic values wrapped in a new package" (pg. 69). She finds that "the world of postmodern journalism" is, in fact, "tapping at the door of the mainstream press," which seek to "remain very much framed in tradition" (pg. 81). In light of these works that connect the topics of journalism and decision making, two key points that drive this project arise. The first, as voiced by Schotz, Quinn, and Peck, is that the lines dictating proper behavior in journalism are thin. The second is

not only that these lines are easily impacted, as voiced by these same authors, but also that, as Robinson says, new media is "tapping at the door" to potentially impact the mainstream press.

2.2 The decision-making practices of sports journalists

Virtually all aspects of sports journalism comprise a largely under-researched field (Boyle, 2006, pg. 13). The lack of research in this area can largely be attributed to what Boyle pinpoints as sports journalism's "dismissal as a form of 'nonserious entertainment'" which "underestimate[s] the range of material now to be found under the heading of sports journalism" (pg. 13). Additionally, Bernstein and Blain (2002) point out the importance of sports and sports journalism: "For scholars interested in the media in particular, sport is important as a popular content of the media, which can also shed light on a range of related issues central to media studies. . . such as the vast field of representation and identity and globalization, as well as aspects of political economy of the media" (pg. 1). Additionally, McChesney (1989) points out the increasing seriousness that has come to be associated with sports writing due to "the spectacular increase in sports revenues brought on by television rights payments and all the attendant changes that increase brought for the world of sport" (pg. 67). He goes on to say that the "real world" has invaded the sports page and that "some have even attempted to extend the 'adversarial' stance of the newsroom toward politicians, government officials, and criminals to the relationship between sportswriters and athletes and sports promoters" (pg. 67).

Despite these attempts to more closely associate sports journalism with more serious forms of journalism, there appears to be very little scholarship in the way of sports journalists' decision-making. One exception is a chapter by Koppett (1994) in his book *Sports Illusion, Sports Reality: A Reporter's View of Sports, Journalism, and Society*. Koppett, however, seems

to side further from Boyle, Bernstein, Blain, and McChesney and more closely to those they decry for dismissing sports journalism. In outlining issues in the decision-making practices of sports journalists, Koppett points to several incidents, such as the history of professional sports teams paying sportswriters' travel expenses, offering pressbox food, complimentary tickets, and other "modest perks" (pg. 159). He then offers seven obligations in sports journalism: getting the story right; observing confidentiality; recognizing privacy; rejecting "real" conflicts of interests, such as accepting gifts of significant value and bribes; striving for honest evaluation, regardless of who may be hurt; avoiding damage to anyone by careless, inaccurate, or vindictive evaluation; and weighing as seriously and as solemnly as you can the relative claims of the public's right to know against common decency and the subject's individual rights (pg. 161).

While Koppett offers something rare in academia—a set of moral guidelines particularly for sports journalists—his final words on the topic serve to undermine the work of those aforementioned authors who seek to have sports journalism taken seriously:

> To a great degree, then, sports journalists and sports promoters really do have a common interest: the generation of more and more entertaining material about something that doesn't really matter too much. Unlike his or her non-sports colleagues, the sports reporter is likely to be swamped with too much information, and must pay more attention to selecting sensibly than to digging out hidden facts. And that's where we find the ethical obligation that is valid in more areas of life than just journalism: keep a sense of proportion (pg. 163).

Koppett's minimization of the issue begs the question, "Why even study something that 'doesn't matter too much?'" What he fails to acknowledge is what authors such as Boyle, Bernstein, Blain, and McChesney make clear, which his that large-scale issues, such as

identity, globalization, and political economy, make sports much more than silly, little games.

2.3 Decision-making and new "journalisms"

The impact of the Internet on journalism cannot be overestimated. For example, Deuze (2003) offers a typology of four different "journalisms" that have developed out of the online platform. Mainstream news sites generally feature "a selection of editorial content and a minimal, generally filtered or moderated form of participatory communication" (pg. 208). Index and category sites are often attributed to search engines, marketing research firms, or enterprising individuals, which offer links to existing news sites elsewhere on the Web (pg. 209). Meta- and comment sites are dedicated to news media and news issues in general, whether as media watchdogs or extended index and category sites (pg. 210). Finally, share and discussion sites facilitate "platforms for the exchange of ideas, stories, and so forth, often centered around a specific theme" (pg. 211). Deuze goes on to say that "the function of (most of) these sites is still the same as the main purpose of journalism according to its dominant liberal-progressive definition in elective democracies worldwide: to provide citizens with the information that they need to be free and self-governing" (pg. 211). Many scholars other than Deuze have studied and continue to study how new "journalisms"—to use his terminology—have developed and continue to develop in relation to new media platforms such as Twitter.

In addition to Deuze's broad claim about journalists' duty in the burgeoning world of new media journalism, some scholars have made more specific claims. Perlmutter and Schoen (2007) look at decision-making implications discussed by non-professional bloggers, identifying four main findings: bloggers see their own values as being antithetical to the professional press;

blogging is regarded as untrained, while journalism is regarded as trained; bloggers cannot logistically afford a code of ethics; and blogging does not need a code of ethics when it is successfully being regulated without one (pgs. 44-46). Though a "Bloggers' Code of Ethics" was developed by the website CyberJournalist.net in 2003, its influence is unclear, as the code's preamble states, "These are just guidelines—in the end it is up to individual bloggers to choose their own best procedures" ("Blogger's Code of Ethics," 2003). Perlmutter and Schoen suggest that such structures either do not exist—or are not recognized—in the blogosphere in order to continue to separate it from mainstream journalism.

Hayes et al. (2007) attempt to locate what might be deemed proper decision-making by professional journalists within this blogosphere. They note the trickiness of such a move, though, as attempts to define journalists by professional ethics or professional training are tenuous at best, as was also discussed in the previous section on journalism and decision-making. Rather, Hayes et al. point out that "one can argue that the proper starting point for any inquiry into roles and values is with the content itself" (pg. 265). The authors state, "A philosophy of moral values is shaped by the journalist's or news organization's need to be perceived by its audience as contributing to public discourse by providing factual, reliable, timely, and meaningful information" (pg. 265). Therefore, the authors point to characteristics of online content, such as factualness, reliability, timeliness, and meaningfulness, as the starting point for determining how professional journalists judge proper decision-making on new media, as opposed to more traditional platforms.

Similarly, Robinson (2006) investigates how professional journalists using the new media platform of blogs participate in a form of postmodern journalism, which is "nonlinear and interactive, with multiple entry points and several endings," allows "traditional no-nos," such as

superlatives, first-person, contractions, questions with no answers, invites comments and conversation, and features never-ending stories thanks in part to hyperlinks (pg. 78). Her conclusion points to what has been deemed elsewhere as an "indirect sharing of responsibilities" with journalists that defies journalistic norms (pg. 80). She writes:

> Mainstream journalists counter the threat of independent news blogs by taking them to task within their own blogs, thereby framing according to the dominant journalistic system. When their own writing becomes suspect as deviating from the norms, they justify by manipulating the truth and presenting many truths. News is no longer framed by the typical notions of journalism set out by Kovach and Rosenstiel and others (pg. 79).

Along with Robinson's recognition that professional journalists' actions on blogs and interactions with other non-professional bloggers are changing typical notions about journalism, all of the authors in this section indicate that new media "journalisms"—to use Deuze's terminology—are impacting traditional media values.

2.4 Twitter and journalism

When it comes to looking at the particular new media platform of Twitter, both academic and professional trajectories of research are still blossoming. Academically, very little research exists explicitly connecting Twitter to journalism. However, some research has been done in the four years since Twitter was founded regarding perceptions of the microblogging site, people who use the site, and the audience to the site. Professionally, a number of working journalists have begun to explore what the use of social media practically means for the field of journalism via the medium of review publications.

In academia, Arceneaux and Weiss (2010) have critically analyzed press coverage of Twitter using theories of social construction and the diffusion of innovations to determine the "public response" to the social medium from its emergence in 2006 through the beginning of 2009 (pg. 2). Reflecting on reactions to earlier communication technologies, the authors offer a typology of three categories of response: positive to negative, continually positive, and negative to positive (pg. 3). They then use grounded theory to organize themes presented through the press over the three-year span. The most dominant theme presented was explanation of the new technology. The theme of explanation could be divided into two subthemes, depending upon whether the story focused on the brevity of Twitter and its 140-character limit or the speed of Twitter and its instant dissemination of messages (pgs. 6-7). Additionally, amongst stories that made some kind of subjective judgment, the themes were overwhelmingly positive and could be organized into three subthemes: new sensibility, commercial use, and civic use. While very few purely negative themes arose, skepticism and pessimism did arise around the subthemes of information overload, acceptable practices, and unanticipated consequences (pg. 7).

Ultimately, Arceneaux and Weiss reveal that the public response to Twitter was overwhelmingly positive and characterized the technology as one of several "new methods of maintaining social bonds" in "the increasingly digitized world of the 21st century" (pg. 12). Not only did the authors find very few negative judgments of Twitter, but they pointed out that the majority of those negative judgments came from blogs, rather than mainstream media, which was to be expected, as "blogs, in general, contain a wider variety of opinion on all subjects" (pg. 9). In addition, negative subthemes, such as frequent server outages and the lack of a viable business model, perhaps reflect positively on Twitter, as users lament the possible loss of the technology for both brief and extended periods of time (pg. 13). Looking back on past examples,

such as the telegraph, telephone, radio, television, and the Internet, the authors find that "the preponderance of positive press coverage revealed by this research suggests that the skepticism over Twitter will not slow its diffusion and commercial adoption" (pg. 13).

Ahmad (2010) takes the question of Twitter's place in the new media landscape for the general public and applies it specifically to journalists. He raises the question in terms of the new medium's usefulness. The author offers a framework of four criteria that constitute usefulness: providing information, offering critique, entertaining readers, and generating revenues (pg. 147). Reflecting upon this framework, he provides an autoethnography of a period of a few weeks he spent working at *The Guardian* newspaper of London, which results in what he deemed a "practice-based anthropology of Twitter's usage at a single news organization which, although anecdotal and fragmentary, should provide theoreticians and media scholars with a glimpse at the reporting and production process at arguably the world's leading exponent of Web news technology" (pg. 149).

Throughout his time at *The Guardian*, Ahmad observed Twitter being used as a tool for both marketing and collaborative research. He describes journalists' use of Twitter as reporters and commentators "suppl[ying] a steady stream of live Twitter updates (including some pictures)" which served "to produce a profoundly immersive experience" which "provided the user with a remarkably rich sense of what happened as it unfolded" (pg. 151). Ultimately, he suggests, Twitter was not working to replace traditional forms of journalism in any way. Rather, it was supplementing these traditional forms (pg. 152). On the other hand, however, Ahmad pointed out that Twitter's adoption by journalists also leads to negative consequences, such as notions of information capitalism and technological fetishism that cause the quality of their work to suffer. In order for Twitter to be truly useful to journalists, a combination of revenues for

journalism and innovation through usage of Twitter as a tool must arise. Otherwise, the author suggests, journalism becomes a tool for Twitter (pg. 154).

With Twitter having been established as a generally positively viewed technology for maintaining social bonds and a potential tool for journalists, the question shifts from how Twitter is viewed to what users actually get out of the experience of using Twitter. Chen (2010) employs a uses and gratifications approach to determine if, as she puts it, "Twitter is just the chaotic noise that some say or has the potential to gratify the basic human need to connect with other people" (pg. 1). The author offers two categories of media gratifications, conceptualized by Cutler and Danowski. Content gratifications offer value in the information of a media message, while process gratifications offer value in the experience of using a particular medium (pg. 2). Methodologically, Chen employs a sample of 317 people's responses to a 21-question survey detailing their uses of Twitter, gratifications received from Twitter, and demographic information.

Through her research, Chen found that "the use of Twitter functions mediates the focal relationship between active Twitter use and gratification of the need to connect with the other on Twitter" (pg. 5). This finding not only suggests that Twitter is not just noise but gratifies the human need for connection, but it also suggests that Twitter usage is in itself a type of process gratification that offers some value for the user regardless of the media message. By extension, then, if people use Twitter to gratify a need to connect with others, then journalism via Twitter naturally becomes more of a public enterprise, as journalism is no longer just about the content, but the process, as well.

Furthermore, Schrøder and Larsen (2010) explore the shifting cross-media news landscape to determine why people do or do not use a particular news medium. The authors

frame this question in terms of "perceived worthwhileness," which is constituted by five factors, including time available, the affordance of "public connection," price, normative constraints, and participatory affordances (pg. 527). "Public connection," as defined by Couldry et al., involves "a medium's ability to satisfy through its content an individual's need to both equip himself for the role of citizen-member of the democratic order, and for the role of belonging as a community-member in the broadest possible sense" (pg. 527). Worthwhileness differs from uses and gratifications in that it deals with "socially produced, routinized meaning processes and discursive practices" rather than "rational individualized needs for specific media materials" (pg. 528).

Schrøder and Larsen employ surveying as a method of determining cross-media patterns of worthwhile news media, which was to be paired at a later time with a hybrid quantitative-qualitative research design. Their survey of 1,031 members of the Danish population over the age of 18 resulted in several findings. While television is reported as both the most worthwhile and indispensible medium, the Internet finished second in both categories. Additionally, when asked about the most important media for overview and depth reporting, television and the Internet tied atop the overview category, while newspapers finished first for depth, followed by television second, text-TV news third, and the Internet fourth (pgs. 529-30). While these findings point to media such as newspapers on the decline as far as Danish users' "perceived worthwhileness," the Internet is clearly on the rise as a worthwhile medium. The authors report that its tie with television as the most worthwhile overview news medium "was a cause of slight surprise, although the casting of Internet news as fast news, together with the well-known fact that news sites are the 'visit generator' of the net should maybe have led us to anticipate this finding" (pg. 532). Therefore while Chen specifically points to Twitter's gratification of a basic

human need for connection with others, Schrøder and Larsen show that new, Internet-based media, such as Twitter, are on the rise amongst media deemed the most worthwhile by their users.

Having considered theory related to users' experiences with Twitter, it seems logical to extend this discussion to the audience on the other end of such experiences. Marwick and boyd (2010) explain how this audience "is often imagined or constructed by an individual in order to present themselves appropriately, based on technological affordances and immediate social context" and apply this idea of the "imagined audience" specifically to Twitter (pg. 2). Depending upon whether a user's profile is public or private, their tweets may be available to an infinite number of people or very few people. Despite this number, the user is never entirely sure of the exact audience to their tweets, so he or she must imagine that audience (pg. 4). Marwick and boyd, who uses an all-lowercase spelling of her name in print, employ a Twitter-based survey of 181 different users to investigate how users might view their audiences. Chief amongst their findings is that Twitter constitutes a "networked audience," which is made up of "real and potential viewers for digital content that exist within a larger social graph" (pg. 16). For this reason, the audience on Twitter is both potentially public and personal, and, as the authors write, "Social contexts we used to imagine as separate co-exist as parts of the network. Individuals learn how to manage tensions between public and private, insider and outsider, and frontstage and backstage performances" (pg. 17).

Additionally, Marwick and boyd come to several secondary conclusions that shed light on Twitter and user-audience relationships. For instance, Twitter users consider it inauthentic when they perceive other users as consciously speaking to an audience (pg. 6). Furthermore, users imagine a variety of different audiences, depending upon whether they use Twitter as a

broadcast medium, marketing channel, diary, social platform, news source, and so on (pg. 9). The flattening of these audiences into one, known as "context collapse," causes users to participate in a practice deemed by twentieth-century Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman as impression management, which is exemplified by users who create multiple accounts using pseudonyms, nicknames, and fake names to obscure their real identities (pgs. 9-10). Finally, and perhaps most surprisingly, when it comes to self-censorship, many users characterize Twitter as a "professional" environment with potential professional costs where the "strictest standards" apply (pgs. 12-13).

Professionally, the majority of review articles linking Twitter and journalism are forward-thinking and open-minded when it comes to this type of interaction. For instance, Gordon (2009) predicts that "the biggest mistake" in the history of online journalism will be media corporations taking the Internet for granted as a one-sided means of communication (pg. 3). He demands such corporations embrace Internet-oriented strategies, such as cross-promotion and adoption of multiple platforms, including Facebook and Twitter. He advises them to set aside an outdated fear of consumers clicking away from their sites and never returning. Schulte (2009) takes Gordon's prediction even a step further by pointing out that the converging of media corporations and new media is leading to a "distribution revolution" in which journalists are forced to think of distributive aspects of business that had never previously confronted them (pg. 23). As journalists become distributors, their employers face additional challenges, as well, as evidenced by the recent publication of social media guidelines for reporters by major media corporations, such as those outlined previously.

As the negotiations for the reigns of social media usage by media corporations take place between journalists and their editors, the benefits of such activity are becoming clearer. Gordon

points to coverage of Hurricane Hanna in North Carolina in 2008, while Lowery points to coverage of a lesser-known instance of the explosion of a building in downtown Bozeman, Montana, in early 2009 as banner occasions for social media, specifically mentioning Twitter, which serve journalistic purposes, such as informing and aiding readers in times of crisis, in new and beneficial ways (Lowery, 2009, pg. 32). Among the ways Twitter can benefit journalists, Farhi (2009) lists its conduciveness to news outlets providing scoops, as well as its helpfulness as a tip sheet, displaying facts, sources, and story ideas in the work of other hybrid producer-consumers (pg. 28). Additionally, Farhi lists several negatives associated with the social medium, including its abundance of bad information, its 140-character limit, and an unproven business model, though he asserts that such technology, no matter the brand name attached to it, is here to stay (pgs. 30-31). Lowery also gives some practical lessons learned from her own media corporations' foray into the world of Twitter and Facebook, which include advice against mixing professional and personal accounts, as well as automating headlines and links.

Jones (2010) provides the particular perspective of a sports writer and a self-described "Twitter-holic" (para. 1). She recounts successes in using Twitter to obtain and collect informal poll results, on-the-record sources for fan-based stories, suggestions for restaurants and running routes in unfamiliar cities, and feedback from international fans as the team she covers, the National Football League's Denver Broncos, traveled to London for a game (para. 25). She also recounts her struggles to keep up with the torrid pace of news production that Twitter journalism represents (para. 26). Overall, however, she is overwhelming positive in affirming Twitter as a legitimate news source: "Years ago it was the rush to be the first to the phone booth; now the goal is to find a place of one's own to tweet" (para. 26).

While the majority of these authors gush over the positive potential for Twitter, others decry the negative consequences of such social media on traditional forms of journalism. Poole (2009) laments the loss of classic sports writing in the current journalistic landscape for two reasons: the rise of television's faster news cycle and the Web's segmentation of the audience and further acceleration of the news cycle (pg. 19). Poole's example, which stands in contrast to the aforementioned ones by Gordon and Lowery, involves the firing of University of Alabama head football coach Mike Price in 2003. Price's firing was connected to media coverage of his frequenting of a strip club, which was borne out of discussion on a fan message board of rival Auburn University. Poole says that new responsibilities, such as keeping up with message boards and providing live tweets of events, have diverted the energies of sports writers, resulting in a prevalence of "chicken-nugget news," which is brief, colorless, and utilitarian (pg. 20). Whether they view its impact as positive or negative, Twitter is clearly having an impact on journalism in ways that scholars should begin—and in some cases have begun—to seek for themselves.

In reviewing the previous literature regarding the topics of journalistic decision-making, sports journalism, and new media such as Twitter, several valuable insights relating to this project can be gleaned. First, the lines delineating proper journalistic decision-making are thin and prone to outside impact, particularly by new media. Second, sports—and sports journalism—is a growing, but still underappreciated, field of research, as more scholars are beginning to take the subject matter seriously for its potential impact on large-scale issues such as identity, globalization, and public economy. Third, the rapidly changing environment of new media "journalisms" is clearly having an impact on traditional journalism, including sports journalism. Fourth, Twitter has been characterized positively as a worthwhile media platform by

academics and professionals alike, but its social and professional implications are still being uncovered, and it is still unclear whether its impact will ultimately be positive or negative for journalism and journalistic decision-making. In light of these insights, a void in research exists where the topics of journalistic decision-making, sports journalism, and Twitter intersect. This project seeks to fill that void, providing not only additional scholarship in the under-researched field of sports journalism, but also answers to the questions that arise from the marriage of a certain type of journalism and a particular new media platform.

3 METHODS

This project combined the complementary methods of qualitative textual analysis and in-depth interviewing to determine if and how the use of Twitter by sports journalists is affecting the ways in which they make decisions within their profession.

3.1 Qualitative textual analysis

In order to analyze the two different sets of texts which make up this project, the traditional methodology of qualitative textual analysis will be employed. Textual analysis is a term used to describe many different approaches, which aim, as Joye (2010) writes, at "analyzing the choices made by the author of the text" (pg. 590). Silverman (2005) states that "the particular strength" of such qualitative research is "its ability to focus on an actual practice in situ, looking at how social interactions are routinely *enacted*" (pg. 832). This strength suits the aim of this project to determine how journalistic decision-making is enacted and the particular call it seeks to answer to open a dialogue between academic and professional realms. Texts can be exemplified by a countless number of different presentations of data, which for the purposes of this project are interview transcripts and tweets.

Patton (1980) breaks down the major steps that constitute a qualitative textual analysis. The first is data collection, which is achieved in this project in the obtainment of two sets of data—texts of sports journalists' tweets and the transcripts of interviews with those same journalists. Relating to the former set of texts, in order to gain a somewhat normative sample, tweets from nine sports journalists were collected over a randomly selected period of one week, which was be deemed reflective of a regular news cycle. This means, for example, that the week-long period did not include special events, such as the World Series, the NBA Finals, or the

Masters, which would result in a prevalence of a certain type of news during a particular news cycle.

Patton's second step is the selection, organization, and analysis of these texts, which involves "bringing to order the data, organizing what there is into patterns, categories, and basic descriptive units" (pg. 268). This step intends to determine what both sets of texts say about how journalists view decision-making taking place on the platform of Twitter. Once patterns, categories, and descriptive units were assigned, the third step is interpretation, or "attaching meaning and significance to the analysis, explaining descriptive patterns, and looking for relationships and linkages among descriptive dimensions" (pg. 268). After determining where these patterns, categories, and descriptive units are echoed amongst journalists and where they are disputed, the fourth and final step was evaluation, which involves "the systematic collection analysis, and interpretation of information about the activities and outcomes of actual programs in order for interested persons to make judgments about specific aspects of what the program is doing and affecting" (pg. 268). In other words, this last step involved organizing the data and interpretation into relevant theory regarding an answer to the research questions.

3.2 In-depth interviewing

As a complementary research method to qualitative textual analysis, in-depth interviewing was employed. Qualitative interviewing has been described by Bingham and Moore in their book *How to Interview* as "conversation with a purpose" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, pg. 171). In this case, the purpose of conversation was to determine sports journalists' perceptions of Twitter's impact on the news production practices of their profession. Lindlof and Taylor list eight aims of this particularly methodology, which include several that apply directly to such a

research question: “understanding the social actor’s experience and perspective through stories, accounts, and explanations;” “inquiring about occurrences in the past;” “testing hypotheses developed in the field;” and “achieving efficiency in data collection” (pg. 173).

Among the six types of interviews outlined by Lindlof and Taylor, the project employed respondent interviews. In “The Controversy Over Detailed Interviews,” Lazarsfeld lists the goals of respondent interviews as follows: “(1) to clarify the meanings of common concepts and opinions; (2) to distinguished the decisive elements of an expressed opinion; (3) to determine what influenced a person to form an opinion or act in a certain way; (4) to classify complex attitude patterns; and (5) to understand the interpretations that people attribute to their motivations to act” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, pg. 178). Since the use of Twitter is a relatively new development in sports journalism—in particular—and journalism—as a whole—respondent interviews were particularly appropriate, because despite the interviewees’ level of expertise about their particular world, their sense of individuality as they speak only for themselves about their unique involvement with a new medium was the primary focus of this project. In other words, where the long-established world of sports journalism and the newly-popularized practice of tweeting intersect, sports writers were looked upon as respondents.

Practically speaking, this project employed in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which were both open-ended and ethnographic, rather than limited and surface-level (Fontana & Frey, 2000, pg. 652). The pool of nine interviewees was comprised of sportswriters from the top twenty-five newspapers in the United States based on circulation (Appendix A). Newspaper journalists were the focus of these interviews because their platform has long been the standard-bearer for what is considered traditional news, therefore they seemed ideal candidates to

illustrate whether traditional news production was being impacted by the new supplementary platform of Twitter.

Due to the geographic parameters involved with such a sample, the interviews were conducted over the phone, rather than in-person. While Hon and Brunner (2000) explain geographical diversity as an advantage of telephone interviewing, Rubin and Rubin (1995) do point out such disadvantages as missing both non-verbal cues and the actions of the interviewee in her or his environment. The interviewees were solicited via their Twitter or business email accounts according to those who responded most quickly to direct messages or email messages.

The same series of twenty-three questions was posed to all of the interviewees (Appendix B). The interviews were semi-structured in that they allowed for open-ended responses, as well as follow-up questions that sought elaboration on relevant comments that varied from interview to interview. Additionally, unique questions were sometimes crafted prior to the interview according to the texts of tweets that particular interviewees produced either during or outside of the aforementioned one-week time frame during which data was collected. The primary line of questioning in these interviews was aimed at determining if the use of Twitter was affecting the decision-making of sports journalists and how this is being done. Secondarily, the interviewees were questioned about their individual experiences using Twitter.

Due to the involvement of human research subjects, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to the beginning of the interview process. IRB Protocol H11324 was approved for a period of February 25, 2011 until February 24, 2012. Along with approving the research protocol, the IRB reviewed and approved a copy of the recruiting message, twenty-three question interview script, and consent form. The university-approved consent form was sent to

each of the nine interviewees, either via standard mail or email, and a signed copy was returned, which will be kept on file for a period of five years after the research was completed.

The interviews, which were tape-recorded, took place between February 27 and March 7, 2011, and ranged from 17 minutes and 42 seconds to 57 minutes and 28 seconds. They were all conducted by the same interviewer. The interviews began with questions designed to ease the interviewee into the interview process, such as when and why they personally began using Twitter and how it plays a role in their day-to-day journalistic routine. Then, Twitter was posed as both a source and an outlet for content to the interviewees, who were asked to compare the platform to other platforms designed for the same two uses. Furthermore, the benefits and pitfalls of Twitter were considered, as well as which of those might relate uniquely to sports journalism. The interview proceeded with questions regarding Twitter and its potential success or failure as a journalistic tool, concluding with the most pointed question regarding whether Twitter has ultimately improved or reduced the quality of work. This question was reserved for last due to conflict that may arise between journalists, who view Twitter negatively, and their employers, who view the platform positively and require that their employees use it. Since the interviewees agreed to make their interviews public, and not confidential—for reasons such as the desire to identify them as influential voices and connect their interviews with their tweets—it was anticipated that such conflict might result in the interviewee becoming uncomfortable or refusing to answer the question. However, the question was received positively by all nine interviewees. Toward the end of each interview, the interviewee was asked if she or he had any anecdotes or examples from their respective Twitter feeds that they thought were worth mentioning in relation to the subject matter being discussed. In conclusion, they were asked for any final comments concerning the subject which may not have been prompted by the interviewer.

3.3 The participants

The journalists interviewed for this project were: Mary Schmitt Boyer of *the Cleveland Plain-Dealer*; Paul Buker of *The Oregonian*; Ken Davidoff of *Newsday* in New York; Helene Elliott of *the Los Angeles Times*; Stephen F. Holder of *the St. Petersburg Times*; Lindsay Jones of *the Denver Post*; Colin Stephenson of *The Star-Ledger* of New Jersey; Adam Thompson of *The Wall Street Journal*; and Mike Wise of *the Washington Post*.

Boyer is the beat writer for the National Basketball Association's Cleveland Cavaliers for *the Plain-Dealer*, resuming such a role this year that she had previously assumed from 1996 to 2001. She has been a sports writer since 1977, also covering the NBA's Minnesota Timberwolves and the National Football League's Minnesota Vikings. Buker covers Oregon State University football and basketball as a beat writer at *The Oregonian*, where he has worked for 34 years. Davidoff is the national baseball writer for *Newsday*, covering all of Major League Baseball with an emphasis on New York's two teams—the Mets and the Yankees. He has also worked at *the Bergen Record* in Jersey for part of his 18-year career. Elliott is a columnist for *the L.A. Times*, where she most often covers the National Hockey League. She has worked in Los Angeles since 1989 and previously worked for *Newsday* in New York, as well as *the Chicago Sun-Times*. Holder is one of two beats writers who cover the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers for *the St. Petersburg Times*, where he has worked for five-and-a-half years. He previously worked at *the Miami Herald* for seven years, covering everything from high school sports to college football to the NBA. Jones has spent nearly three years as one of three beat writers assigned to the NFL's Denver Broncos, after spending five previous years at *the Palm Beach Post* covering education, high school sports, and University of Florida athletics. Stephenson patrols the beat for the NBA's New Jersey Nets for *The Star-Ledger*, where he has spent the last 13-plus years in a

variety of roles covering the NBA, NFL, NHL, and college basketball. He previously worked at *the New York Daily News*, *the Asbury Park Press*, and *The Courier News* in Bridgewater, New Jersey. Thompson has been an online sports editor and occasional contributor to *The Wall Street Journal* for the past three years. As a writer, he has covered the Vancouver Winter Olympics and the NBA. Wise is a columnist in Washington, D.C., where he has worked for the past seven years, also hosting a popular local radio show. He previously covered the NBA, as well as the Olympics, in 10 years at *The New York Times*.

4 RESULTS

4.1 When they began using Twitter

With the exceptions of Boyer and Stephenson, all of the journalists interviewed had been using Twitter for over a year. Boyer said that when she took over as the Cavaliers beat writer after former beat writer Brian Windhorst went to work for ESPN in Miami following the departure of LeBron James from the Cavs to the Miami Heat during the summer of 2010, she was encouraged by her bosses at *the Plain-Dealer* to tweet as much as she could. She said she still struggles with doing it:

> I'm 55 years old, and I've noticed that my younger colleagues tweet just as a matter of course. I think they probably tweet in their personal lives, as well, and so it's just second nature to them. Whereas I lean over to a colleague to say something, and I realize, "Oh, you should tweet that." So it's still kind of a thought process for me. I have to think to do it, as opposed to just doing it. I feel like a rookie basketball player, frankly.

Admittedly an "old-school" sports writer, Stephenson said he only began using Twitter in September of 2010, when he became the back-up beat writer for the NFL's New York Jets. Previously, as a general-assignment reporter, he had avoided using Twitter, but stated that as a beat writer—then for the Jets and now for the Nets—it was unavoidable. "I saw [colleague and fellow Jets beat reporter Jenny Vrentas] using it all the time, and all the football writers were using it all the time, tweeting this and tweeting that. So, I kind of kept up with it, and I kind of felt like I had to get on it at the time." He added, "It definitely wasn't my choice. That's kind of the way it is now. You kind of have to be on Twitter, especially if you're on a beat." Stephenson

suggested that Twitter has become a necessary tool to maintain the level of expertise about a particular team or sport that is expected of a beat writer.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, as two of the most veteran sports writers resisted Twitter for the longest, one of the youngest began using it the earliest. Twenty-nine-year-old Jones was first to begin using Twitter in the summer of 2008. But it was not by choice, as she was approached by her bosses and told to use her cell phone to text occasional updates from Broncos training camp. She recalled, "I thought it was a real waste of time. I thought, 'Who out there would care to get updates from training camp sent to their phone?'" Jones continued tweeting via text message throughout the 2008 season, before getting more involved in the spring of 2009. Because she had begun using Twitter so early in its existence, she tweeted under the name @denverbroncos until late in the 2009 season, before the Broncos requested that she change the name to avoid confusion between *the Denver Post* account and an official team source. She now tweets under the name @PostBroncos.

Despite the examples of Boyer, Stephenson and Jones, the results of the interviews did not indicate that older journalists were more likely to resist Twitter and vice versa. As stated above, though Jones began using Twitter earliest, it was not exactly her choice to do so, and she did not necessarily embrace it right away. Furthermore, perhaps the best counterexample to such a stereotype, Buker, in his 50's, not only began using Twitter out of his own personal interest, but was the most frequent Twitter user of those interviewed. He also stated in his interview that some of his younger co-workers had given him a hard time because his use of Twitter contributed to *The Oregonian* requiring its sports writers to use the social medium. He said, "Twitter was just a personal thing, and when the bosses discovered that I quickly had 1,500,

1,800, close to 2,000 followers, they figured out that it was a lot more valuable for the paper's benefit too."

4.2 Why they began using Twitter

Of their reasons for beginning to use Twitter the journalists interviewed were generally split between two possibilities. The first of these possibilities, as expressed by Boyer and Jones above, was suggestions from bosses or editors. Wise was another of those interviewed who was asked if he would begin using Twitter: "One of our youngest editors—who is the [Washington] Capitals editor, the hockey editor—is very young and very astute in the ways of social media, and she asked if I could do it, and I said, 'All right, sure I'll do it.'" Additionally, Stephenson could be placed into this group, because, though he was not asked to begin using Twitter, he said that he viewed it as somewhat of a requirement. Each of those journalists who expressed a perceived lack of choice in whether or not to begin using Twitter also expressed a negative initial reaction to it. While the reactions of Stephenson and Jones were previously mentioned, Wise said that his initial thought was, "Oh, great. They're going to ask me to do something else. This is the modern-day world of journalism in which you're not just a writer anymore. You're a communicator with your audience in ways that have nothing to do with being a wordsmith or a reporter."

The second possible reason for beginning to use Twitter, as expressed by Buker above, was personal interest, which primarily developed out of observation of others, who were primarily colleagues, using Twitter. Holder said he began using Twitter as just a "reader" or a "follower" of people involved with the NFL. As such, he realized that Twitter could be an effective tool for his job when he came to the realization that "a lot of people don't spend eight

hours a day on our website, but they do spend eight hours a day glancing at Twitter." While Elliott also observed fellow sports writers using Twitter effectively, she additionally recognized it as a way to frequently update news despite traditional, time-consuming gatekeeping techniques. She said, "I saw colleagues doing it, and I thought it was a great way to very quickly and succinctly get news out there without going through sitting down and typing out a blog. At our newspaper, blogs have to go through the copy desk, so that takes more time." Thompson said that he was inspired to use Twitter not by colleagues, but rather by something of a social-media expert who was hired as a consultant to *The Wall Street Journal*. Davidoff added that a family friend had turned him onto Twitter.

4.3 Why they continue to use Twitter

All of the journalists interviewed were asked how their initial thoughts on Twitter had changed over time, and all responded that their thoughts had some way changed for the better. While the majority now view Twitter as a positive factor in the sports journalism landscape, three—Wise, Stephenson and Boyer—seemed to remain somewhat on the fence. All cited the addition of Twitter as a responsibility taking away from other, more important responsibilities, while Wise expressed additional doubts concerning the openness of Twitter. He said, "My biggest concern still to this day is, 'Why would I give away my best lines in a tweet when readers of *the Washington Post* pay for that in their morning paper?' So I still feel that, and I still hold back a lot. But I've also since then gleaned some more respect for the medium as a genuine news source and also its overwhelming power." Stephenson added that whether or not he still wanted to use Twitter, it had become inevitable in the current landscape that he had to: "It is what it is. I can't say I don't want to do it. It's just part of the deal, and I've just go to do it. My

attitude is changing—perhaps not quickly enough—to where I just need to embrace it instead of resenting it." Boyer echoed this notion, suggesting that since so many journalists have come to use it, she cannot do her job without: "I still hate it, but I do it. I think it's incredibly inane. But, especially like around the [NBA] trade deadline, it was a primary source of communication between sports writers."

The remainder of those interviewed positively characterized how they had come to view Twitter as a tool for their profession. Such a sense of appreciation for it seemed to develop out of an initial underestimation of Twitter for some of the journalists. For instance, Holder said he initially thought of Twitter along the same lines as Facebook, but now, he sees Twitter as a mostly professional and somewhat personal tool and Facebook as a strictly personal tool. Thompson said he initially thought of Twitter as a chore, "but now it's very much something that I like to do and something I can see the value in." Buker echoed Stephenson's sentiments about Twitter being integral to contemporary sports journalism, adding that Twitter's central role must be reflective of something positive that it accomplishes. He said, "It seems like obviously there must have been a need for it or a void there for people, because people certainly have jumped on Twitter, and now it's hard to find somebody who isn't on Twitter." Jones added, "I can't imagine doing my job without it." Davidoff commented, "I've built up a comfort zone. Now, I have a feel for me of what constitutes a good tweet and what constitutes a bad tweet."

4.4 How they use Twitter

The journalists were asked to describe how they use Twitter on a day-to-day basis, as well as to evaluate how successfully Twitter fulfilled two particular uses—as a source of information and an outlet for content—in addition to any other uses that came to mind. Many of

the journalists mentioned Twitter's omnipresence, as it is the first thing they look at in the morning and the last thing they see at night. "It really kind of dominates my life," Stephenson said. "We've always worked in a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week business, but never more so than now with Twitter." Stephenson went on to describe Twitter as a "necessary evil," with the evil being the constant pressure of what might be best described as an 86,400-second-a-day news cycle. Holder added, "I think it's been overwhelmingly positive in helping me do my job, but it's also made it a little more stressful, because I feel like I'm tethered to it." In addition, Jones mentioned that her routine used to begin with checking websites like ESPN.com and ProFootballTalk.com, which were particularly relevant to the NFL, but now she goes to Twitter to get all of that information in one place. Holder suggested that such a change in routine is not only affecting journalists, but readers, as well: "I read recently that people used to go to a handful of websites each day or on a regular basis, but nowadays they search for things and they go to them that way or they get them through another website, which in many cases is Twitter."

As the journalists recounted a typical day's work using Twitter, their routines varied quite a bit. Among those who considered themselves to be not-so-frequent Twitter users were Stephenson, Thompson, and Wise, who all cited different reasons for such an approach. Stephenson pointed again to an "old-school" mentality: "Let's say four of us or five of us are in a group-interview setting, and we all get the same stuff. Well, I'm going to go back to my laptop and start writing that for my newspaper's website, for the blog. Somebody else is going to tweet it. So I see this guy tweeting something I already know, and now I have to tweet it, but, of course, I got it up second, or third, or fourth, as the case may be." Thompson cited a kind of fatigue that comes with constantly being bombarded with updates every second of every day, "I'm not out there all day long with my thoughts. I just have other stuff to do, and I kind of feel

like as a user, I kind of get a little exhausted when people are on there tweeting something every 10 minutes. I think some people do it well, but others don't, and it just gets a little tiring." Furthermore, Wise added that he has never been consistent in his usage of Twitter, as he only tweets when he's "engaged," whether that is because of something he is promoting for his newspaper column or radio show, or something that has become a popular topic of discussion amongst his followers.

Among the more frequent users, Holder estimated that he has his Twitter feed up at least 75 percent of the time that he's on his computer. He said, "I'm not necessarily contributing all of that time, but I am reading the feed and taking note of what is out there." Though Twitter usage on the part of a beat writer covering a particular team or sport certainly varies according to what time of year it is, Jones, for example, provided an account of a typical Wednesday during the NFL regular season, which is one of her busiest days:

> Let's say it's a Wednesday, which is the big press conference day. So we get out to the facility in the morning, and we have conference calls with the coach and a player from the opposing team for that week. Usually after that, I'll send out a couple of highlights on Twitter: "Oakland coach Tom Cable says Sebastian Janikowski won't kick this week," or whatever, just a couple of newsworthy nuggets. Then we'll have the press conferences with the Broncos head coach and quarterback, and then we'll have a locker room session. So during the press conferences, I basically sit there with my laptop on my lap or on my desk and live-tweet it. There are people asking questions, and [former coach] Josh [McDaniels] is answering questions. A lot of the stuff would be newsworthy-type stuff: injury updates, somebody's not going to start, somebody's going to start, somebody's playing, not playing, basically press conference highlights. I do the same thing with the

> quarterback. If there's anything in the locker room, I might tweet a highlight or two from there: "Champ Bailey said that Vincent Jackson is the best receiver in the league today," or something like that. Then we get to watch the first 15 minutes of practices, which is basically enough time to take roll. If somebody's there or not there, that's usually how you can tell if they're going to play or not play. You get to see enough at the beginning of practice that you can tell sometimes if they've made any depth-chart switches… So those are the kinds of things you race back out—since we're not allowed to tweet from the practice field—and send from your phone or go back to the media room and post it. It's definitely a race with the other beat writers, because getting retweeted is kind of a big deal. If I post that Kyle Orton is throwing passes while Tim Tebow is getting all the first-team reps, and I'm the first one to get it, and [ESPN's] Adam Schefter, or Pro Football Talk, or one of the major, major sites sees it and retweets it, that's a big deal. That's a lot of people who are crediting me for whatever the news might be. It's a constant stream, and I guess the other side of it would be the interaction with readers. The Broncos fans, in particular, will ask questions, and I answer questions. During the season, we do that a lot. It's all about engaging with the readers in a way that was unheard of before now.

Jones' account of her day illustrates how central Twitter is not only to her personal journalistic routine, but also to the routines of her colleagues on the Broncos beat. When news happens, Twitter is the first place it is reported. She said that for her piece for Harvard's *Nieman Reports* she counted around 120 tweets that she had produced on a single game day (Jones, 2010). Boyer related a similar routine, but on a smaller scale: "I would say up to a dozen to 20 tweets during the course of a game, including the final score." Buker echoed Jones' notion of a "constant stream," or an ongoing discussion between, in his case, Oregon State fans, football players,

basketball players, athletic department officials and others in which he participates, and sometimes initiates, each day. Elliott noted that one night she was not attending a hockey game in either Los Angeles or Anaheim, so she decided to live-tweet while she watched some out-of-town games. She soon got a direct message to her account that read: "I love the play-by-play. Wish I could watch. I'm in Bali, Indonesia." Davidoff said he tweets links to his blog posts two or three times a day, in addition to breaking news, random thoughts, and a "shtick" he does during the MLB regular-season which involves making a new prediction of the final records for the Mets and Yankees each day. Taken together, the journalists' comments give the impression that such constant and far-reaching dialogue via Twitter seems, at the same time, to be both overwhelming and satisfying.

4.5 Twitter as a source of information

Relating to Twitter's usefulness as a source of information, the word most often mentioned was "immediacy." News generally surfaces on Twitter before it does on blogs, websites, or the newspaper. Not only is the news sent on Twitter more quickly, but it is efficiently organized and presented in such a manner that it is received more quickly, as well. Wise provided a particularly interesting account of the positives and negatives that result from such immediacy:

> The immediacy part of it, the get-it-now part of it is seminal in how we look at covering things now in ways good and bad. In the good way, you'll literally find out from somebody's Twitter feed whether Moammar Gadhafi has been toppled, and everything sports-news-related will show up on Twitter often before it shows up on ESPN or in the newspaper or anywhere… The bad part of it and the you-need-be-careful part of it is that

> there is no editor. Just as if you were sending an email to a girl that tore your heart out and stomped on it, you'd be sending it emotionally in real time, and months later you probably might regret sending that. But where you were—in that emotional place you were at the time—you said, "Damn it. I'm going to fire this off." That part of it can be dangerous in many ways. It's almost like you tell people all the time to think about things before you hit the send button, but Twitter doesn't encourage you to pause. It encourages you to be faster, more immediate, have the snarkiest, quirkiest, or most entertaining tweet there is, because God forbid that someone else beats you to it.

Another caveat with using Twitter as a source, as explained by Thompson, is that the Twitter feeds of media members almost always provide more useful information than those of players or coaches. Stephenson agreed, "Most of these athletes are not saying very much. But it's still access and something that's good to have." Boyer added that she had never broken a story as a result of something a player tweeted. Said Thompson, "It is sort of a Hail Mary way of reaching someone you're trying to get a comment from. It's probably a pretty low percentage, but all it has to do is work once to be useful." Davidoff was the most negative in his assessment of Twitter as a source: "It's not legitimate at all. I'll joke around occasionally with a baseball person on Twitter, but I certainly wouldn't use Twitter to try and get real information."

However, several of the journalists pointed to occasions where Twitter may be a journalist's only source of a certain type of information. Elliott said that she has seen hockey players saying things that team public relations representatives would not allow them to say in the locker room, or conversing with other players on Twitter. "You're kind of eavesdropping on them, and that's kind of fun," she said. Holder mentioned that football players may post tweets that provide rare insight into how they are recovering from injuries, or agents may post updates

on contract negotiations. Stephenson said that the only response he could get from former Nets player Derrick Favors when he was recently traded to the Utah Jazz was via Twitter, because Favors was not answering his phone.

In Denver, Jones has been very close to what is being considered a revolutionary use of Twitter by the Broncos front office. New Executive Vice President of Football Operations and former quarterback John Elway has recently begun tweeting under the name @JohnElway to announce major team news, such as the firing of coach Josh McDaniels, the hiring of coach John Fox, and the re-signing of star player Champ Bailey. "That is completely unheard of," Jones said. "Usually if you're covering a coaching search, you're tracking plane tail numbers and super-off-the-record sources about who's coming in and when they're interviewing… It's been weird from a beat-writer perspective, because we want to break all the stories. I don't want the team releasing the information. But at the same time, it's also nice to have the official confirmation right there." Though it is too soon to tell if the Broncos social-media strategy will catch on, such a development would only make Twitter that much more important as a tool for sports journalism.

Additionally, Twitter can be used as a source of information from readers. Thompson mentioned that *The Wall Street Journal* does a morning roundup of the previous day's most interesting stories ("The Daily Fix"). He said that if he and his colleagues are ever unsure of what story to lead with, Twitter serves as the tiebreaker, "It's not a coincidence that since I've started to check the [Twitter] feed every morning, traffic for "The Daily Fix" has gone up. I don't think those two things are unrelated."

4.6 Twitter as an outlet for journalistic content

Where immediacy is a factor for journalists using Twitter as a source, and it certainly is as well for journalists using it as an outlet for their own work, the other major hallmark of Twitter—"brevity"—seemed to come up more often in relation to this second usage. Holder offered a characterization of sports journalists that was echoed by several of his colleagues: "One of the things that every sports writer will tell you is that they never have enough space. You're always begging your editor for more inches in a story. So, to go to that group of people and tell them that you've now got 140 characters is one hell of a dilemma." Several of the journalists mentioned having trouble dealing with brevity constraints, in addition to the fact that stringing together two or three tweets to get a single point across is a generally frowned-upon practice. Though Twitter does offer the possibility of expanded tweets beyond 140 characters, as Buker pointed out, the brief nature of Twitter dialogue causes some, like Wise, to doubt its usefulness as a source. "I still find researched and edited and written stories to be the most effective in terms of research and preparation [for columns or the radio show], because the bottom line is people actually prepare that, and you can only get so many bits of information in 140 characters even if you tweet 20 times." On the other hand, Davidoff said that he finds Twitter's brevity constraints somewhat refreshing, "We all talk too much and write too much, so I like that Twitter restrains you." Furthermore, Thompson noted the difficulty in comparing Twitter as an outlet to the printed newspaper as an outlet, because the data that is available does not line up. He also said he believed that Twitter had net yet become as important as a source as Facebook—"You're more likely to get a bump from some story catching fire on Facebook than you are from Twitter"—but was the only journalist interviewed to make such a claim.

Where Twitter seems to have as its greatest value as a source is in upsetting traditional gatekeeping hierarchies, as mentioned above by Elliott. Similarly, Jones said, "Our editors obviously want everything on our site first, but sometimes that's not exactly feasible. Because Twitter is instantaneous, I can type directly from my fingers, and it goes out to over 13,000 people immediately. If I send it to our web editor, it might take 20 minutes for somebody to look at it and format it and stick it up on our site." Davidoff added, "When I have breaking news, I can just tweet it first, and then put it on my newspaper's website. My newspaper is fine with that." Perhaps for this same reason, Twitter is also redefining the traditional notion of the "scoop." Stephenson expressed frustrated that due to gatekeeping practices in the newspaper business, online-only journalists, such as those writing for ESPN.com or YahooSports.com, more frequently have the scoop and break news. At the same time, due to the immediacy of Twitter, being the one to have the scoop or break the news is not as prestigious as it once was. Stephenson said, "In the old days, if a guy had the scoop in the paper, you had to wait until the next day before you could address it, chase it, follow it, improve on it. Now, if a guy has the scoop, you can get something up 10, 15 minutes later. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing, because in the newspaper business you want to have the scoop. But now you have the scoop for 10 minutes, as fast as somebody can type something up." Thus Twitter is instrumental in a redefinition of breaking news.

Another redefinition Twitter seems to be playing a part in is that of the role of a sports reporter. The journalists interviewed characterized the dialogue that takes place on Twitter as sometimes being "clever," "entertaining," "flippant," "funny," "humorous," "quirky," "snarky," among other terms. The common bond between such terms seems to be a lack of seriousness that perhaps parts with more traditional forms of journalism. Though oftentimes there may be a clear

delineation between tweets that are comedic in nature and those that are journalistic, at least one of the journalists interviewed—Holder—went as far to hypothesize that Twitter is playing a crucial role in a redefinition of what it means to be a reporter that has been taking place for some time now. Holder explained, "I'm 35, and I went through journalism school in the '90's, and it was always made very clear to us that if you're a reporter, and not a columnist who writes editorials, then you don't offer your opinion. That's changed. That changed a long time ago, and Twitter really just blew that out of the water." Whether it is called "opinion," or perhaps nuanced as "analysis," which Holder said he prefers, he said traditional rules about whether that type of writing is allowed by reporters have changed with the transition from print to the Internet to the point where, on Twitter, there "are no rules."

4.7 Other uses of Twitter

When asked about any other uses of Twitter, other than as a source of information and an outlet for content, the one that was generally mentioned across the board was, as Holder termed it, "to build a relationship with your readership." Holder characterized the environment between journalists and readers on Twitter as a "bar-room" atmosphere where the exchange of information has a first-hand feel to it. Elliott also mentioned such an environment: "In the olden days, you would write, and [the readers] would send a letter to the editor—or more recently send you an email—but the conversation was probably a little more distant. Now when you're out there tweeting all the time, and most of us tend to put personal stuff in tweeting too, I think readers and fans feel like they know you better." Jones said that she has taken advantage of Twitter's ability to facilitate closer journalist-reader relationships, particularly when looking for fan comment from season-ticket holders for one story, as well as from British fans of the team

when the Broncos played in London last year for another. Wise added that such an informal feel to Twitter can be a danger, especially to journalists working for large news organizations, because "people expect more from you than they do a blogger who's not connected to a larger website," so how the platform invites a mainstream journalist to act and how the readers expect a mainstream journalist to act are often quite different. Davidoff mentioned a similar dynamic, but in different terms, using the notion of branding instead: "Everything I do is to build my brand, whether I link to stuff on *Newsday*, put breaking news on there, put a joke up there, this shtick I do where everyday I predict the records of the teams. That has generated a nice following of lovers and haters, which I think is a nice balance. It gets people talking. It all goes back to building a brand."

Somewhat related to journalists using Twitter to build a relationship with readers is an additional use of Twitter that is strictly personal in nature. Holder, for instance, mentioned that he maintains a Facebook account for personal matters, while his Twitter account is more professional. However, Twitter is inevitably personal on some level, as well. He said, "[Twitter] ends up being this weird mix of personal and professional to some extent, and much less personal than professional, like I said. But I'll read a tweet about Player X getting a contract extension, which is relevant to my job, and then the next tweet could be about the Egyptian protests, which is not." Jones also mentioned following actors, actresses, and politician on a personal level on Twitter, in addition to following contacts for professional purposes. Holder said Twitter allows him to accomplish what he needs to do professionally "with a little bit of a diversion," adding, "That's where you've got to be careful, because, if you want, you could end up following your 100 most-famous celebrities, and then you could spend all day reading their tweets and not get anything done."

4.8 Benefits of the relationship between sports journalism and Twitter

The journalists were asked to discuss the various benefits and pitfalls related to using Twitter, many of which previously came up in the discussion of the uses of Twitter, such as its impact on the dissemination of information in terms of brevity, immediacy and the personal and unfiltered nature of information on the platform. One benefit worth elaborating on further seems to be Twitter's compatibility with breaking news. Especially for the beat writers, who are expected to wield a certain level of expertise in regards to a certain team, more specifically, or a sport, less specifically, as Stephenson described, "You live in fear that somebody's going to break a story on Twitter and you're going to have to drop what you're doing and immediately chase that story." Whether such exposure to more information, more rapidly is a benefit or a pitfall seemingly depends on whether a journalists considers keeping up with Twitter a winning or a losing battle. Whereas for Stephenson, it might be considered the latter, for others, such as Holder, it seems to be the former. Holder said, "I need to be up-to-date on what's going on, and in sports nowadays—for whoever is reading the [NFL's collective bargaining agreement] negotiations or what have you—things change by the minute, so you just really have to be on top of it, and that's what I've really been able to use [Twitter] for in large part."

Another potential benefit for sports writers, according to some of the journalists, is that the type of information for which Twitter is built and the type of information of which sports primarily consists are compatible. As Wise stated, "So much of sports is minutia, and, really, what is Twitter but minutia?" Davidoff elaborated on this subject, using an example from MLB free agency, "Every winter, you know Cliff Lee's going to sign somewhere. That's just built for Twitter. There's going to be a finish line, and there's going to be a race to see who can report that news first, and Twitter, right now, is the arena where that race is really taking place." Others,

such as Thompson, see this as a pitfall, however, as he said, "I used to cover the NBA, and I see a lot of NBA writers who will put some pretty miniscule stuff up there like guys signed to 10-day contracts or somebody fined $5,000 for a technical foul. That's sort of a level of minutia that doesn't really interest me." Davidoff's point about the race to report news is related to another possible benefit of Twitter that is tied to Stephenson's discussion of the changing notion of the scoop. Where the scoop may be easier to obtain for certain types of journalists over others, or be held for a shorter period of time and therefore less prestigious because of Twitter, the platform certainly provides a clear indication of who got the scoop. As Davidoff said, "Certainly, when you get a story now, you want to tweet it. It's kind of good, because there's always this heavy competition, especially, I think, in sports media for who had the story first, and Twitter is kind of the ultimate referee of that."

Additionally, Thompson brought up the notion of Twitter as a "time suck," which he labeled as both a potential benefit and a pitfall. The positive side of it is, in his words, "There is never a time now—waiting at the doctor's office or for an airplane or something—when you don't have anything to read. There is always something to read, because you can always just pop [Twitter] on your BlackBerry or whatever, and there are writers who you like saying funny and interesting stuff, unless it's three in the morning or something." The negative side is, "You can sort of get addicted to that and become antisocial and not interact with human beings while you're checking your Twitter feed all the time."

Finally, when considering benefits, Thompson also brought up the question of who Twitter is actually benefitting, connecting to reservations, such as those expressed by Stephenson and Wise, about giving away your best lines. Thompson said:

> I think there's this real conundrum that a lot of them are facing where they're often getting the news out on Twitter before their own sites, which is kind of stunning if you think about it. You're basically giving to a third party. It benefits you, but not directly, and it benefits from you, from your work. I think that's something that I find that we're still sort of navigating and is a little confusing for people.

What Thompson pointed out, which should not be left absent from a discussion of Twitter's benefits for sports journalists, is who is actually benefitting more: Twitter—as a brand, as a company, as a service—or journalists? Whereas this project investigates if and how Twitter is impacting sports journalism, another interesting set of research questions left unexplored involve how journalists' use of Twitter is impacting the brand, company, and/or service itself and why.

4.9 Pitfalls of the relationship between sports journalism and Twitter

Of the pitfalls which have been previously discussed, one that seems to deserve more mention is the risk associated with producing and consuming information under an accelerated time crunch. As Boyer said, "I do think it's like, 'Tweet first, check later.' So, sometimes people are quicker to tweet than to check facts." Also, as mentioned previously, those who work for newspapers where stricter fact-checking policies are enforced, such as Stephenson, seem to be working from a disadvantageous position. He said:

> A lot of times with a particular source, the particular information that I'm getting from this source is not something that we want to put out as anonymous, so [the editor will] say, "No, you can't use that." So what I end up doing is I end up having to credit somebody else for breaking a story that I also could have broken. So in terms of decision-making, what Twitter forces you to do puts me at a disadvantage because it forces you to

> speed up the decision-making. This guy tweeted something. Should we retweet it? Is it true? Can we confirm that? You want to react to everything.

Davidoff added, "Immediacy is a double-edged sword. I don't think I've put any wrong information up, but when you hear something and you have this outlet to get it out there immediately, you might have an instinct to just put it up there and let it fly, but you have to be very careful because you don't want to get something wrong." Additionally, as it relates to wrong information, Elliott noted that journalists must be careful of imposters, who tweet seemingly viable information, so as not to pass it along themselves. She gave the example of the recent NHL trade deadline on February 28, 2011, when an imposter posed as ESPN hockey writer Pierre LeBrun and disseminated false trade details, causing LeBrun to fittingly change his user name to @Real_ESPNLeBrun. Though journalists should not be held responsible for wrong information that is circulated by someone posing at them, they must be careful not to pass along such information believing it to be legitimate.

Wrong information was certainly key in Wise's tweet that got him suspended from *the Washington Post* last August, but, as he discussed, his trouble was related not so much to immediacy, but to another pitfall in an inconsistency of professional standards associated with Twitter. He said, "A major pitfall for me with Twitter was forgetting that—irrespective of my different media jobs—in each one, and specifically *the Washington Post*, whatever I do in whatever medium reflects on that job." Though his "social media experiment" might have been appropriate had he only been a radio personality, it was judged inappropriate in his dual roles as a radio show host and newspaper columnist. Wise added, "I'm not somehow in an echo chamber when I do the radio show, and I found that out in a painful way." Elliott added that tweets don't

always convey the tone, explain the point, or develop the idea within a message, which contributes to this pitfall. Buker recalled a personal experience related to this particular pitfall:

> As a journalist, you can be entertaining and humorous and flippant and everything else, but you have to adhere to the same professional standards that you adhere to at your newspaper. Otherwise, you're going to get in trouble with your bosses. One time, I made a flippant comment about how tiny our sports section was lately because we weren't selling enough ads, and I was quickly given a slap on the hand about that and told not to make fun of my newspaper on my Twitter page. So I learned my lesson.

Wise explained this pitfall as a tension between a readership that "expects you to be serious" and a platform that "forces you not to take yourself so seriously." He said, "For some of us in this business, we need to understand that why people still pick up the printed newspaper or click us online is because after all the pablum that's out there, they still want real news and serious stuff sometimes, and you can tear down your own brand if you're not careful."

Another pitfall that has been previously touched upon is the extended workday that Twitter creates for sports journalists. Buker explained the predicament that he believes most print journalists find themselves in at the moment: "Because of all the cutbacks and layoffs and buyouts in our business and the overriding feeling that management gives us that, 'Gee, we're lucky to have jobs in print journalism,' you almost feel obligated to work the extra hours even though maybe you're not getting paid for them. I know at my newspaper—I'm not saying I have a terrifically hard job—but sometimes you work a lot more hours than they're paying you for, but it's just sort of part of the business." Holder added the sentiment that once you begin spending that extra time on Twitter, there is no going back. He said, "The people who are the most thirsty for that information can get it at the drop of a hat, and you can give it to them at the

drop of a hat. So it really does satisfy that, and I would add to that, that I think people are more thirsty for that than ever before, because there is so much of it out there that there's an expectation for more and more information."

Additionally, Holder and Jones forwarded the notion that Twitter, while introducing people to a larger variety of information, may be limiting the amount of information they consume on a deeper-than-surface level. Holder said that he believes Twitter probably causes all who use it, for journalistic purposes and otherwise, to "read a little less." While Jones added, "I don't know how often people are actually clicking links that they see on Twitter, beyond getting their news in 140-character bytes and reading headlines, instead of actual content. I can see that as being kind of dangerous in just getting the news that you want, instead of the full story with the full context." She said that she regularly fields questions on Twitter that are answered within the links included in particular tweets, but, because some, lazy readers do not click through to the links to read larger stories or blog posts, they do not know that the answers are there.

One final pitfall introduced by several of the journalists is the learning curve involved, which can be associated with any new technology. As Elliott noted, the demographic for Twitter seems to "skew kind of young," so that may put older journalists at a disadvantage. For instance, Wise answered a question about the large volume of replies to mentions by readers on his Twitter feed, as opposed to other types of messages, by stating, "I hate to admit this, but I didn't really know what the mentions thing meant, and so I was sort of one of these ignoramuses where I didn't really know how people were responding to me or who was responding to me… So lately I've just found out what the mentions thing meant in the last month or so." Furthermore, Davidoff illustrated how such miscues are not always related to not having learned about the technology, but also not paying full attention all of the time: "You can occasionally screw up. I

almost put my cell phone [number] on Twitter, because I thought I was responding to a direct message with somebody. I was responding on my cell phone… and the next thing I knew, I got two or three phone calls from strangers saying, 'Hello, is this Ken?' And I said, 'Oh, boy.' It was probably up there for about a minute." Davidoff also mentioned how he has routinely seen public tweets that were clearly meant to be private direct messages.

4.10 Twitter's impact on journalistic decision-making

All of the journalists interviewed expressed some sort of impact that they felt the popular use of Twitter was having on sports journalists' decision-making. Generally, the sentiment expressed, which has already been covered extensively, was that—as Stephenson so concisely put it—"It forces you to speed everything up." The immediacy of Twitter causes journalists to put information out in the public sphere when they might not have done so previously. Thompson said that he had experienced such an impact on his own decision-making:

> It seems like people are throwing stuff out there well before their own editors would want them to both for reasons of having the scoop to yourself and also because it's not vetted fully. I sort of stumbled through that on my own a little bit... I started making some jokes about Donovan McNabb's reported contract with the Redskins before all the details were in, and when the details were in, it really didn't look as bad as people were first saying, and I felt bad about that. I actually tweeted an apology to the Redskins.

Jones added that the frantic pace with which journalists release information on Twitter causes some to "just throw stuff out there and hope that it sticks." She added, "Anybody can put something out there, and it will catch fire, and then I'll get 1,000 emails, and then I'll get emails from my boss." Buker related a similar experience with his bosses, "[Twitter is] real big with our

editors, because a lot of times, they'll see something I talk about on Twitter or allude to on Twitter, and they'll immediately call me and ask if I should be doing a story for the print edition or the online edition about it."

A couple of the journalists expressed the importance of not letting Twitter consume one's decision-making and instead, thinking about how it connects to the other platforms at one's disposal. Elliott said, "You have to strike a balance between the information you're giving away in a tweet versus the way you're going to develop it for a story maybe in your paper or on the web or both." Holder said that he often uses Twitter when news is breaking to give the reader the "nuts and bolts," while pointing them to the website to get the full story. All of the journalists were clear, however, that Twitter cannot be ignored. Boyer offered an example from the recent NBA trade deadline of the Cavaliers making a largely unexpected deal to acquire guard Baron Davis:

> I did, in fact, get a direct tweet from [another reporter] that night that I never saw. Covering the game, I just was busy and didn't get her direct tweet. Had she called me, had she emailed me, I would've seen those. So we would've had a little advance notice on the trade, instead of finding out about it at like 3 a.m. But I didn't realize that was her preferred method of communication. So, I was a little behind the eight ball because I didn't check that particular avenue.

Boyer also suggested that a side effect to Twitter's impact on journalistic decision-making is an absence of communication between reporters that previously existed, whereas now the mentality is "everybody kind of out for themselves, seeing who can tweet this first."

4.11 Twitter's impact on the quality of sports journalism

For all of the talk of the positive and negative details of the marriage between Twitter and sports journalism, none of the journalists were overwhelmingly positive about Twitter's impact on the quality of the work done within their field. Thompson and Davidoff were perhaps the most positive. Thompson said that Twitter has enhanced the reporting of breaking news: "I always am finding about breaking news faster, and I also find myself reading more interesting stuff over the course of the day, because I have these 400 people helping to point me in the right direction." Davidoff pointed to Twitter as enhancing particularly the way journalists interact with their public.

Conversely, Wise and Holder were the most negative of the journalists interviewed in this regard. Wise said that he thought the quality of sports journalism had "probably been reduced" by Twitter. He recalled a recent example of why he thought so:

> I saw a bunch of reporters at a Mike Shanahan press conference not too long ago at Redskins Park in Virginia, and literally, as he was talking, they were tweeting. So if you were writing a story as a beat writer on Mike Shanahan that day, you weren't getting his facial expressions. You weren't asking important follow-up questions that might lead you to a better story about what's really going on. You weren't building a relationship with a person you need to—the head coach of the team—because you were looking at your phone, tweeting some bit of news, and trying to beat your competitor to it. I've seen this time and time again. It's like A.D.D. journalism. It's great and it's immediate, but really after it's over, it's sort of like fast food. There were no nutrients, no vitamins. It was like a McDonald's sundae. It gave you some empty carbs, and it gave you some sugar, but it didn't enrich your journalistic experience.

Holder added that due to the rushed environment that surrounds journalism as its carried out in relation to Twitter, the turnaround time for stories goes down, which, in turn, causes the quality of stories to go down. He described the common scene of a reporter getting off of the phone with a source and going straight to Twitter to recount the conversation: "That's not high-quality journalism, but it is journalism today." He added, "[Twitter] has so many benefits, but there is a trade-off, and I think our job is to minimize how much the quality suffers and try to compensate for that as much as we can. But it's a tough thing to do, and there's no science to that."

The remaining five journalists expressed that they did not really see Twitter having much of an impact on the quality of work done by sports journalists. Jones said, "I don't think it's really changed the way we report necessarily, other than who gets more sourcing. I think it's just really changed more the way that the news is disseminated." Stephenson echoed the same point. Elliott offered that notion that while Twitter has become a tool for journalists, the work of journalists cannot fully be done on Twitter alone:

> I don't think Twitter has replaced telling a story. The essence of what we do is tell a story—or try to do. You can't tell an entire story in 140 characters. I think what keeps people reading is the desire to read a story and to learn a story, and if you make it compelling for your readers, no matter what the form, you hope that, that primal instinct will always be there. Twitter can't replace a well-told story and a well-developed story, but it has its merits in different areas.

Buker added that what might be considered traditional work that he does for *The Oregonian* has not been enhanced by Twitter. Rather, a different kind of work—that done for the website and now, for Twitter—has become a higher priority. Finally, perhaps somewhat similarly to Buker's thoughts, Boyer offered the alternative that Twitter and what she considers to be real work could

be in opposition to one another: “The fact that I have to check it instead of working—that annoys me. But I don’t think the quality of my work is impacted one way or another.”

4.12 The potential long-term impact of Twitter

Upon considering whether the impact of Twitter on sports journalism would last long-term, most of the journalists interviewed expressed doubts, particularly about the technology involved. Boyer said, “[Twitter is] certainly, you would think, kind of at its peak right now. It’s just kind of the latest thing. I’m sure there will be some other thing that will replace it. In fact, I’m sure if I asked a 16-year-old, there’s probably something right now that we’re not even aware of that people are using.” Wise suggested that technology allowing people to offer video commentary to followers in seconds via their cell phones, for example, could cause Twitter to become outdated. Thompson forwarded a similar viewpoint: “I’ve got to think that there are clever people out there—obviously the people who created Twitter are pretty clever—and they’re going to change it in ways that people like, or somebody else is going to come along and improve it. We’ve seen how quickly these things come and go. I don’t think there’s any reason to assume that Twitter will be with us 10 years from now.” Davidoff and Elliott both offered questions like, “Who knew what Twitter was two or three years ago?,” in order to suggest that it may vanish as quickly as it appeared. Holder suggested that research pointing to Twitter’s relatively low retention rate among its users may be a predictor of its ultimate demise, but he added, “I think that for the time being, for as far as we can see—which is not very far—it’s accomplishing the goals, and I don’t see reporters using it less. I’ll put it that way. Because I think the benefits have been pretty big.”

Alternatively, Jones was the most optimistic about Twitter's staying power. She said, "Maybe when it first got going, you kind of thought, 'Maybe this is just a fad,' but I don't really see how we go back after this. It's been pretty revolutionary." Additionally, Buker said he saw Twitter lasting long-term, as it had become integral to the current "24/7 society." Stephenson added, "It's had an impact already, and I don't see what would change to roll that back, unless something else—some other new idea—comes out that is better and faster than Twitter. You can't put the genie back in the bottle. This is our life now. This is what it is." However, within these positive statements, the sentiment prevailed that the technology of Twitter may not necessarily last. Jones explored such a possibility:

> Next year, it might be something completely different. But the general precedent is going to remain, and it's only going to keep getting bigger, whatever the form might be, whether it's some new site or some new social media. Social media as a whole is not going away in the way that we do our business, the way that we get our news, break our news, all that kind of stuff. I don't see it going away at all, and we'll probably be having these discussions in 10 or 15 years, thinking about the early days and how primitive all of this stuff was.

4.13 Twitter and sports journalism as a unique marriage

Perhaps the biggest consensus reached by the nine journalists on any single question involved whether the Twitter and sports journalism has a particularly unique marriage, or whether the social medium could be as effectively paired with any type of journalism. While several of the journalists pointed out details that made Twitter specifically useful for sports journalism, all agreed that such a relationship translates across niches of journalism, whether

they be entertainment, politics, or whatever. Among the details that make Twitter and sports journalism a useful pairing were the aforementioned focus on minutia, as discussed by Wise and Davidoff, who pointed out another link between the two being the race to be most immediate. Additionally, there were mentions of a common "results-oriented" nature, as explained by Buker, and a shared, close personal aspect, as detailed by Jones and Stephenson, who both suggested that sports fans and sports writers share a particularly close connection that is not shared by other readers and writers. The general sentiment shared by the journalists was that Twitter can be used for any type of journalism, but "it certainly does fit sports really well," as Buker said.

4.14 A look at their Twitter feeds

In order to get a closer look at how the journalists interviewed used Twitter, a week-long sample of their tweets was collected. This sample ranged from Monday, February 21, 2011, to Sunday, February 27, 2011. These dates were selected in order to somewhat approximate a "routine" week for the journalists, meaning that no high-profile events were taking place that might steal a majority of the headlines, or in this case, tweets. For instance, Sunday, February 20, was the day of both NASCAR's Daytona 500 and the NBA All-Star Game, so the sample was collected beginning with the following day. Despite such a provision, there is no perfect sample that could be collected for such a range of sports journalists during a particular week. For those such as Boyer, Elliott, Stephenson, the regular seasons of the sports they cover were in full swing, while for others such as Holder and Jones, the offseason was underway, but the NFL's collective bargaining agreement was still a hot topic. For Davidoff, MLB spring training was to begin the following week, while for those such as Buker, Thompson, and Wise, the range of sporting events that they could possibly cover results in the possibility of Twitter fodder at

anytime with no real offseason. All of these factors and more could contribute to more or less tweets during any given week for any of the journalists. In addition to surveying their tweets, data was also taken regarding the number of tweets they wrote during the week of the sample and during the entire time they had been on Twitter, as well as the number of Twitter users they were following and the number following them. This data was collected on March 17, 2011, at 10:30 a.m., as to be as up-to-date as possible prior to the completion of the project.

Table 4.14.1 Twitter data

Name	Tweets in sample	Tweets all-time	Following	Followers
Mary Schmitt Boyer	66	5,980	84	30,064
Paul Buker	213	27,402	44	1,947
Ken Davidoff	34	5,356	686	11,978
Helene Elliott	161	4,021	370	6,250
Stephen F. Holder	24	1,368	86	1,314
Lindsay Jones	64	16,543	3,946	13,360
Colin Stephenson	107	1,418	139	596
Adam Thompson	42	4,507	267	8,747
Mike Wise	0	1,111	91	5,640

Boyer wrote 66 tweets during the week of the sample, which all could be characterized as breaking news. For instance, she tweeted Cavs coach Byron Scott reactions to NBA trade deadline deals involving Carmelo Anthony to New York, Deron Williams to New Jersey and Baron Davis to Cleveland. She tweeted her reaction to the aforementioned situation of finding out about the Davis deal in the wee hours of the morning: “Sorry to be sleeping at 3am, but in case you haven’t heard, #Cavs trading Mo Williams and Jamario Moon to Clips for Baron Davis, No. 1 pick” (PDcavsinsider, 2011). Additionally, 32 of the 66 tweets were in-game updates or live-tweets during one of the Cavs three games with the Rockets, Knicks, and Sixers that week, while 21 consecutive tweets referenced activity surrounding the February 24 trade deadline, which likely inflated Boyer’s number of tweets that week. Her Twitter account has produced

5,980 tweets, as she follows 84 users and has the largest following of any of the journalists interviewed with 30,064. However, as previously mentioned, these numbers are inflated due to LeBron James' popularity while with the Cavs and former writer Brian Windhorst's work on the Twitter feed before turning it over to Boyer. She called the following "an absurd number," saying, "I'm somewhat shocked we still have 30,000 followers, and I guess I'm a little bit at a loss to explain that."

Buker authored the most tweets of any of the journalists during the week of the sample with 213. Of those, 68 were retweets of information other users had posted, while another 16 were replies, which involved the writer offering his comment on the issue at hand while also retweeting the original information. This reflects the conversational nature of his daily use of Twitter that he described in his interview. Another feature of Buker's tweets was links, which not only led the reader to his stories, but also to the stories of *Oregonian* colleague Lindsay Schnell, for instance, or even to stories of other organizations such as *USA Today* and *The Onion*. The issues covered in his tweets encompassed a range of sports, not limited to Oregon State athletics, or college athletics even, such as former NFL player Dave Duerson's death at the age of 50. He most extensively live-tweeted Oregon State's basketball game with California on February 26 and the performances of former Oregon State football players Jacquizz Rodgers and Stephen Paea in the NFL Combine on February 27. During the basketball game, Buker tweeted 12 times, mainly consisting of a string of four consecutive tweets giving a synopsis of the first half and another five at the end of the game. He mentioned in his interview his tendency to take what might be considered an unorthodox approach to Twitter: "The brevity thing is a little tough to deal with because I'm known for stringing together three or four tweets to get my point across." For the combine, Buker offered 26 straight tweets and retweets detailing Rodgers' 40-

yard-dash time and Paea's 49-straight bench press reps at 225 pounds, which set a new record. In total, he has produced 27,402 tweets, nearly 11,000 more than the closest of the other eight journalists interviewed. Perhaps surprisingly, he has 1,947 followers, which was seventh out of the nine, and follows only 44 others, which was the least of the nine.

Davidoff wrote 34 tweets during the week of the sample, with over half—18—of those teasing blog posts or articles for which a link was also provided. The remainder consisted of the occasional factoid or funny comment, with three straight tweets dedicated to the passing of Los Angeles Dodger great Duke Snider. For instance, he wrote, "Duke Snider was a class act. He will be missed. My prayers go out to his family" (KenDavidoff, 2011). Additionally, Davidoff participated in a Twitter tradition known as "Follow Friday," where you post the user names of those you follow whom you would suggest your followers also follow. These user names are preceded by the hashtag #FF. In all, Davidoff has produced 5,356 tweets, which was the fourth-most out of the nine journalists interviewed. He had the third-biggest following of 11,978, which logically proceeds from his status as a national baseball writer for a prominent New York newspaper. He also followed the second-largest number of users—686—which could also contribute to his large following in that it gets his user name out there to a larger audience. All of these rather large numbers could also be a result of Davidoff's 22 months spent on Twitter, which places him among the most veteran users interviewed.

Elliott authored 161 tweets during the week of the sample, which consisted of almost entirely breaking news content. While six of the tweets were replies to follower questions and five others were retweets from the feeds of users she was following, the remaining 150 tweets were either commentary on NHL action or updates surrounding the sport's trade deadline, which was set for February 28, the day after the sample concluded. Additionally, five tweets were

dedicated to the NBA game between the Los Angeles Clippers and the Boston Celtics at The Staples Center. As expressed in her interview, Elliott views Twitter as a way to "get out there what I [have] as quickly as possible," which was evidenced by the style of her tweets. For example, one tweet she offered as clarification of a previous issue read, "shud have said Wednesday vs. Kings is likely too soon for Emery to start….but maybe not to back up" (helenenothelen, 2011). For Elliott, Twitter is a format where punctuation and spelling, for instance, can be sacrificed in favor of speed, and she is certainly not alone in that view. Furthermore, according to her number of tweets (4,021) and the number of users she follows (370) and is followed by (6,250), Elliott appears to be somewhat average for the nine journalists interviewed, finishing fifth, third, and fifth, respectively.

Holder's Twitter feed over the week of the sample was perhaps the best example of how content of that platform can vary according to the season. He wrote only 24 tweets over the course of the week, which began just 15 days removed from Super Bowl XLV. Of those, the majority contained updates regarding certain situations surrounding the Buccaneer organization, including the re-signing of cornerback Ronde Barber, the status of free agent linebackers Quincy Black and Barrett Ruud, and the ongoing NFL collective bargaining talks. Additionally, three tweets were written in reply to follower questions and two were retweets from others' feeds. Perhaps the most interesting tweets of the 24, were the first and last of the sample, which illustrated the "weird mix of personal and professional" that Holder referenced in his interview. His first tweet on February 21 prefaced a link to a story on running back Cadillac Williams by letting his followers know that he was, "Back from a vacation" (HolderStephen, 2011). His last tweet on February 25 was a retweet of a message from the account for CAA Sports wishing one of its clients, Bucs defensive tackle Gerald McCoy, a happy birthday. While his intent could

have been to inform his followers of McCoy's birthday, or to chime in on wishing the player a happy birthday, the message clearly displays a personal aspect of Twitter that may not exist on other platforms. Holder has produced a total of 1,368 tweets, ranking him seventh of the nine journalists, and he follows 86 users and is followed by 1,314 users, which rank him eighth in terms of each.

As with Holder, Jones' Twitter feed over the course of the week of the sample was impacted by the sport she covers being newly into the offseason. Of 64 tweets in her feed, 33 contained links to stories on *the Denver Post* website written by various authors covering the Broncos, while another nine contained links to *the Post's* blog ("All Things Broncos"), which is maintained by Jones and two other writers. However, an additional 15 tweets came consecutively over the course of 15 minutes on February 23 and were live updates from a conference call with star cornerback Champ Bailey, who had just resigned with the team. This scenario likely reflects the description Jones gave in her interview of her Twitter feed during a practice or game day. The remainder of her tweets consisted of a couple of breaking news updates, a couple of answers to follower questions, and even a couple of tweets dedicated to the recent NBA trade of Denver's Carmelo Anthony to New Jersey. In all, Jones has authored 16,543 tweets, ranking her second behind Buker, whom she trailed by nearly 11,000 tweets, and ahead of Boyer, whom she led by nearly 11,000. In addition, she follows the largest number of users by far, with 3,946, as compared to Davidoff's 686, which ranked second. Such a large number of users followed means that Jones is not only exposing herself to a lot more information, which could boost her number of tweets in retweets and replies, but also she is also exposing her feed to a lot more users who see that she is following them and, in turn, follow her and suggest that their followers do the

same. Perhaps as a result of this, Jones had the second-highest number of followers, behind only Boyer, with 13,360.

Despite being one of the most reluctant Twitter users of those interviewed, Stephenson wrote 107 tweets during the week of the sample, likely due to the Nets having two games that week against the Spurs and the Rockets, as well as the trade deadline, which saw New Jersey make one of the biggest deals, acquiring point guard Deron Williams from Utah. Stephenson had 14 tweets during the Spurs game, 22 during the Rockets game, and 13 about the Williams trade, with another 11 concerning the Knicks acquisition of Carmelo Anthony, for whom the Nets were thought to be in the running, as well. Another 18 tweets were replies, primarily in conversation with other sports writers, such as coworker Steve Politi of *the Star-Ledger* and Al Iannazzone of *the Bergen Record*. Being relatively new to Twitter, Stephenson had produced the second-fewest tweets among the nine journalists interviewed with 1,418 and had the fewest number of followers with 596. However, the number of users he followed ranked him higher—at fifth—with 139. This number, coupled with his high output of tweets in the sample reflects his notion in the interview that, "It is what it is. I can't say I don't want to do it. It's just part of the deal, and I've just got to do it."

Thompson produced 42 tweets during the week of the sample, with 14 of those consisting of retweets of other users' content. Among the tweets recycled by Thompson were some by *The Wall Street Journal's* Reed Albergotti and Mike Sielski, Frank Isola of *the New York Daily News* and *Sports Illustrated's* Richard Dietsch. Another retweet came from actor Simon Pegg, who wrote, "Going to my first hockey game tonight. Canucks vs Montreal. Very excited. All very new to me. I haven't even seen the Mighty Ducks trilogy" (WSJSports, 2011a). An additional 16 tweets included links to articles and columns on *The Journal's* website and another nine were

links to the roundup-style column to which Thompson referred in his interview called "The Daily Fix." An occasional clever comment such as, "It feels good to know that in a chaotic world, I can always count on Rise & Grind being a trend here each and every morning" (WSJSports, 2011b), rounded out the sample. The content of Thompson's tweets, as well as the statistics regarding his number of tweets, those he follows and those who follow him are certainly impacted in different ways by his role as an editor, which is reflected in his user name @WSJSports. Aside from occasionally creating his own content, Thompson is tasked with compiling and promoting the content of others, especially the writers in his section or newspaper, which is clearly reflected in the number of retweets and links that he posts. With 4,507 total tweets, placing him fifth of the nine, he follows 267 users, which is fourth, and is followed by 8,747, which is fourth.

During the week of the sample, Wise did not author any tweets, reflecting the inconsistency he discussed in his interview: "You'll see these huge gaps in usage for me. So, whereas I Twittered like crazy during the Super Bowl I covered in Dallas, for the last week I had off at the radio show and the newspaper, so I didn't use it at all." The aforementioned week off was the week of the sample, however, during the previous week—February 14-20—Wise produced 54 tweets, which could perhaps be judged a useful point of comparison. The vast majority of those were in conversation with other users, whether they be listeners, readers, or colleagues. He offered 10 retweets, one of which, perhaps further illustrating the dangers of Twitter, was from a user by the name of @MikeWiseSucks. Wise, however, displayed a sense of humor concerning the matter, tweeting in a reply to the same user, "Thanks Mom" (MikeWiseguy, 2011). Another 11 tweets consisted of his own comments, whether they be breaking news on the Kansas City Chiefs hiring former Washington Redskins head coach Jim Zorn as an assistant coach or appreciation shown to guests on his radio show. In all, Wise had

tweeted 1,111 times, fewest out of the nine journalists interviewed, followed the fourth-fewest users (91) and was followed by the fourth-fewest users (5,640).

One interesting point that Wise made in his interview, which has come to light in this analysis of these nine journalists' Twitter feeds is the following idea: "Your Twitter account doesn't make you. You and where you are professionally makes your Twitter account." Perhaps the two best examples of this are Boyer and Buker. Boyer, who had the largest following of the nine, was shocked that her 30,064 followers remained after the departure of LeBron James—who created the media frenzy that caused so many people to seek out the Twitter feed of *the Plain Dealer's* Cavs beat writer—from Cleveland. Buker, on the other hand, expressed how he had developed his own personal interest in Twitter, and his largest number of tweets (27.402) by far reflects how much time and effort he puts into the platform. Despite this, he had the third-fewest number of followers (1,947), which was likely a combination of factors consisting of him not being in a major media market and not covering a high-profile beat. If there is a counterexample to Wise's claim that your Twitter account is not a reflection of your journalistic ability, but instead your professional status, it might be Jones. Though on likely the most important sports beat at her newspaper, she is one of several writers on that beat that is not in a major media market, yet she still has a gigantic following (13,360), which is probably due in large part to the high volume of tweets she puts out (16,543) and the large number of users she has sought out and followed (3,946).

This data indicates the mix of intentional and unintentional circumstances that can lead to a sports journalist being perceived as more successful or less successful on Twitter. Among the intentional, following a large number of users can work to build a journalist's own following, as is the case with Jones, in particular. Additionally, offering a large number of tweets does not

work to build one's following as much as one might think. As the most frequent tweeter of the nine, Buker has the third-smallest following, ahead of only Holder and Stephenson. Among the unintentional circumstances, being tied to a big story has certainly paid off in a large following for Boyer, with LeBron James, and probably too for Jones, with Tim Tebow. Additionally, the controversy surrounding Wise has likely increased his following. The combination of being in a big media market and having a large newspaper readership also helps build followings, as is likely the case with Elliott, Davidoff, and Thompson, as well as Wise. Taken together, these intentional and unintentional circumstances seem to support Wise's claim that one's reputation looms larger than one's work on Twitter when it comes to gaining a large following and, as a result, more influence.

The data also reaffirms several other points made by the journalists in their interviews. The immediacy of the platform was put on display by the live-tweeting of event by those reporters whose teams were in-season, while the brevity of the platform was also seen in shortened tweets, such as the aforementioned one by Elliott that sacrifice spelling and grammar for speed. Also, the building and maintenance of the journalist-reader relationship was evident in the conversational usage of the retweet and reply functions. Finally, the data pointed toward inconsistency in usage, which could be attributed to a number of reasons, including certain sports being out of season and writers being on vacation. Despite the inconsistency, the fact that the reasons were legitimate ones that would result in a lack of content across all platforms, not just Twitter, points toward its use as a legitimate tool, rather than a novelty, by these journalists.

5 DISCUSSION

Returning to the first half of the research question guiding this project—"Is the use of Twitter as a journalistic tool impacting traditional journalistic decision-making and news practices?"—the answer appears to be a resounding, "Yes." Though this project does not incorporate the voices of journalists at prominent U.S. newspapers who do not use Twitter, it is not as if the nine who were interviewed and use Twitter are all early adopters of new technology and enamored with social media. Some, such as Boyer, Stephenson, and Wise, seem to lament to varying degrees their usage of Twitter, but they also accept it as somewhat of an inevitability in the current journalistic landscape. As Stephenson said, "I don't like it. It makes my job more difficult. But I don't have a choice. It also makes my job easier." When Stephenson said he does not have a choice, he does not mean that his newspaper requires him to use Twitter, because less than a year ago, as a general-assignment reporter, he was not using it. What he means is that in his current job, as a beat writer for the New Jersey Nets, he does not have a choice because without it he cannot do his job. The interviewees generally shared the opinion that new information appears first on Twitter, so while it may be a stretch to say that contemporary sports journalism cannot be done without Twitter, journalists who do without it are clearly putting themselves in a disadvantageous position.

If nothing else, this project points to the fact that Twitter should be taken seriously as a communicative tool for its many impacts. It simply cannot be dismissed as a place where people go to talk about the non-serious, inane, unimportant details of their daily lives, such as what kind of sandwich they ate for lunch. Surely, Twitter is that place too. But it is also a place where serious people such as journalists go to do serious work. As this project was being completed, the relationship between Twitter and sports journalism was still being navigated by the public. Just

days before the project's completion, the first instance of sports journalism, Twitter, and libel intersecting made headlines. National Basketball Association referee Bill Spooner filed a suit in Minnesota U.S. District Court on March 14, 2011, alleging that Associated Press reporter Jon Krawczynski made a libelous Twitter post during a January 24 game between the Houston Rockets and Minnesota Timberwolves. After Spooner made a call that Timberwolves coach Kurt Rambis argued, Krawczynski tweeted, "Ref Bill Spooner told Rambis he'd 'get it back' after a bad call. Then he made an even worse call on Rockets. That's NBA officiating folks" (APkrawczynski, 2011). While the "make-up call" is a commonly accepted practice in basketball and sports, in general, Krawczynski's decision to document this conversation from press row and quote Spooner led to the landmark suit which states, "At no time did Plaintiff Spooner make any statement about 'getting points back' to Coach Rambis or anyone" (Zillgitt, 2011, para. 16).

The caveat involved in this project's assertion that Twitter is having not just one, but many impacts on sports journalism is not to exaggerate that impact to a point where it mischaracterizes it. The words "revolution" and "revolutionary" have been thrown around previously in the discussion of Twitter and journalism, perhaps most famously by *Atlantic* blogger Andrew Sullivan in relation to the post-election protest in Iran in 2009 (Morozov, 2009, pg. 10). Whether in relation to sports journalism or the situation in Iran, Twitter probably is not revolutionary. As Wise so aptly put it in his interview, "Your Twitter account doesn't make you. You and where you are professionally makes your Twitter account." Twitter is an additional tool in the hands of professional journalists. It is not facilitating a new, radical, revolutionary journalism in the way of citizen journalism, civic journalism, or any of a number of other models. What Twitter is doing is giving already established professionals an additional way to keep their readers more informed and, as Davidoff adds, to build their brands. Such uses,

however, lead to circumstances that may very well be revolutionary in terms of news production and consumption. The exact nature of these circumstances is summarized in the following sections.

5.1 Twitter's three hallmarks

The second half of the research question guiding this project—How is Twitter as a journalistic tool impacting traditional journalistic decision-making and news practices?—was answered in a number of different ways by the nine journalists interviewed. For the most part, these various answers could be taken individually as starting points for future research projects combining Twitter and sports journalism, or journalism as a whole. Generally, these ways in which Twitter is impacting sports journalism can all be traced to what this project has identified as three hallmarks of Twitter. The first two are no secret, as Twitter encourages users to follow other users with the statement, "Get short, timely messages from [insert user name here]." Brevity and immediacy allow users to get information that can be both quickly accessed and easily understood and were implicated in both good and bad uses of Twitter by sports journalists. The third hallmark, which is less overt, coming out of previous experience with Twitter and the discussions with the journalists interviewed, is the personal, unfiltered nature of the platform. Information that is produced and consumed on Twitter is judged by a set of standards that separated it from information available via other platforms. Twitter as a personal, unfiltered platform, again, led to both good and bad uses of it by sports journalists. In light of these hallmarks, the conclusions of Hayes et al. (2007) that proper journalistic decision-making online is dictated by characteristics such as factualness, reliability, timeliness, and meaningfulness beg for reevaluation (pg. 265). While the immediacy of Twitter certainly makes timeliness a vital

criterion of "good" decision-making on the platform and the personal, unfiltered dialogue perhaps relates to meaningfulness as another key criterion, perhaps factualness and reliability are somewhat taken for granted by those who produce or consume journalism on Twitter, as evidenced by the prevalence of wrong information and the inconsistency in usage patterns. Aside from impacting the format of journalism on Twitter, these three hallmarks—brevity, immediacy, and personal, unfiltered dialogue—also shape the landscape of the discussion of Twitter's many, varied impacts on both journalists and journalism as a whole.

5.2 Twitter's impacts on journalists

There were a number of ways mentioned in which Twitter was impacting sports journalists, from which four major impacts on journalists themselves were gleaned. These four include: (1) being "tethered" to the platform; (2) being more likely to produce, consume, or forward wrong information; (3) blending journalists' personal and professional lives in an unprecedented fashion; and (4) imposing a learning curve that could result in potential harm for those who are navigating that curve.

Perhaps the most overarching was what has previously been described in scholarship as "being tethered to our 'always on'/'always on us' communication devices and the people and things we reach through them" (Turkle, 2008, pg. 122). This notion of "the tethered self" was evident in the journalists' discussion of working longer days in which the first thing they do in the morning and the last thing they do at night is check Twitter. Stephenson described this as living "in fear" or "in dread" that news will be broken on Twitter and will cause the journalists to drop whatever she or he is doing and chase that story. There is clear trade-off at play. The plus side, as Davidoff described, is that information that he may learn on a Wednesday at 10 a.m. is

no longer on hold until Thursday at 7 a.m. when it is read in the newspaper. The downside, however, is the responsibility that comes with that capability for immediately updating your readership. In speaking with these journalists, who serve in a variety of positions from beat writer to national writer to columnist to radio personality to editor, with some holding dual roles, a related theme seemed to arise. The journalists who came across as most tethered to Twitter were the beat writers. These writers, being assigned to a specific team, were required be an authority on these organizations down to the smallest of details. Coupling their detailed level of expertise with what several interviewees described as Twitter's fittingness for minutia seems to further support the claim that beat writers are the sports journalists most tethered to the platform.

An additional way in which Twitter impacts sports journalists was identified as the propensity for producing, consuming, or forwarding wrong information. Despite being a platform that seemingly encourages speed over accuracy, research by Marwick and boyd (2010) points to perceptions of Twitter as a "professional" environment where the "strictest standards" apply (pgs. 12-13). In his interview, Davidoff described immediacy as a "double-edged sword," with one side being how much more information is made available more quickly. The other side, however, is the pressure to keep up with that pace, which sometimes results in little or no fact-checking by those at any of the stages from production to consumption to forwarding. Wise sought to expose this unfortunate side in his "experiment," which was successful in that others simply forwarded the misinformation that he produced, highlighting the absence of fact-checking taking place in regards to Twitter. Ultimately, however, he was held responsible for that misinformation, experiment or no experiment, which cost him a month's suspension at *the Washington Post* and made the experience overall an unsuccessful one. Another way misinformation circulates is through the creation of fake Twitter accounts, which Elliott briefly

highlighted. Though journalists are not ultimately held responsible when imposters produce information under their names on Twitter, they must be careful that they are not forwarding information from imposters posing as colleagues.

Furthermore, Twitter impacts journalists by blending their professional and personal lives in a way that is unprecedented. A balance between these two realms much be achieved, such as Holder does by trying to maintain personal relationships to Facebook and professional ones on Twitter. However, Twitter seems inherently personal on a level that the institutions of newspapers and websites are not. This personal aspect of Twitter contributes to a third usage of it which was somewhat unexpected coming into this project. Two uses—as a source of information and as an outlet for content—were assumed in the formation of questions. However, a third—as a way to build relationships with one's readership—surfaced from the interviews. This usage seems to be journalists taking advantage of the personal connection inherent between Twitter users in order to facilitate a kind of journalist-reader loyalty that perhaps existed in a previous era of newspapers, but has disappeared with the online availability of any and every news source. Returning to the Lippmann-Dewey debate discussed in the introductory section, Twitter seems to coincide somewhat with the vision of the latter, allowing for a plurality of voices that factor in some aspect of journalistic decision-making. In light of such a stream of dialogue, which seems not to have been as easily achieved on previous platforms, participation can be productive or, perhaps as with users such as @MikeWiseSucks, not so productive and downright nasty. Either way, Twitter seems to be an exemplar of what Schudson (2008) describes as "the virtue of schizophrenia" that both benefits and complicates journalism (pg. 223).

Another way to look at journalist-reader interaction on Twitter is, as Davidoff described it, "build[ing] their brand." In this way, the relationship seems less personal, but perhaps is more

appropriate for a social media platform like Twitter, on which users collect followers, as opposed to one like Facebook, on which users make friends. While such an approach may be more appropriate for the platform's terminology, it seems as if the majority of those interviewed chose to emphasize the added personal quality of dialogue on Twitter. Additionally, the lack of important details like newspaper mastheads, advertisements, and even newspaper names or acronyms in the user names of some journalists on Twitter seems to emphasize the person over the brand. This supports the research done by Chen (2010), who found that the use of Twitter gratifies a "need to connect with the other" (pg. 5) on a personal level. In some sense, though, the person is also a brand. Regardless of whether journalists choose to emphasize their roles as persons interacting with other persons or brands selling themselves to consumers and potentially future employers, Twitter certainly brings the person to the forefront of journalism carried out on that platform.

A final impact of Twitter on the journalists that use it bears brief mention. As with any new technology, Twitter has its learning curve, and, with the platform's inception into institutionalized journalism just around two years old, some are still navigating that curve. This leads situations which can be rather harmless or potentially harmful. An example of the former might be Wise's lack of knowledge about the mentions function, which caused him to miss out on potential dialogue with fellow users for some time. Examples of the latter might be Davidoff's release of his cell phone number via Twitter, as well as him witnessing other journalists making public direct messages that were clearly meant to be private. All it takes is one wrong click on the computer. On a cell phone via text messaging, that margin for error grows, as the final product is not immediately available on one's Twitter page for review and retraction, if necessary.

5.3 Twitter's impacts on journalism

Aside from the ways in which Twitter is impacting sports journalists personally, there were additional ways mentioned in which the platform is impacting sports journalism as an institution. Four of these impacts on journalism seemed more resonant than others: (1) breaking down traditional gatekeeping techniques; (2) transforming the notion of the scoop; (3) blurring the roles of the reporter, whose work is based in fact, and the columnist, whose work is based in opinion; and (4) causing people to read less.

The first of these impacts goes back to the tradition of gatekeeping theory (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, pg. 22), which was posed in the introductory section of this project alongside the possibility that Twitter represents a new gate in the chain of production from journalist to editor to reader. From a journalist's perspective, Twitter seems to be that new gate where a larger margin of information can be released to the public, while from an editor's perspective Twitter seems to be a place where there is no gate or gatekeeping, as information is rerouted by journalists to avoid these traditional methods. For some of those interviewed, even information on the most recent platform for journalism prior to Twitter—the blog—has to go through the copy desk before it can be posted on a newspaper's website. However, a tweet is a message that does not have to be vetted, so it can be released immediately. For this reason, Quinn's (2007) notion of "virtue ethics" seems to be much more important, as journalists' need for quick thinking and moral clarity are elevated in a profession that already has thin lines dictating proper behavior on a platform that now allows for an immediate, unimpeded flow of information to the reader (pg. 184). Although, there are surely some news organizations in which editors must approve tweets, for some, that is not the case, which makes Twitter a unique site for news in

terms of journalistic freedom. For this reason, how Twitter is—and continues to be—handled by news organization could serve as a barometer for organizational pressure on journalists.

Another of Twitter's impacts on traditional sports journalism is in its transformation of the notion of the "scoop." As Davidoff said, Twitter is the site where the "race" to see who can report something first is taking place. What it means to have a story first has been radically changed, as discussed most extensively by Stephenson. On one hand, it always has been—and still is—important to have the scoop on a story. Who has the scoop is perhaps more visible now than ever, as Twitter makes that perfectly clear. Also, as Stephenson said, because of the many responsibilities of newspaper journalists in this multimedia age, online-only journalists are increasingly the ones who report something first on Twitter. At the same time that the scoop still matters and newspaper journalists may be more rarely scooping stories, the scoop seems to be also somewhat less prestigious nowadays, at least in terms of sustaining the exclusivity given to a journalist who scoops a story over time. In a previous era of newspapers, journalists would have the scoop to themselves for a day before anyone else could report on that same story. Now, journalists have the scoop for a minute, maybe five minutes, and rarely 20 minutes before someone else is posting the same information on Twitter. Though, as Jones pointed out, it is important to have the scoop, so that you can be retweeted by others in a Twitter-era way of sourcing, there is no professional standard for whether to retweet someone else's scoop or whether to simply tweet the same information with no source while not necessarily claiming it as your own scoop.

Additionally, Twitter is impacting sports journalism in that it is blurring the traditional roles of the reporter, who deals strictly with facts, and the columnist, who deals strictly with opinions. As Holder described, these two roles have been somewhat conflating for years now,

but Twitter, “blew” that distinction “out of the water.” This blurring seems to be primarily a result of the aforementioned personal aspect of communication on Twitter. Nowadays, readers have a venue where they can not only read a reporter’s account of a player’s performance or contract negotiations or run in with the law, but readers can also ask the reporter what they personally think about said situation. As that venue has become more popular, Holder noted, such requests have reached a level of “expectation” on the part of the readers, where they don’t ask, but expect that the reporter will offer her or his opinion or analysis of a set of facts. This blurring also works in the opposite way, as columnists, who are expected to give their opinions, can now live-blog a game that are watching, giving factual information in real time, before praising or deriding the performance or a player, coach, or team in a later web article or the next day’s newspaper. Perhaps as gatekeeping theorist Bowman (2008) suggests, new media is causing journalists to stray too far from their “core task” (pg. 110), which is that model of deciding which facts go through the gate and which do not. Whether the conflation of the roles of reporter and columnist is creating such tension in the lives of journalists who are unsure of what type of information—fact or opinion—they are responsible for sharing and whether Twitter is intensifying that tension certainly deserves further consideration.

Finally, Twitter possibly impacts sports journalism by causing people to read less. Several of the journalists interviewed raised a concern that Twitter is causing readers to consume their news in the same “chicken-nugget” format posed by Poole (2009, pg. 20). Whereas Twitter is dangerous in that it does not allow for the journalist to get into the larger issues involved in a story, it is equally dangerous in that it encourages the reader to not seek out those larger issues. This is further complicated by Jones’ shared experience of her followers often not clicking through to the links in her tweets, only reading the brief less-than-140-character preface to the

link. The reason she knew this was because the readers would message her with questions that had been answered by the story that was linked. The question of why sports fans use Twitter as a source of news is big enough for another project altogether, but the journalists interviewed seem to locate two extremes. One reason seems to be, as located by Jones, the quick, efficient consumption of small bits of information for someone who wants to know of everything in passing about a sport, team, or player. Another reason, as located by Holder, is the thirstiness for as much information as soon as possible for someone who wants to know everything in detail about a sport, team, or player.

5.4 Looking toward the future of work on Twitter and journalism

Also, this project revealed two important implications for the future of work done regarding these topics of Twitter and sports journalism, or journalism as a whole. The first of these implications is that though the specific technological artifact of Twitter may not last long-term, the hallmarks of Twitter—brevity, immediacy, and the personal, unfiltered nature of dialogue—have a greater likelihood of lasting. One important distinction to make here is that Twitter alone is not responsible for these three characteristics becoming popular with readers. As Davidoff said, "Twitter's a fantastic advancement of those principles, but certainly they're not the ones who split the atom." Surely, blogging played a large role in furthering these characteristics, but it does not seem a stretch to say that Twitter has taken these hallmarks to a new level for sports journalism and journalism alike. As Stephenson said, "This is our life now," and it is hard to see going back to anything different from news production being tied to Twitter. Additionally, an interesting possibility for the future is that this relationship between Twitter and journalism spills over to their sources, as with the proactive Twitter usage of the Denver

Broncos. If other professional team, colleges and universities, player agencies, or any number of other possible organizations follow in using Twitter in such a way, it will only affect sports journalism in greater, and perhaps different, ways.

The other implication which is tremendously important to the future of research on Twitter and journalism is that eight of the nine journalists interviewed believed that the use of Twitter is fitting not only for sports journalists but any type of journalists. While Boyer was the lone exception, she did not disagree, but only felt as if she could not offer an authoritative take on the question due to limited knowledge of Twitter usage by other types of journalists. The uses, benefit, pitfalls, and impacts of Twitter on sports journalism can be seen as translating to crime, political, entertainment or various other types of reporting. As much as Twitter is non-serious for some, it is serious business for others, including sports journalists. Similarly, as much as sports journalism is non-serious for some, the journalists interviewed for this project seem to believe that it should be taken seriously, at the very least insofar as it is an exemplar of the relationship between Twitter and all of journalism.

5.5 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Overall, this project was limited in several different ways. First, a large factor in the rationale of this research agenda was the lack of previous research due to a number of factors including the relative newness of Twitter and the taking for granted of topics like sports and social media. Therefore, theoretically, there was not a large canon from which to pull and create a basis for where the project would go and how it would go about doing so. In order to attempt to compensate for that, however, this project instead focused on theory-building and attempting to

thematize aspects of the relationship between Twitter and sports journalism that could be expounded upon in future research, whether related to sports or not.

Additionally, the sample size of nine journalists cannot be seen as representative of the entire field of sports journalists in the United States. Measures were taken to ensure that these journalists worked at prominent U.S. newspapers and therefore could be seen as somewhat authoritative, but these results cannot be taken alone and thus call for further support from future research. Similarly, the data taken from the nine journalists' Twitter feeds cannot be viewed as representative for the reasons listed in that section, such as which sports were in-season and which were not, as well as individual personal preferences about the consistency of use. Finally, due to spatial and time constraints, phone interviews were used, despite the favorability of in-person interviews. The interviewer's inability to pick up on interviewees' facial or bodily cues could have limited the interview process.

5.6 Conclusions

From Milton to Lippmann to Dewey to the news production and gatekeeping scholars, this project builds on a theoretical tradition of asking how and why certain information is allowed to enter the public marketplace. Currently, Twitter is one of the latest technological advancements to spur a reevaluation of those questions for those who take Twitter seriously. For those who do not take Twitter seriously, another aim of this project is to inspire a rethinking of such a perspective.

Taken together, this research shows that Twitter is impacting traditional notions of journalistic decision-making and news production in a number of interesting ways that likely have, in some cases, and possibly have not, in other cases, been considered previously. For

instance, Twitter's usage does seem similar to what Robinson (2006) called postmodern journalism when investigating blogs as tools for journalism. Twitter does facilitate journalism that in some ways is "nonlinear and interactive, with multiple entry points and several endings," also allowing for "traditional no-nos" (pg. 78). However, Twitter also reinforces traditional journalistic hierarchies among publications, as evidenced by Wise's statement that a writer's reputation and the reputation of her or his newspaper are the most important factors in how successful one is in gaining a large following. Additionally, perhaps Twitter contributes to a breaking down of the traditional practice of gatekeeping and a rethinking of the notion of the scoop that have yet to be considered or taken seriously.

What this project does that certainly has not been done before is offer the voices of nine prominent journalists from some of the most prestigious newspaper in the United States saying something along the lines of, "Twitter does matter to our profession, and this is why…" In this way, Twitter not only answers a call for research which opens a dialogue between the academic and professional worlds, but also fulfills a gap in scholarship that exists where this new medium and old art converge at the intersection of Twitter, sports, and journalistic decision-making.

This project started nearly one-and-a-half years ago as a sports fan, sports journalist, and current graduate student was introduced to Twitter and quickly saw it change his newsgathering routine. From such simple beginnings, this completed work is intended to not only inspire future research agendas regarding how Twitter impacts other types of journalism, as well as how the various, interesting and impactful details of the relationship between Twitter and sports journalism continue to develop over time, but also to inspire research into taken-for-granted topics and impacts that uncover rich, new traditions of scholarly work.

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7 APPENDICES

A Top 25 newspapers by circulation in the U.S. in 2010

1. The Wall Street Journal
2. USA Today
3. The New York Times
4. Los Angeles Times
5. Washington Post
6. Daily News of New York
7. New York Post
8. San Jose (Calif.) Mercury News
9. Chicago Tribune
10. Houston Chronicle
11. The Philadelphia Inquirer
12. Newsday of Long Island, N.Y.
13. The Denver Post
14. The Arizona Republic of Phoenix
15. Star Tribune of Minneapolis
16. The Dallas Morning News
17. The Plain Dealer of Cleveland
18. The Seattle Times
19. Chicago Sun-Times
20. Detroit Free Press

21. St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times

22. The Oregonian of Portland

23. The San Diego Union-Tribune

24. San Francisco Chronicle

25. The Star-Ledger of Newark, N.J. ("Circulation Numbers," 2010).

B Preliminary 23-question interviewing script

1. Name?
2. Employer?
3. Job description?
4. Years of experience?
5. When did you begin using Twitter as part of your journalistic routine?
6. Why did you do so (personal interest, job requirement, other reasons)?
7. Explain how Twitter plays a role in your routine on a day-to-day basis.
8. Do you use Twitter as a source of information from athletes, coaches, fans, etc.?
9. How does Twitter compare to the other sources available to you?
10. Do you use Twitter as an outlet for your own journalistic content?
11. How does Twitter compare to the other outlets available to you (newsprint, website, blog, etc.)?
12. Are there any other ways in which you use Twitter other than as a source and/or outlet for content? Explain.
13. In general, has Twitter impacted the decision-making process of a professional sports journalist? If so, how?
14. What benefits does Twitter offer to all those involved in professional sports journalism (organization, journalist, reader)?
15. What pitfalls does Twitter offer to those involved?
16. Which, if any, of these benefits or pitfalls may be unique to sports journalism, as opposed to other types of journalism via Twitter? Why?
17. What were your initial thoughts regarding Twitter as a professional journalism tool?

18. Have those thoughts changed over your continued use of Twitter for journalism purposes? If so, how?
19. What long-term impact, if any, do you see Twitter having on the practice of professional sports journalism?
20. If none, how do you see Twitter ultimately failing as a journalistic tool?
21. As a professional sports journalist, do you think the overall quality of your work has been enhanced, reduced, or remains the same since Twitter has become a regular part of your journalistic routine?
22. If enhanced or reduced, how?
23. Do you have any additional comments about Twitter and the practice of professional sports journalism?

C Mary Schmitt Boyer interview transcript from March 7, 2011

Kyle Sears: Tell me about your position at the Plain-Dealer and maybe any previous experience you'd like to mention.

Mary Schmitt Boyer: I'm the Cavs beat writer this year. I was the Cavs beat writer from 1996 to 2001, and came off for a couple of years, and then when LeBron arrived, I became a back-up or a second person on the Cavs. So I wasn't actually the beat writer, but I did lots of Cavs. Then our main Cavs beat writer went to Miami for ESPN.com, so then I took over again this year. I've covered the Minnesota Timberwolves and Minnesota Vikings. I've been a sports writer since 1977.

K: Tell me when you first began incorporating Twitter into your journalistic routine.

M: I think probably within the last calendar year. Again, because I wasn't the beat writer, per se, I didn't use it as much as I do now. But when I filled in for Brian [Windhorst], I would tweet injury updates and things like that, but certainly not to the extent that I have this season.

K: What were your reasons for beginning to use Twitter? Was it something that developed out of personal interest, or was it something that since you're on the Cavs beat it's a requirement that you need to tweet updates?

M: It's more of a requirement, per se. I have absolutely no interest at all. I started to follow a few players on Twitter last season, intending to never tweet myself. I was just going to monitor their tweets. But the Plain-Dealer has been—I don't want to say at the forefront—but they've been very encouraging of having all of us write, tweet, and blog as much as possible in the course of our jobs. There's no mandatory, "You must tweet three times a game or six times a game," or anything like that, but they just encourage us to do it as much as we can.

K: Going from when you began using Twitter really having no interest at all to having used it for a while, what were your initial thoughts and maybe how have they changed?

M: I hated it, and I still hate it, but I do it. I think it's incredibly inane. But, especially like around the trade deadline, it was a primary source of communication between sports writers. Obviously, I follow mostly sports writers. The @PDcavsinsider actually has 30,000 followers, which is an absurd number in my personal opinion. It really reached its peak right before LeBron's decision, and frankly, I expected after he left and after Brian Windhorst left that it would take a precipitous nosedive. So I'm somewhat shocked that we still have 30,000 followers, and I guess I'm a little bit at a loss to explain that. I'm 55 years old, and I've noticed that my younger colleagues tweet just as a matter of course. I think they probably tweet in their personal lives, as well, and so it's just second nature to them. Whereas I lean over to a colleague to say something, and I realize, "Oh, you should tweet that." So it's still kind of a thought process for me. I have to think to do it, as opposed to just doing it. I feel like a rookie basketball player, frankly.

K: Give me an idea of in a typical day for you how you would use Twitter.

M: Let's use a game day. I'll go to the noon-time shoot around and tweet an update of some sort from that. Ordinarily it's kind of a lineup change or injury update. Then we also blog something during the day just to give people an update. Then pregame, if there's any sort of injury update, I usually try to tweet something from the pregame, whether it's an interesting comment or again an injury update or a lineup change or something like that. Then, during the course of the game, I definitely do it after every quarter, and then depending on what's going on in the course of a game, I would say up to a dozen to 20 tweets during the course of the game, including the final score.

K: Next, I want to talk about a couple of different uses for Twitter and maybe how you see Twitter accomplishing certain goals as opposed to other options you may have to accomplish the same goals. First, how does Twitter work as a source, as opposed to the other sources that you have available to you?

M: I can't say that I've ever broken a story as a result of something that a player has tweeted. Certain people have tweeted that they were traded or whatever. I've never written a breaking news story off a tweet. But because people here are still interested in stuff that LeBron says, sometimes some of his tweets turn into stories, not necessarily breaking news stories, more just kind of what people are talking about or responding to.

K: Next, talk to me about how Twitter works as an outlet for your own content, as compared to more traditional outlets like the print edition, or the website, or even a blog.

M: I have been remiss in using that to sort of self-promote, honestly. I know I should do a better job, especially if you've done a larger story that you're happy with or a more in-depth story. I do that occasionally. But from a systematic standpoint, on game night, I file a notebook before the game. In order for me to post it on Twitter, I have to wait until it's posted on the Cleveland.com website, then get the link, shorten the link, and then post it on Twitter. I am never good at doing that during the course of a game, because, frankly, I'm trying to watch the game. So, I haven't been very good about promoting my own work on Twitter. I know the paper is encouraging that, as well, but the timing is not too easy.

K: Do you see any other important uses of Twitter other than the two we just talked about—as a source and as an outlet for content.

M: This is totally outside the realm of sports, but the whole situation in Egypt seems to have been completely driven by Twitter. So, obviously it's a way for people to communicate. It's a

social network that people can use to communicate things way bigger than sports. Obviously, it was very successful in that instance. Sports kind of pales in comparison to that.

K: Probably the only other use that has been consistently mentioned to me is as a way to build a relationship with your readership. Do you see the potential in that?

M: I do, but, again, for instance when you're tweeting during a game, I personally don't feel that I have time to respond to the tweets. There's only so much I can personally do during a game besides watch the game. Again, it's probably a generational thing where I like to concentrate on one thing at a time, maybe two. The fact of having a running conversation with fans during a game—I'm just not comfortable doing that. I like to pay attention to the game. But I know everyone doesn't share that viewpoint. Some people are much better at it than others.

K: Maybe not so much for you, but other sports journalists that you've observed, since Twitter has become as popular as it is, how do you think it's changed the decision-making process of the typical sports journalist?

M: I can use an example of the Baron Davis trade here in Cleveland recently. I did, in fact, get a direct tweet from somebody that night that I never saw. Covering the game, I just was busy and didn't get her direct tweet. Had she called me, had she emailed me, I would've seen those. So we would've had a little advance notice on the trade, instead of finding out about it at like 3 a.m. But I didn't realize that was her preferred method of communication—this is another reporter. So, I was a little behind the eight ball because I didn't check that particular avenue. I should say, nowadays if there's a trade, you tweet about it first and check it out later, whereas in the old days, the first thing you would do is pick up the phone and call a reporter in that city and say, "Hey, I'm hearing that the Cavs may be getting Baron Davis. What are you hearing about that?" So there was more actual communication between reporters, instead of everybody kind of out for

themselves, seeing who can tweet this first. But that's the medium now. It's much more immediate than it used to be, but it's not more complete.

K: What are the benefits involved with using Twitter for the purposes of a professional sports journalist?

M: It is immediate. If you have that on your BlackBerry or whatever as your homepage or whatever, it's a very quick, short headline, as it were for you to pass along news or ask a question. But I use email more than Twitter, so I guess that says that I feel compelled to say things that take more than 140 characters to say.

K: What pitfalls come to mind?

M: I do think it's like, "Tweet first, check later." So, sometimes people are quicker to tweet than check facts.

K: Do you think that this discussion that we're having of Twitter being used as a tool for sports journalism translates to it being used for any type of journalism?

M: It certainly does seem sort of like it somehow should be connected to sports talk radio, doesn't it? I don't know that it is. I don't have any percentages. I really can't speak to that, because I don't know how, again, other than the situation in Egypt, which is pretty well documented, news reporters are using it. I don't have any experience with it, other than sports, so I can't speak to that.

K: Do you see the impact that Twitter has on sports journalism lasting long-term?

M: It's certainly, you would think, kind of at its peak right now. It's just kind of the latest thing. I'm sure there will be some other thing that will replace it. In fact, I'm sure if I asked a 16-year-old, there's probably something right now that we're not even aware of that people are using. I

don't think it's going to change our lives, but it certainly has changed the way we do things at this point. I'm sure there will be something else to come along any day now.

K: Across the field, as sports journalists have begun to use Twitter more frequently, do you see its use in any way enhancing or reducing the quality of work, or does the work remain the same?

M: I don't think it impacts the quality of my work. Frankly, I still find it a bit of an annoyance. I know people love it. I don't, and so the fact that I have to check it instead of working—that annoys me. But I don't think the quality of my work is impacted one way or another. Some people probably check it too much and are somewhat obsessed with it, but that's not the case with me.

K: You mentioned the Baron Davis story. Do you have any other stories or anecdotes that you think maybe exemplify the relationship between Twitter and sports journalism or any interesting aspects of that relationship?

M: I do notice that sometimes, for instance, the Cavs just were at the Knicks, and there was a lot of chatter between the Knicks writers, and you sometimes think they're kind of tweeting for each other or ribbing each other. I kind of wonder how much their followers who are not sports writers care about or are interested in the ribbing that goes on between sports writers on Twitter. I guess you could probably tell from how many followers they have, or not. I guess it's just a lot of inside jokes is what I'm trying to say it seems to me.

K: Do you have any additional comments about the relationship between Twitter and sports journalism that weren't prompted by any of the questions?

M: No, but I do think it's very topical. Again, I follow mostly sports writers and broadcasters, and obviously, there's a giant segment of the population who aren't using this for sports. But I just find it very timely, because we've been talking about this, so I've kind of wondered if it's

strictly run by sports writers—and Charlie Sheen, I guess. I just think it's very timely. I'd be very interested to see the results of your study.

D Paul Buker interview transcript from February 27, 2011

Kyle Sears: Well, first of all, as a starter, what's your job description at The Oregonian.

Paul Buker: Well, right now, I'm a beat writer for college football and basketball. I cover mostly Oregon State University sports in the Pac 10.

K: How many years of experience do you have?

P: I've been at The Oregonian for 34 years.

K: When did you first start incorporating Twitter into your journalistic routine?

P: It's been over a year, maybe a little more than a year. I actually got hooked on Twitter by some co-workers who were 20 or 30 years younger than me. At the time, the newspaper wasn't doing any Twitter, but I started doing Twitter and found out quickly that it was a good way to get instant updates on things related to my job, Oregon State-related things.

K: So you basically started out of your own interest, or did The Oregonian—your bosses, maybe—push you toward that?

P: No, it started out strictly as kind of a side thing for me. I do a lot of blogging and a lot of online work in my job for The Oregonian. We have a website called OregonLive.com. But Twitter was just a personal thing, and when the bosses discovered that I quickly had 1,500, 1,800, close to 2,000 followers, they figured out that it was a lot more valuable for the paper's benefit too. It wasn't just me cracking a few jokes when I got up in the morning. It was talking about the beats I covered and the stories I was writing for the paper. So the paper quickly kind of jumped aboard, and some of the other co-workers gave me a hard time at first because, because of all the Twitter stuff I was doing, everybody else was told they had to start doing Twitter also. Typically a guy my age—I'm in my 50's—we're very resistant at first to it, very skeptical of how much impact it would have, but we've kind of been won over.

K: Give me an idea maybe of how Twitter plays a role on a daily basis in your reporting and in your job.

P: There are a lot of Oregon State fans out there who are on Twitter, and they follow me, and I follow some of them. Oregon State football and basketball players and athletic department people—same thing. Some of them follow me, and I follow some of them. And so, a typical day, you can see some of their tweets, and it gives you a little bit of a feel for what's going on around the athletic department and what's going on with the football and basketball people. And then I go on Twitter and make a few comments. And then I'll link my stories that I've done for OregonLive and The Oregonian newspaper on Twitter. And a lot times, it'll spark a conversation on Twitter. For instance, after a game, before a game. Today was a good example. One of the former Oregon State football players, a guy named Stephen Paea, set the bench press record at the NFL Combine, and that was a huge Twitter topic just a few hours ago. So there's a lot of interaction, and it's a good way to get instant updates and find out from athletes stuff that I would've never found out otherwise or would've found out a day later. This is more instantaneous.

K: Do you feel like it increases the hours that you're working or does it just maybe supplement those hours? I've heard other journalists talk about how they feel like they wake up in the morning and have to start paying attention to Twitter until the time they go to bed. Do you feel that way?

P: I do feel that way, and I'll probably tell you the same thing the other guys said, that because of all the cutbacks and layoffs and buyouts in our business and the overriding feeling that management gives us that, "Gee, we're lucky to have jobs in print journalism," you almost feel obligated to work the extra hours even though maybe you're not getting paid for them. I know at

my newspaper—I'm not saying I have a terrifically hard job—but sometimes you work a lot more hours than they're paying you for, but it's just sort of part of the business. And also, even though I've been doing this since I was in high school, I still enjoy it, and I love sports. So if I'm kind of wired in to Oregon State athletics, and there are interesting things going on, on Twitter, I don't mind kind of being locked to my computer for most of the day. My kids are grown-up or in college, and my wife and I, our schedules are conducive to the fact that I can actually get up early in the morning, like they told you, and check out the laptop and do Twitter stuff just right after I get up literally. So maybe 10 years ago when there were still kids in the house and we had lots of game and schedules to work out, it would've been a big pain in the butt, but, you know, it's not that big of a deal now. It just seems like more and more, it's not only Twitter and blogging and online stuff that's part of your job, but they want you to go out there with video cameras and shoot video too. So that's just the way it is. But Twitter had definitely become ingrained in what I do.

K: A couple of the ways that I've identified that Twitter has become recognized is at first as a source where you could go and see what athletes were saying on a personal level and then it's ingrained, as you said, as an outlet for your own content. So, I guess, talk to me first about as a source. How do you see it compared to other sources that you use.

P: It's a very good news source, and because a lot of the different writers around the country follow each other on Twitter. For instance, when the Pac 10 and the Big 12 were expanding and all of this stuff was going on with the University of Texas in football and when the West Coast schools were trying to absorb Texas and some of the other schools, a lot of the news broke first on Twitter and then online later. And it's the same way now. NFL Combine news, you see it first on Twitter. NBA Trade Deadline news, you see it first on Twitter before you see it on the blogs.

So if you're a beat writer, or you're an NBA at-large writer, or a college football at-large writer, you're watching Twitter to see what ESPN.com has, to see what some of the conference websites have, and some of the reporters that have quickly gained reputations for kind of being wired-in with their teams. In fact, I can remember the guy's name, but maybe you talked to him. There was a guy who has a blog and covers Texas, and he got a national reputation for breaking news about the Big 12 on Twitter just a few months ago.

K: Right, the guy from OrangeBloods.com. I can't remember his name off of the top of my head.

P: Yeah, that's it—OrangeBloods.com.

K: Obviously one of the unique things about Twitter is the brevity of it, so tell me a little about how it compares maybe posting your own content on Twitter as opposed to the other outlets that you have for your content—the newspaper, the blog, the website, stuff like that.

P: For me, the brevity thing is a little tough to deal with because I'm known for stringing together three or four tweets to get my point across. I guess now Twitter has expanded tweets that can be longer than 140 characters. But it's a good way to kind of make you be a little more succinct in what you're trying to say. You can be pretty opinionated and pretty flippant, but you can still get your point across. Like I said, in my own case, I do a lot of linking, so I'll make a few comments about something like Oregon State basketball for instance, and then I'll link maybe my blog or a story I wrote about Oregon State basketball along with the Twitter comments.

K: Overall, in terms of your decision-making as a journalist, how do you feel like—not only for you, but for others you've observed—has Twitter impacted that?

P: Well, as far as decision-making, it's real big with our editors, because a lot of times, they'll see something I talk about on Twitter or allude to on Twitter, and they'll immediately call me

and ask if I should be doing a story for the print edition or the online edition about it. The decision-making process is affected when you might be going one direction with a story and see several Twitter comments from fans or athletes that might take you in a completely different direction or expose you to some story angles or ideas or facets of a story that you didn't even know were out there. So that's another way that Twitter's pretty valuable in terms of when you're working on a big story. For instance, when Jacquizz Rodgers, the star running back at Oregon State, decided to go pro a year early, a lot of the information I got for my print story came off Twitter, because I had tweets from Jacquizz Rodgers himself and tweets from family members and teammates that kind of help you make the story more immediate. I know that if you read papers like the L.A. Times, or papers all over the country now, you'll see an actual print story where they'll talk about what an athlete tweeted, because when they're tweeting, it's their words and their audience, and you're getting stuff in the paper that you would never get otherwise just by doing a regular interview.

K: Well, I think we've kind of covered a lot of benefits that are involved with using Twitter as a resource. Any others that maybe we haven't mentioned thus far that maybe you can think of?

P: Not really.

K: Tell me, on the other side of the coin, what pitfalls may be involved with the use of Twitter popularly by sports journalists.

P: There are huge pitfalls, mostly with the athletes and some of the fans, by saying stuff that's either out-and-out false, or not politically correct, or inflammatory. There have been so many stories already about athletes that have put their foot in their mouth on Twitter or started controversy on Twitter and then kind of had to backpedal. And there isn't much of an argument when it's your Twitter account and it's your words. There have been several example recently of

athletes saying, “Well I didn’t really mean what I said.” Well yeah, but those were your exact words. So, as a journalist, you can be entertaining and humorous and flippant and everything else, but you have to adhere to the same professional standards that you adhere to at your newspaper. Otherwise, you’re going to get in trouble with your bosses. One time, I made a flippant comment about how tiny our sports section was lately because we weren’t selling enough ads, and I was quickly given a slap on the hand about that and told not to make fun of my newspaper on my Twitter page. So I learned my lesson. So there’s definite downfall to being able to just bat out 140 characters of whatever pops into your head, because sometimes that can get you in trouble.

K: Overall do you see the use of Twitter as something that is uniquely fitting for sports journalism in particular, or do you see the way it’s used in sports journalism as a reflection of how it can be used by all journalists?

P: I think it can be used by all journalists. I don’t think it’s specific to sports. But it certainly does fit sports really well. I mean, immediacy, brevity, it’s results-oriented like sports. There are so many sporting events during the course of the week around the country and so many writers that cover the athletes and the teams that there’s a huge opportunity there to have lots of sports stuff on Twitter. Although, I subscribe to the L.A. Times Twitter account and the BBC, and CNN just to give me regular news, but I definitely get a lot of sports news on Twitter.

K: Have your thoughts about Twitter as you’ve now used it for a while changed about how it benefits you and your own work?

P: Yeah, I had no idea what the impact of it would be when I started. I just thought that it would be a fun way to communicate with a few people, and I had no idea that it would explode like it has with the number of people that are using Twitter and are starting to use Twitter. I just saw a

number the other day, and it's just staggering. And like I said, it's not just sports, but news, entertainment. Lots of professions use it. So I guess to me the biggest surprise would be how quickly it caught on. It's not quite as dramatic as The Social Network movie and Facebook, but it seems like obviously there must have been a need for it or a void there for people, because people certainly have jumped on Twitter, and now it's hard to find somebody who isn't on Twitter.

K: Do you see the impact of Twitter lasting long-term in your field?

P: You know what, I do. Twitter, blogs, video—it's just kind of a 24/7 society now, especially with message boards and people wanting the news immediately and instant analysis and all that. So I can't see Twitter doing anything but growing and growing.

K: Do you think the overall quality of work since you began using Twitter has been enhanced in ways, reduced in ways, or do you think it remains the same?

P: I can't honestly say that work I do in the print edition of The Oregonian has been enhanced. I think it's helped out my online work. Like most print newspapers, more and more they're leaning toward the online product, so I kind of feel like I'm more of an online/Twitter guy and then a print guy third sometimes. Because The Oregonian emphasizes its website so much that the Twitter stuff and my blog stuff, it seems to me, has more importance than what I do for the print edition half of the time. So the job is kind of evolving, and Twitter has been a part of that.

K: You mentioned the example where you talked about the size of the sports section and had a run-in with that. Do you have any other anecdotes or interesting stories that sort of exemplify any interesting attributes of Twitter or just how Twitter is impacting your work as a whole?

P: There have been a couple of instances where I had "breaking news" on my Twitter account about somebody else's beat at the newspaper I work for, so the bosses wondered why I would

have this first before the actual guys who were covering the teams would have it. But it's just that I've always been more conductive to deadline-type reporting and getting stuff in print or on the blog very quickly. So, like I said, there were co-workers who were a little upset with me for getting the bosses to kind of order everybody to go on Twitter. This was over a year ago. And once in a while I'll get somebody upset with me when, if I've got time to kill and I'm tired of talking about Oregon State basketball, for instance, I'll talk about NFL football or state of Oregon players in the NFL or kind of dip into somebody else's beat like the University of Oregon Ducks or something. So that would be the only other anecdote I'd have, aside from the few times I've put my foot in my mouth and gotten in trouble for stuff I've said on Twitter. I try to keep those incidents to a minimum.

K: Do you have any final comments or anything that you might like to say about Twitter that I didn't prompt in any of the questions or anything like that?

P: I think we pretty much covered everything. Like I said, it sort of amazes me how much it's exploded. Now, it's like—I'm sure you've heard from other guys—it's part of your job. Like those other guys told you, you get up in the morning, and you check Twitter, because if something major is going on in your beat, you're probably going to see it there first, before you see an online story about it. So if you're being paid to keep up with certain things, you kind of have to be on Twitter and have to monitor it all the time.

E Ken Davidoff interview transcript from March 7, 2011

Kyle Sears: First of all, tell me a little about your position at Newsday and any other previous experience you'd like to mention.

Ken Davidoff: I'm the national baseball writer at Newsday. That means I write about everything in Major League Baseball with an emphasis on the two New York teams—the Yankees and Mets. I write columns, breaking news, feature stories. I blog.

K.S.: Any other newspapers that you've worked for that you want to mention?

K.D.: Yeah, I worked at the Bergen Record in New Jersey.

K.S.: How many years have you been a working journalist?

K.D.: Wow, almost 18.

K.S.: When did you first start incorporating Twitter into your journalistic routine?

K.D.: May of 2009.

K.S.: What were your reasons for doing so? Were they personal interest, or something that maybe some of your colleagues or bosses sort of encouraged you to do?

K.D.: Actually a family friend encouraged me to do it at the time. I was curious about it.

K.S.: Is it a requirement at your newspaper that the writers do it? What's the policy on that at Newsday?

K.D.: It's strongly encouraged.

K.S.: Give me an idea of maybe how Twitter plays a role on a typical day for you.

K.D.: I always tweet my blog posts. I usually blog one, two, three times a day, and I tweet those. Then if I have breaking news, I'll tweet that. If I just have a random thought, I'll tweet that. Then during the baseball regular season, I sort of have a shtick that everyday I predict what the records of the Yankees and Mets will be at the end of the season, just to annoy people.

K.S.: Do you have an estimate of how many times you tweet per day, and how you see the frequency of your tweeting comparing to maybe what you see as average in the field?

K.D.: I wouldn't even begin to guess an average in the field. I'm looking at my Twitter page now. I started in May of 2009, so 22 months I've been doing it, and I have 5,326 tweets. So, I guess you can do the math.

K.S.: Next, talk to me about a couple of different ways to use Twitter and how effective they are. So, first, as a source of information from the athletes you cover, from the coaches, and maybe even the fans that you interact with, how does Twitter compare to the other sources that you have available.

K.D.: Oh, very poor. You're saying using Twitter to interact with the people I cover?

K.S.: Right.

K.D.: Like tweeting with each other?

K.S.: Right.

K.D.: Yeah. It's not legitimate at all. I'll joke around occasionally with a baseball person on Twitter, but I certainly wouldn't use Twitter to try and get real information.

K.S.: How about from fans you interact with as a source of information? Does it give you any kind of idea of maybe what your readership is interested in? Or is it kind of the same as with the people you cover? Is it kind of a non-serious thing?

K.D.: In terms of fan interaction, it's a good way to build my brand. To have this one-on-one kind of interaction with fans, it's kind of cool.

K.S.: Talk to me next about how Twitter works as an outlet for your own journalistic content. How does it compare to the print edition, the website, the blog, anything like that?

K.D.: Obviously, as I've mentioned, I can tweet everything I write for the newspaper, whether it's breaking news, feature story, column, blog post. So, I can cover all that in Twitter. Or when I have breaking news, I can just tweet it first, and then put it on my newspaper's website. My newspaper is fine with that. If I have a nugget of information or an observation, I like to put it on Twitter. I feel like the more you do it, the better you have a feel for what's a good tweet and what isn't.

K.S.: A couple of things that I've talked about a lot with journalists are what I guess are considered the two hallmarks of Twitter, which are the immediacy of it and the brevity of it. In using Twitter as a source, maybe not so much, but also as an outlet, how do you see those two things coming into play?

K.D.: They're humongous, not doubt about it. I was at the baseball general managers' meetings, and a source told me that the Yankees were going to try and sign this relief pitcher—Pedro Feliciano—who they wound up signing. So, just then and there while we were in that conversation, I tweeted it, so it hit the world within 30 seconds of me discovering this. I laughed and thought back to my younger days as a reporter when I would've learned something at 10 a.m. on a Wednesday morning, and it wouldn't have hit the world until 7 a.m. on a Thursday morning. That immediacy is remarkable. And brevity—who doesn't like brevity? We all talk too much and write too much, so I like that Twitter restrains you.

K.S.: Do you see any other uses? I guess building a brand is sort of considered using it as an outlet, but it may be considered as a use unto itself.

K.D.: I use it on a professional basis. Everything I do is to build my brand, whether I link to stuff on Newsday, put breaking news on there, put a joke up there, this shtick I do where everyday I

predict the records of the teams. That has generated a nice following of lovers and haters, which I think is a nice balance. It gets people talking. It all goes back to building a brand.

K.S.: As you've seen Twitter gain popularity in your profession, do you see how it is impacting the decision-making of journalists?

K.D.: Sure. Certainly, when you get a story now, you want to tweet it. It's kind of good, because there's always this heavy competition, especially, I think, in sports media for who had the story first, and Twitter is kind of the ultimate referee of that. When you put it on your website, you might be able to fake a timeline, so you have it at a time if you had it 20 minutes later. Twitter is an independent judge, so it's kind of nice in that way. When you have something first, then the whole world can know that you had it first.

K.S.: I think we've covered a number of the benefits involved with using Twitter as a tool for sports journalism. Any others that you want to mention or want to elaborate on more?

K.D.: No. I think I've done an excellent job so far.

K.S.: OK. Next let's talk about the pitfalls, since I don't think we've really covered many of those yet. What pitfalls are involved with using Twitter as a tool for sports journalism?

K.D.: The obvious pitfall is that immediacy is a double-edged sword. I don't think I've put any wrong information up, but when you hear something and you have this outlet to get it out there immediately, you might have an instinct to just put it up there and let it fly, but you have to be very careful because you don't want to get something wrong. That's probably the biggest thing. You don't want to screw up. It makes it easier to screw up. Let's put it that way.

K.S.: Do you think this discussion of the benefits, the pitfalls, the details of this relationship between Twitter and sports journalism easily translates to using Twitter for any type of journalism?

K.D.: I do think it's ideal for sports, because I think in sports there's always a certain kind of news. How can I put this? It's just a great fit for Twitter and that immediacy. Like, I cover baseball. Are you a baseball fan?

K.S.: Yeah.

K.D.: Yeah. Every winter, you know Cliff Lee's going to sign somewhere. That's just built for Twitter. There's going to be a finish line, and there's going to be a race to see who can report that news first, and Twitter, right now, is the arena where that race is really taking place. So, I can't think of an equivalence for that in other news areas, whether it's business or politics or international. It's not like, "Newt Gingrich is going to run for president." I mean, I'm sure there will be some competition there, but it's just not the same in my opinion. Sports is just built for that with free agency and trades and stuff like that. Twitter is just such a great fit for news like that.

K.S.: When you first began using Twitter—the first time you logged on and tried to adapt it to what you wanted to do as a journalist—what were your thoughts, and how have those thoughts since changed?

K.D.: I hated it at first. I didn't get it at all. I did not understand Twitter. I feared that I was wasting my time, that this just wasn't for me. I probably linked to some stuff, but I was just kind of feeling my oats, I guess. I did not have a good feel for what I wanted to achieve with my Twitter account. Thankfully, I hung in there, and through time, I just kind of built up a comfort zone. Now, I have a feel for me of what constitutes a good tweet and what constitutes a bad tweet. You try not to annoy your followers with bad tweets. I keep referencing this shtick where I do the daily record predictions. I'm sure I annoy people with that, but I don't mind it, because I know there's a good trade-off. I know a lot of people enjoy it.

K.S.: Do you see the impact that Twitter's having on the profession ultimately lasting long-term?

K.D.: That's a great question. It's just a guess, but my guess would be no, just because of the way the world keeps evolving so quickly. I mean, three years ago, if you had told me—I think it already existed at that point, but it wasn't really widespread—"There's this thing out there called Twitter… 140 characters." I would've gone, "What the hell are you talking about? You're out of your mind." I have to think three years from now there's going to be something else, and Twitter's going to seem old and irrelevant. But it's just a guess. I'm enjoying Twitter. I'm enjoying it as long as it lasts.

K.S.: As a follow-up to that, I think a lot of people share the same feeling that the technology won't last. Is it possible that something like the theory behind Twitter—this idea of immediacy and brevity—is something that Twitter has introduced that maybe, if the technology does change, that theoretical basis will stick with sports journalism?

K.D.: I would contest the notion that Twitter introduced that. I would say that it advanced it and enhanced it. But to me blogging and websites in general have helped the immediacy part of it. As I said, when I started writing for the newspaper in 1993, it didn't matter if you got news at 8 a.m. or 8 p.m. It wasn't seeing daylight until the next day's newspaper. Since then, newspapers have gone on the web, and that's created that immediacy. And brevity—there's certainly different ways that newspapers have utilized that, as well. I would say that Twitter's a fantastic advancement of those principles, but certainly they're not the ones who split the atom.

K.S.: Do you see the work in the field since Twitter has become popular as being enhanced, or being reduced, of just kind of remaining the same in spite of Twitter?

K.D.: Do I think Twitter has enhanced my field?

K.S.: Right. The work that's done by journalists. Do you think it's enhanced or reduced?

K.D.: I think what you're asking me is if it's more of a plus or more of a minus?

K.S.: Right.

K.D.: I would say it's more of a plus. I just think it's allowed journalists to interact more with their public, and I think the public really likes that. Some journalists don't use it properly. You're going to have that regardless of the field. But all in all, I think it's been a definite plus.

K.S.: You mentioned the Feliciano deal, and you've also mentioned your daily projections on Twitter, do you have any other anecdotes or personal examples from your Twitter feed that maybe exemplify this conversation that we're having or aspects of it?

K.D.: I think one pitfall of Twitter for everyone is that you can occasionally screw up. I almost put my cell phone on Twitter, because I thought I was responding to a direct message with somebody. I was responding on my cell phone. I got a DM as a text, and the next thing I knew, I got two or three phone calls from strangers saying, "Hello, is this Ken?" And I said, "Oh, boy." It was probably up there for about a minute. I think it was Christmas weekend morning, a Sunday morning, so thankfully not a lot of people were on at that particular point. But you do have to be careful in that regard. I've seen some people's tweets where they clearly meant to be responding privately to one person, and they respond publicly to everybody.

K.S.: Any additional comments about Twitter that maybe weren't prompted by any of the questions?

K.D.: Nope.

F Helene Elliott interview transcript from March 2, 2011

Kyle Sears: Starting off, can you tell me a little bit of biographical information, just about your position at The Times and your experience?

Helene Elliott: I'm a columnist, a sports columnist at the L.A. Times. I've been at the L.A. Times since 1989. Before that, I worked for Newsday in New York and before that for the Chicago Sun-Times.

K: When did you start using Twitter as part of your journalistic routine?

H: That's a good question. Let me just go to Twitter, and I think it will tell me when I started tweeting. It doesn't have it on here. Probably a year and a half, I would guess.

K: What was behind your decision to start? Was it something that was borne out of personal interest, or something that maybe your colleagues or bosses had told you about?

H: I saw colleagues doing it, and I thought it was a great way to very quickly and succinctly get news out there without going through sitting down and typing out a blog. At our newspaper, blogs have to go through the copy desk, so that takes more time. A tweet would be something that would just be very immediate and succinct and could be funny and deliver news at the same time.

K: Tell me how a typical day goes for you using Twitter.

H: Just using for an example today, I went to the Los Angeles Kings hockey practice this morning, and they had a new player who was acquired in a trade. So when I got there I took a look at who was playing on which lines, and I tweeted the new line combinations and who was doing what. Then after we talked to the coaches, I tweeted again about who might be into the lineup and which goaltender was going to start the next game and just little tidbits like that.

K: I notice one thing that you seem to do on your Twitter feed a lot is tweet continuous messages that maybe take up two or three messages. Tell me how you sort of work within the brevity constraints that Twitter presents.

H: Yeah, I try not to do that, but yesterday I spoke to the new player who the Kings had gotten, and I felt like it was just the best way. He was not made available to many journalists, and I just wanted to get out there what I had as quickly as I could, again without waiting to go through the whole type-up, write a blog, get it edited, get it posted whenever somebody's available, and then tweet all that. I try to avoid those longer messages, but sometimes it's unavoidable.

K: Also, it seems like you do a lot of live-tweeting of the games. Is that what you've found to be one of the more useful features that you think Twitter offers?

H: Absolutely. It's funny, because last night I was watching some games at home. It wasn't even the Los Angeles or Anaheim teams I was watching. I was watching some out-of-town teams, and while I was tweeting about it, I got a message from somebody saying he was somewhere overseas and "I can't see the game, so I love your play-by-play." It's kind of weird how people anywhere in the world can see. If you hold on, I'll check and tell you where he was.

K: OK

H: Oh, Bali, Indonesia. "I love the play-by-play. Wish I could watch. I'm in Bali, Indonesia."

K: That's pretty awesome.

H: Yeah, I thought so. I was sitting there laughing, because just two, three, four years ago, who would've ever dreamt that Twitter would exist, but now it's become part of every journalist's arsenal, I think.

K: Next, let's talk about a couple of different ways I think Twitter has proven to be useful and how it compares to the other methods that traditionally you might use in such situations. So first,

as a source of information from athletes, coaches you cover, and even from the fans you interact with, how does Twitter compare as a source?

H: Just the immediacy and there seems to be a casualness with it that is more informal than most other forms. There are some hockey players on Twitter who you know that they're saying things that if they were standing in a locker room and a team public relations representative was standing beside them, you know they wouldn't be saying those things. So it's kind of interesting to get insights, and sometimes players will have little Twitter conversations, and you're kind of eavesdropping on them, and that's kind of fun too.

K: Also, another use is as an outlet for your own content. We've talked a little about the different kind of tweets that you may like to send out. What does Twitter have to offer as an outlet for your content as compared to the print edition, the website, and other media?

H: Again, I think it allows for more opinion, more immediacy certainly. I think it's a little more informal. You can say "I think X, Y, Z" when maybe you can't do that in the newspaper. The National Hockey League's trade deadline was the other day, and it was amazing to read tweets from people talking about different trades that had been made. And then the pitfall—and I'm sure you'll probably come to this question very soon—is that some people had set up Twitter accounts with names that were very close to the real names of legitimate journalists, and they were sending out phony trade rumors, so you have to be very careful.

K: Yeah. I think I read that article on Deadspin.

H: Yeah.

K: I think you've hit a little bit on another use as a way to interact with your readers. Can you maybe talk about that a little more and maybe any other uses you see for Twitter?

H: It provides for an instantaneous dialogue with readers. In the olden days, you would write, and they would send a letter to the editor—or more recently send you an email—but the conversation was probably a little more distant. Now when you're out there tweeting all the time, and most of us tend to put personal stuff in tweeting too, I think readers and fans feel like they know you better.

K: You've mentioned the immediacy a couple of times, and I think that plays a lot into my next question, which is how does Twitter impact the decision-making process of a professional sports journalists.

H: Yeah, there's the immediacy, but you also don't want to give away everything you have and you want to draw people to your website and to your newspaper. So you have to strike a balance between the information you're giving away in a tweet versus the way you're going to develop it for a story maybe in your paper or on the web or both.

K: Maybe as a follow-up to that, not only for you, but other journalists that you monitor on Twitter, how do you see Twitter factoring in a hierarchy with the print edition, the website, blogs?

H: The upside is the immediacy, as we said. The downside is the brevity. Not everything can fit into 140 characters. Also, as with emails, tone can be misconstrued, so it has its downside as well.

K: We've already hit on a number of the benefits. Any other benefits you think Twitter offers?

H: Well, I think we've pretty much covered it. It seems to have a skew kind of young and so many of the athletes are young, so I suspect that it's the demographic of the athletes who we are covering.

K: Similarly, I think we've hit a number of the pitfalls involved. Can you think of any others that might be worth mentioning?

H: Again, an email or a tweet doesn't always convey the tone of something. You may intend it as a joke, and somebody takes it seriously, or vice versa. Also, you can't fully explain a point or develop an idea in a tweet. I think it lends itself to just basic, straight, "John Jones is going to start in goal tomorrow," as opposed to the coach talking about the last five bad goals that John Jones gave up. That's something that you save for your column or story.

K: Talking about these benefits and pitfalls and this marriage between sports journalism and Twitter, do you think that such a marriage is unique, or do you think that the discussion that we're having easily translates to other types of journalism?

H: That's a good question. I would assume it works for gossip-type columnists and Hollywood reporting and that type of thing. I'm not sure how it would work in terms of political reporting. It might. If you're covering the president, you can tweet, "The president is wearing a flag lapel pin today," or he's not, or "The president visited a second-grade class," or "The first lady wore an American designer outfit today." You can use it in a lot of different phases of journalism, I'm sure.

K: Tell me a little about your thoughts on Twitter initially when you began using it and maybe how those thoughts have changed over time.

H: I thought it was—and I still think it is—a great source for immediately disseminating information. But again, as we've seen, you've got to be careful in terms of any information you pick up via Twitter. You've got to be careful who it is putting out that information. Is it somebody you trust? Also, be careful, as we were saying before, that it's the real person and not a fake account. It's the real so-and-so from the Daily Breeze or the Daily Planet. It's not

someone impersonating Jane Doe of the Daily Planet. There are some pitfalls. Again, as it relates to the fact of tone, you have to be really careful, because things can be misconstrued.

K: Do you see Twitter having a long-term impact on professional sports journalism?

H: It's tough to say because, I mean, who knew about Twitter two or three years ago? And who knows what we'll be doing two or three years from now? The technology changes so quickly it's impossible to really answer that.

K: Do you think not so much looking at the technology but the presentation in kind of a condensed form—is that something that Twitter has maybe made more popular and something that if the technology does change that maybe could impact journalism in the long term?

H: Possibly, I mean, it seems that nobody has a very long attention span anymore, and it seems that 140 characters is about all the time that people have to spend sometimes on something when maybe it would serve them better to actually put in a little more time. I think the brevity and the immediacy are the two key factors here. The brevity could very well be a legacy and be something that is carried on, certainly.

K: Looking at your profession as a whole and how journalists use Twitter, do you think that the overall quality of work has been enhanced, or reduced, or remains the same since Twitter has become popular as a tool?

H: That's tough to answer. I don't think Twitter has replaced telling a story. The essence of what we do is tell a story—or try to do. You can't tell an entire story in 140 characters. I think what keeps people reading—whether it's novels or websites or Kindles or books or newspapers or magazines or whatever it is they're reading—is the desire to read a story and to learn a story, and if you make it compelling for your readers, no matter what the form, you hope that, that primal

instinct will always be there. Twitter can't replace a well-told story and a well-developed story, but it has its merits in different areas.

K: You had the great story about the guy who messaged you last night. Do you have any other stories or anecdotes or examples from your Twitter feed that you think maybe exemplify the impact that Twitter's having on your profession?

H: It's funny because as a hockey writer, most press boxes are way, way up in the rafters in arenas, because obviously, teams don't get any revenue from press box seating, and they want to get the most revenue they can. So the press boxes are tucked up high out of the way, and sometimes in hockey a puck can be deflected off somebody's skate or off a foot, and we may not see that in the press box. And I've had it happen or seen it happen with other journalists where you'll say, "It seemed to deflect on the way to the net," and somebody will tweet to you, "Yeah, it went off so-and-so's foot," or "Yeah, so-and-so got a piece of it with his stick," which is something they can see on the replay at home and we can't in the arena.

K: Any other comments that you may have about the relationship between Twitter and sports journalism that maybe weren't prompted by any of the questions?

H: No. I'm just curious to see where this goes and what the next generation is going to be like. Again, 140 characters is a nice start, but it shouldn't be a total story. You can't completely tell a story in 140 characters.

G Stephen Holder interview transcript from March 2, 2011

Kyle Sears: Tell me a little about your role at the paper and your experience.

Stephen Holder: My role is I'm one of two reporters who cover the Tampa Bay Bucs and the NFL at-large. It's a pretty comprehensive way that we cover the team, it being a local team. So, that means we're at every practice, every game. In the offseason, we continue to cover them pretty vigorously. It's a pretty comprehensive type of thing that involves both football and non-football types of things, like contracts, the whole nine, as you can imagine. That's pretty much the nature of the job, and that also involves nowadays, obviously, a lot of online contribution and what we're talking about with social media, as well.

K: Tell me a little about how long you've been working in St. Petersburg and also at any other papers that you've worked for.

S: I've been here now about five-and-a-half years, and I came here in that capacity—to cover the Bucs. Prior to that, I worked at the Miami Herald for I'd say about seven years, and I had a variety of jobs there. I covered college football and the NBA during different periods there, everything from high school to the NBA over the course of my time there. I had some other minor experience other than that, but those are the two primary jobs that I would say I've had.

K: Tell me when you began using Twitter as part of your journalistic routine. How long has it been?

S: I would say about two years now. I started out on Twitter just as a reader and a follower, if you will, of others who were generally people in the industry—by industry, I mean the NFL—whether they be media or people I needed to follow. That eventually kind of morphed into me using it as a tool for my job, and the extent of it was—and continues to be—just a vehicle to communicate to readers and fans. A lot of our readers don't spend eight hours a day on our

website, but they do spend eight hours a day glancing at Twitter, so sometimes I'll take advantage of that to alert them about what we're working on or even sometimes about things that aren't necessarily going on, on our website, just sort of a play-by-play of a particular story, even, that's unfolding. I'll oftentimes update far more on Twitter than I would on our website, with the intent being that when we do have an update on our website, those people will be inclined to go there and look at it because they've been following the story on Twitter. Also as a sports writer, you often get the bar-room conversation from people—they have all these questions and want to know things, and they feel like they're getting first-hand knowledge—and I think Twitter allows you to do that with people that kind of appreciate that first-hand account of things, as opposed to hearing it second-hand or third-hand. I think it enables them to get a lot more of that. That was kind of a long answer, but I think all of that is part of why I use it.

K: So it sounds like your use of Twitter was basically borne out of personal interest. Were there anymore factors from your colleagues or bosses who pushed you to use it?

S: I was far from the first person among my colleagues to use it. So, I saw from afar others using it and how they took advantage of it, and that definitely encouraged me to get involved. I think I sort of followed other peoples' lead to some extent. I wasn't revolutionary by any stretch. I was far from the first. We have quite a few people on our staff who use it, some more extensively than I do, some less extensively. But yeah, I think I noticed two things. One, I saw those around me using it and saw that it could be a good tool to take advantage of, and two, I think there was just a general curiosity about it because you've heard so much about it in the media in and out of sports. You can't watch a newscast without hearing about either them asking you to communicate with them on Twitter or hearing things that others have said on Twitter. I think it was such a constant presence, that you kind of felt like you're missing something, and it was just

bold curiosity that was the result, and I kind of gave into that. I don't regret it. I think it's been a good thing by all accounts, for the most part.

K: Speaking of the sort of constant nature of it, which is something that comes up a lot in the interviews that I've had, tell me how a typical day might be as far as your usage of Twitter related to your job.

S: Today is a rare exception, because I'm working on a little bit of a project, but I would say that days when I am doing my usual job, I have the Twitter app open probably 75 percent of the time on my computer. And I'm not necessarily contributing all of that time, but I am reading the feed and taking note of what is out there. I think a lot of times, what we find nowadays as reporters, as you well know, is that the news travels so fast and things change so rapidly that you can spend literally your whole day reading websites and getting updates on stories. Well, that's not really feasible when you have work to do, so what Twitter enables you to do is get those updates in a quick fashion and cut down on your reading time. That's probably not good for my industry as a whole, to be honest with you, but it is a fact. It just really does make it more manageable. A big part of our job is being informed, and it's hard to do that when the information changes so quickly, so you really have to take advantage of something that helps you streamline that quite a bit. I think that's one of the big advantages to the thing is that it enables you to manage all that information that's coming at you from all those different websites and stay up-to-date with it without having to commit to so much reading and surfing on the web. That's what I think has been most useful for me. And like I said before, if we have a big, breaking story, you're going to hear about it on Twitter probably a few minutes before we get it up on our website, because they idea is I want to grab people's attention and say, "Hey, here's all the nuts and bolts. Go to this link and read it." So that would be the secondary usage of it. But I guess the first one is primarily

myself getting information, because I need to be up-to-date on what's going on, and in sports nowadays—for whoever is reading the CBA negotiations or what have you—things change by the minute, so you just really have to be on top of it, and that's what I've really been able to use it for in large part.

K: I think that kind of leads into my next couple of questions, which are related to certain uses of Twitter. So, the first one is as a source of information, if you have anything else to add about using Twitter as a source of information from athletes, coaches, fans, etc., and particularly how Twitter as a source compares to the other sources you have available to you.

S: That's kind of a gray area. I would say I follow on Twitter quite a few players and/or agents and even some coaches and front-office people, and I think it does enable you to oftentimes be alerted to some stories. Sometimes it's intentional by those parties, and sometimes it's unintentional. A lot of times we'll hear or we'll see a player who's hurt talk about his efforts to get back on the field, for example, and that's something that in the NFL, information about injuries is generally very, very vague, so a lot of times we can use that to our advantage. I've seen agents offer updates about contract negotiations for example, and that's oftentimes something you don't necessarily get in quick order from a team. Generally, they're not going to endanger the negotiations. They're generally going to announce that it's done, or something along those lines. But it does generate stories quite often, and I think what it does do is—we don't have a large number of household names of the Tampa Bay team, in particular, but I know a lot of my colleagues who cover teams that have a lot of high-profile players—you can't get an audience with those players very much, which is frustrating, but they all are on Twitter, and some of them are prolific tweeters. I think as a result, you kind of get a lot of times a sense of their state of mind or how they feel about things, and I just think that it enables you to get a little

bit of an audience with those guys that you wouldn't otherwise get, and most anybody can get that. So I'm not even talking about something that the general public can't get. But I do think that if you combine that with talking to other sources and other ways that we go about getting information, it paints you a better picture. In this job nowadays, you've got to use every tool that's available to you, and Twitter is a big one. To answer your other question about how it compares as a source to others, you've got to be very careful with it, obviously. The users have to be careful—the people actually making statements on there—and the person who is receiving that information needs to be careful, because there is no filter, as you well know, and I think as a reporter you can't necessarily take anything that's written on Twitter as gospel. It needs to be supplemental to all the other information that you've received and not primary. It really can't be something that you rely on. You've got to verify it. You've got to double-check it. You've got to know the context. You've just got to really be very, very careful if it's going to be the starting point for a story. And that's what it should be—it should be the starting point for a story and not the end-all for a story. That's the thing. As long as you recognize that as a reporter, you can get a lot out of it, but I just think that you really have to go into it know, right off the bat, that you've got to do a lot more work once you've obtained some information on Twitter. That's just the beginning. You've got some more work to do, obviously, in addition to that.

K: You've also talked a little about the next use I want to talk about, which is as an outlet for your own content. You mentioned that a lot of what you do on Twitter is designed to sort of provide information to the reader that guides them to the website. Is that generally how you see Twitter being useful as an outlet?

S: Well, that's one of the uses. As it relates to my job and what I do, we provide information, and we do it primarily through our website, so you want as many eyeballs as possible to see it. That's

pretty unique equation. But I would also say that—I think some people do this better than others—it also allows you to sort of build a relationship with your readership. Not all of your readers are going to follow you on Twitter, but a lot of the diehards will, and I think they feel sort of a relationship. At least in the old days, I think readers felt a relationship with the writers they read everyday, and that's becoming less and less true everyday. But I do think in some strange way Twitter has kind of taken us back to that a little bit, because they get familiar with you, and they see the same faces everyday as opposed to the same bylines everyday. I think it's a similar effect, and I think that's useful, because you build credibility, number one. Whether you're credible or not, I think when people see you and read you everyday and are receiving your updates everyday, every hour, I think they tend to rely on that information, and you will establish whether you're credible or not with the readers over time, and it'll be pretty obvious. But I think if you do that, that can only help our print product, whether it be online or in the newspaper. I think it's very valuable in that regard, and a lot of that doesn't necessarily involve sending a link to a story. I'll often be in the locker room doing interviews, and I'll send out a tweet clarifying something that was in a story earlier or something that was left over from the day before that wasn't entirely clear. I'll oftentimes do that, and it's not something that I'm going to write a story about, but I just do that because I want those people who are the thirstiest for that knowledge and who are expecting that to know that we're going to provide that. Sometimes it'll be on Twitter, or sometimes it'll be in the newspaper, or otherwise. I think people expect that on all platforms nowadays, and if you're doing that as a reporter, you've got to continue to satisfy that appetite. Twitter is a great way to do that, and I think everybody benefits from that. The people who are the most thirsty for that information can get it at the drop of a hat, and you can give it to them at the drop of a hat. So it really does satisfy that, and I would add to that, that I

think people are more thirsty for that than ever before, because there is so much of it out there that there's an expectation for more and more information, and Twitter's ideal for getting it out there.

K: Obviously with Twitter, the brevity of it is a big issue, so maybe how does that factor in as far as how Twitter works for you as an outlet compared to the other outlets you have available—the print edition, the website, and others?

S: That can be a frustrating angle, just because one of the things that every sports writer will tell you is that they never have enough space. You're always begging your editor for more inches in a story. So, to go to that group of people and tell them that you've now got 140 characters is one hell of a dilemma. It can be hard. And the other reason it's hard, in all seriousness, is that we, I think, try to be very careful with how we say things, and a lot of times just because there's so much gravity when it comes from what we like to think of ourselves as, which is a reputable news source. You spend years building a reputation, so you want to be very careful about what you say and how you portray things. So, if there's news, and you're trying to disseminate it on Twitter in quick fashion in only 140 characters, what you're faced with is trying to be thorough, but also trying to put it in 140 characters. And those goals are not in tune with each other. My usual approach is, "If you think it's not clear to people, then you probably need to tweet again and clarify it. If you're not entirely sure it's clear, then just don't take the chance. Keep posting until you think you've made the point." But, like I said, you have to leave out a lot of pertinent details when you use Twitter. No matter how many tweets you're willing to make or type, it ultimately is about quick and brief updates. So, once you get into really complex issues, it almost sort of works against you to use Twitter, just because you can't really convey that. But I do think it's become an art in some sense to get your point across in short and quick fashion and to do it

without giving people the wrong impression or without leaving them confused or without important details. Whether you can do that is a big part of whether you're successful at Twitter as a news vehicle. I think that is one of the bigger challenges, and I also think that is where a lot of reporters get in trouble, because they do leave out some pertinent details because they have so little space, and I think that people are so quick to draw conclusions based on that information, and then you've got a little bit of a problem on your hands sometimes. I think it requires a lot of caution, and a lot of times there are a lot of lessons learned the hard way there, too. That's one of the more challenging angles of using it in the fashion that we as reporters do.

K: We've talked about Twitter as a source, Twitter as an outlet, and we've also talked about Twitter as a way of building a relationship with your readers. Any other uses of Twitter that you want to mention?

S: For me from a personal standpoint, I would say this, that I generally use Twitter for work and Facebook for personal. But I do think that, just because I'm on it all day, I have a handful of people I follow that are unrelated to work, whether they be in music or politics or what have you, just for my own amusement. It keeps me up to date on things that I'm personally interested in. So, it's kind of weird, because it ends up being this weird mix of personal and professional to some extent, and much less personal than professional, like I said. But I'll read a tweet about Player X getting a contract extension, which is relevant to my job, and then the next tweet could be about the Egyptian protests, which is not. But I want to stay up on news from a personal standpoint just so I know what's going on. It's kind of interesting that way. I think it allows me to accomplish what I need to do professionally with a little bit of a diversion sometimes. But I think that's where you've got to be careful, because, if you want, you could end up following your 100 most-famous celebrities, and then you could spend all day reading their tweets and not

get anything done. I think you've just got to really be careful in terms of how much and how little you want to use it for each facet—personal and professional—if you're a person who uses Twitter for your job, like we do. I think that would be the other use that I would mention.

K: We've talked a lot about the different benefits and pitfalls that Twitter can offer using it for professional purposes. Any other benefits or pitfalls that you want to mention?

S: I think we've kind of covered them. One other pitfall I would mention is that I think a lot of times, when you're a person with a platform, whether it be just the little one that I have or whether it be someone who has 200,000 followers, you've got to be careful to not get into back-and-forth with people that's not positive. I've seen that a lot. I think a lot of times, on the web in general, people are very quick to attack and very quick to criticize, and I've seen writers take offense to things that were said about them or something that was tweeted or whatever it might be, people disagreeing with them, and that's fine. It's a free country. Let's not all have the same opinion. But I just think you've got to really have thick skin and not respond to any of that in a really negative fashion, because it's very easy to forget that it's not just you and that person, but it's you and 2,000 other people who are going to read it, and then news travels fast. Then it becomes, "Bucs beat writer saying bad things about the Bucs on Twitter." You don't want to be in the news. You want to write the news and produce the news. I think that's a pitfall. It's not the biggest sin, but there have been people in the media who've found themselves in an unnecessary situation, because they just didn't act in a mature way to something that somebody said on Twitter. I think that's one of the things you've got to mindful of. With social media, in my experience, you have to go into it and know that it's kind of a different world, and people don't treat each other the same on there as they do on the street. So, they're far more critical, and they are much more apt to say things they wouldn't say in person. And on Twitter, the people don't

even know you. On Facebook, they're your friends usually. On Twitter, people have no reason to be nice to you. They don't know you. They just follow you. They're just random people. You don't have any relationship with these people. So, you just take it as what it is and understand that you're going to get some of that. Just don't react to it in an overly negative way, because that takes away from what you're trying to do in terms of your job and communicating and reporting. That would just be one random thing I'd mention.

K: The discussion of the different details of how Twitter plays a role in the practice of sports journalism—do you think that, that same conversation translates easily to any type of journalism? Or do you feel like the relationship between Twitter and sports journalism is unique?

S: I think it translates. I really do. I think it might be different in some fashion, just because I think there's the angle of it's more like—I don't want to say it's entertainment, but it is—entertainment. You get a little bit different sense then you would get if you were covering politics, I think, because that's a much different arena, and you're dealing with a whole different set of circumstances. Sports is sports, and that obviously separates it from more serious stories we have to cover. But I don't think it's a lot different in terms of the use of Twitter. I think it accomplishes the same goals. You want to get your news out there. You want people to look to you as a source. You want to have a relationship with your readership and build credibility with that readership. Those are all the same goals that anybody in the media wants to accomplish, so, whether you be on television or working for a newspaper or website, I think those are all legitimate goals for everybody in the media. I think it crosses over. It absolutely crosses over, and I think we've seen that quite a bit, particularly with politics and news of that nature. I wouldn't draw a line of distinction at all. I think it's useful for just about any type of journalism or area of journalism.

K: Talk to me next about your initial thoughts when you began using Twitter two years ago and maybe how those thoughts have changed up until now as you've become more familiar with it.

S: I thought going in that it was more of a recreational tool. Let me put it that way. And it is for a lot of people. But I didn't recognize then how many people use it for serious purposes and that I could use it in that way too. I mean it's not stuffy, but at the same time, I use it for legitimate journalistic purposes, and I didn't necessarily envision that. Like I said, I got on there largely out of curiosity, and just in a very short period of time, I found out there were some serious benefits to using it. That would be how my perception of it changed. I got into it—I was on Facebook—thinking that it was something more along those lines, and my use of Facebook was purely recreational. So that was the perspective I was coming from, and when I got on Twitter and started using it professionally, my perception of it really changed. I would say the overwhelming majority of people who use Twitter use it recreationally, but for our purposes, it's serious business, and I think it has some real serious benefits for us. I don't have any regrets. I think it's been overwhelmingly positive in helping me do my job, but it's also made it a little more stressful, because I feel like I'm tethered to it. I think I check Twitter every night before I go to bed. It's the last thing I do, I think, just because I don't want to miss anything. It has kind of created a little bit of a monster for me, but overwhelmingly, for the most part, I would say it's been positive, and it has accomplished all of those things that I outlined earlier. I would say I've gotten a much more positive impression of it now than when I initially started using it.

K: Do you see Twitter's impact on sports journalism lasting long term?

S: I wonder about that. I've read and heard that it doesn't have a high retention rate, if that's the way to put it. In other words, people come and go rather quickly. I don't know how true that is, but that's my understanding. I wonder sometimes. I think until something comes along that can

accomplish what it does and improve upon it, then I think it could get overtaken. But for the time being, for what we do, for the goals that I outlined earlier, I think it's the perfect tool for those goals and those things we want to get accomplished. I understand that people's habits have changed a lot. I read this recently, that people used to go to a handful of websites each day or on a regular basis, but nowadays they search for things and they go to them that way or they get them through another website, which in many cases is Twitter. Because people's habits have changed, you've got to kind of find them to some extent and take your work to them, rather than them coming to you. They still do, obviously, find you on the search engines, but you've got to couple that with going to them, and I think there's not a better way right now to do that than Twitter. Short of putting a billboard up or a banner from an airplane, I don't know that there's a better way to do it. For the foreseeable future, I just think that it's the method that will be used in our business. But again, two years ago no one had ever heard of an iPad, so who knows? I think that for the time being, for as far as we can see—which is not very far—it's accomplishing the goals, and I don't see reporters using it less. I'll put it that way. Because I think the benefits have been pretty big.

K: Tell me overall throughout the profession, as Twitter has become more popular as a tool, do you think that the quality of work has been enhanced or reduced or remains the same.

S: That's an interesting question. I think, unfortunately, one negative effect overall from Twitter—and this is not just about journalists—is that it has probably caused people to read a little less, like I mentioned earlier. I don't think that I spend as much time on websites, because I get updates on Twitter that kind of encapsulates all of that. Can you repeat what you were asking me? I feel like I've gotten off on a little bit of a tangent here.

K: Do you feel like the quality of work has been enhanced by Twitter, reduced, or remains the same as it has become popular?

S: That's hard to say. I don't know that the quality of work has been enhanced. I wouldn't go that far to say that. I don't know how much it's hurt, but I don't think it's enhanced. If it has hurt the quality, here's how it has hurt: everything has become more rushed, and it was already rushed before. When the turnaround time goes down, the quality oftentimes goes down, because I talked earlier about how pertinent details and all of those things kind of get lost in translation. I think the likelihood of that goes up when you get off the phone with a source and the first thing you do is go to Twitter and recount the conversation. That's not high-quality journalism, but it is journalism today. We have to keep that in mind. We always strive to keep that quality high, but I think it's a never-ending struggle between getting it right and being thorough and all of those things and being fast and getting the information out there at the drop of a hat. It's a really hard thing to do, and I think it's inevitable that the quality has suffered. So I would say, despite all the good things I've said about it before, I think it also could have something of a negative effect. Our industry was already changing so rapidly and the dynamics of it changed so drastically, and now you add Twitter into the mix, and whereas before we were rushing to put a story online where we could write 200 words and turn it around in 10 minutes, now it's become turn it around and get 140 characters on the web and break the story. I just don't think that's an improvement. It is an improvement when it comes to turnaround time and getting information out and not having to rely on people coming to your website. Those are all good things. Don't get me wrong. But I just think that when it comes to the quality of it, I think it could suffer and probably has in many cases, just because of the dynamics that Twitter has changed. It's kind of a tough scenario. It has so many benefits, but there is a trade-off, and I think our job is to minimize how much the

quality suffers and try to compensate for that as much as we can. But it's a tough thing to do, and there's no science to that. It's a tough assignment, but we've got to be very mindful of it and try to keep that in mind at all times as much as possible.

K: Do you have any person anecdotes or examples from your Twitter feed that come to mind that kind of exemplify the relationship between sports journalism and Twitter?

S: I'll tell you one thing, actually, that was very interesting. I don't know if this answers your question, but I'll tell you this story. I was in Florida, and we covered the University of Florida very extensively, and when Tim Tebow was there last year, I went to the Senior Bowl—if you're familiar with that, after the college football season, it's a college all-star game in Mobile, Alabama—for a number of reasons. But one of the reasons was Tim Tebow was there that year in January of 2010. I remember him being under a lot scrutiny the first day because of his throwing mechanics, and a lot people were doubting whether they were appropriate for the NFL, and it was a pretty fair criticism, because they weren't very good. Being somebody who covered the NFL, I actually hadn't seen him in-person before. We got a very, very up-close look at him on the first day of workouts, and I tweeted a couple of posts from the field, standing on the sideline, talking to some scouts I knew, factoring in their impressions and my own, and I said some things that were very critical of him on Twitter. I didn't say anything that was mean. I just said that his mechanics were worse than I thought, worse than I knew. I would say, within 20 minutes, I got a call from an agent who's a friend of mine, and he told me what I had said. I said, "Oh, did you read that on Twitter," and he said, "No, I read it on the internet," and somebody had already passed along some impressions because it was a big story. People were passing along impressions from those who were there and writing it on their blogs and what have you, and it kind of was a little bit of reminder that, number-one, news travels fast, and, number-two,

what you say has a lot of gravity. I'll tell you the website. I'm sure you've read about it and know it. It's Pro Football Talk, which is run by Mike Florio at NBC Sports, and I know Mike, and they weren't wrong. They just took what I said and passed it along in a larger story about Tebow having a rough day. Obviously what I said kind of fueled their argument that he wasn't having a good day, and he wasn't. My point is it was a real, real, real big reminder that—and I didn't have a problem with it, but it was a reminder that—"Hey, there are a lot of people watching." And that includes the people who run the teams. I know for a fact that people in very high reaches of the Bucs organization read Twitter and know what we say on Twitter, and I know that because I've heard about things that I've said from them. You just have to keep in mind that there are always eyeballs watching you, and I think that sometimes you are reminded of those things whether you want to be or not. You just want to make sure that you can always either back-up what you're saying or defend what you're saying, because people are going to hear about it. It's not a vacuum. I'm sure there are other stories, but that's one that comes to mind right away, and it's kind of a funny little story. And then I would say I went to Tebow's workout roughly two months later in Gainesville after he had worked with several NFL coaches on changing his mechanics, and they were much better. And I tweeted that, and I'm sure the same thing happened. But those were my impressions. I don't know if this answers you question, but this is something I didn't think about earlier. I'll just throw this out there, and you can handle it however you want. One of the things that I think is interesting is that I'm 35, and I went through journalism school in the '90's, and it was always made very clear to us that if you're a reporter, and not a columnist who writes editorials, then you don't offer your opinion. The reader should never know how you feel. That's changed. That changed a long time ago, and Twitter really just blew that out of the water. It's kind of weird. I find myself offering analysis, and I call

it analysis if I'm ever asked. I don't say it's opinion. And I do think there's a difference. I think opinion is saying somebody's a bad guy, while I'm saying, "That's probably not a good idea—what he did," as opposed to, "He's a bad guy." So I try to sort of couch it as analysis, but you can't operate as a sports writer today and not give at least some sort of analysis, or if you want to call it opinion, call it opinion. I don't think you can do this job and not give that to the readers anymore, because I think there's an expectation of it now, and I think that people have become accustomed to getting a sense of how a reporter feels about something. I don't think you can do that in all facets of journalism. I don't think you can do that in, say, politics or if you're covering a murder trial. Obviously, it's not my job to be the jury. But I do think that in sports, because it's so driven by analysis and opinion because that's what dominates sports coverage nowadays, we've all fallen into that, for the better or worse. We've all become a part of that. I think that we all, sports writers or sports journalists at large, offer quite a bit of that these days, and a lot of it happens on Twitter. I think the majority of it happens on Twitter. And because we don't follow quite the same rules as on our newspaper pages and our website, I just think there are no rules, unfortunately, on Twitter. It's what we do, for the better or worse. I don't think it's a bad thing all the time. It can be sometimes. But I think it has given sports journalists an outlet to sort of give some analysis and impressions sometimes. To be honest with you, people want it. They want to know how you feel about things. When I don't take a stand on a story, they want to know why I'm not espousing a stronger view of something, and I have to explain to them, "That's not my job." Like I said, those who care the most will follow you on Twitter, and I think they get a sense of some of those things by following you. I just thought I would mention that.

K: I'm definitely glad you mentioned that. My last question is, "Do you have anything else you'd like to add?"

S: That would probably be what I would've said. What I just gave you would probably apply to that question, I would think. I think that's a really interesting angle. I don't know how that applies to your project. Like I said, journalism has changed not only from a technical standpoint in terms of how we do the job. We don't talk to people eight hours a day and go write a story anymore. Those days are over. Now, you get information and you give the information real-time. In addition to that, it's also changed theoretically and philosophically in terms of what I just said in that the work of reporters borders on opinion. And I think you've got to be careful with that, because you don't want to make people's opinions. You don't want tell people what to think. I do think it's appropriate to offer some real analysis, and sometimes that analysis can sound like opinion, but it's oftentimes our impression of what's going on, and people sort of mistreat it as opinion. A lot of times it's just our account and our impressions of what's happening and what we see everyday. I think it's very useful for the readers or viewers or whoever to hear that, and I think it's become much more acceptable nowadays to engage in that, and Twitter is where the majority of it happens.

H Lindsay Jones interview transcript from March 2, 2011

Kyle Sears: First of all, give me some biographical information about your position at the paper and a little about your experience.

Lindsay Jones: I have been at the Denver Post for almost three years. I started here in June of 2008. I spent five years before that working at the Palm Beach Post in South Florida. I covered education there. I covered high school sports, and then I covered the University of Florida. I lived in Gainesville for the last year-and-a-half while I worked at the Palm Beach Post covering the Gators. I was there during their second national basketball championship and during Tim Tebow's Heisman year. Then I got the job here in Denver, and I've been here ever since. I actually grew up in Colorado, so I was getting to come home, and I actually went to college at Emory in Atlanta.

K: Tell me when you first began using Twitter as a part of your journalistic routine.

L: It was actually that first summer. It was the summer of 2008. This was kind of like before Twitter was big at all. So it was my first time at the paper, and my bosses said, "Oh, we've got this Twitter thing, and we want you to send updates from training camp." But I had no idea what it was. They were saying, "Oh, it's a way for people to get updates to their phones." So, basically it was a couple of times at practice if something big happened, if there was a big play, if somebody got hurt, you would text the messages. You would text like 40404 I think is what it was at the time. You would text to that number and say, "Champ Bailey sprained his ankle," or whatever the case may be, and it would get sent out there. I thought it was a real waste of time. I thought, "Who out there would care to get updates from training camp sent to their phone? That's ridiculous. It's a waste of time. It's eating up my text messaging." I remember telling my bosses, "Look, if you're going to make me text, I would like if you would pay for my text

messages." And then I kind of did it periodically throughout the 2008 season with the text messaging. I would send out stuff during games, maybe once a quarter or once a half—"The Broncos scored three touchdowns in the second quarter and lead the Chiefs 21-7," or whatever. But then sometime during that offseason, like spring of 2009, it was pretty close to the draft actually that I decided I needed to get more involved, and I found more people getting involved. I was hearing more about Twitter. So I revamped the Broncos account. At that time, it was called @denverbroncos, because our web people at the Denver Post had gotten that name in the summer of 2008, long before anybody with the actual Denver Broncos thought to get that name. So I tweeted in April through the draft, the whole offseason, training camp, all of that stuff that year, and then I guess it was late in the 2009 season, the Broncos like came after me and said basically, "You can't use that name anymore." So I changed the name, and by that time a lot of the names that had to do with the Broncos were already taken, so it became @PostBroncos, and that's what it's been for the last two years now. It's just become such a huge part of my daily beat-writing life, especially during the season. During training camp, it's constantly sending out updates. From practice, I live-tweet press conferences, basically. But it also auto-feeds out our stories and that kind of stuff. When I started three years ago, I couldn't have imagined how much it would've changed in that short amount of time.

K: Tell me about how your thoughts about it have changed. You talked about how you thought, "Why would anybody want this information?," when you first tweeted from your cell phone. How have your thoughts changed since then?

L: Now, I can't imagine doing my job without it. It's really hard for me to imagine my day-to-day responsibilities without it. It's changed it that much. It changes the way that I get my own news, the way that I get stories from other people, the way that I learn about what's going on

around the league. It's not my first stop anymore to go to ESPN.com or even ProFootballTalk.com, which I go to a lot. But Twitter is my first destination. I have the TweetDeck up on my computer. I'm a true believer. I think there are a lot of maybe more old-school journalists that have been slow to embrace it. But I'm 29, so I'm kind of right in the generation that's maybe adapting more quickly to all of this technology. I barely remember a time before the internet. I remember before Facebook. I was in college before Facebook. I do know other writers who have commented or even sent me messages like, "Oh, Twitter is dumbing down our business and blah, blah, blah." Well, yeah, OK, maybe it is. I think it can be dangerous. I think there is probably a lot more irresponsible journalism going on because of the immediacy of Twitter. But at the same point, it's the way that everybody is doing business, and if you're not going to do it, you're going to get left behind, and you're not going to get the eyeballs. I've got like 13,000-something followers right now, and that's not anywhere close to our subscription numbers or anything like that, but that's still a lot of people who are getting my updates. And hopefully a significant number of those people are clicking our links and going to our site. It's also exposure for myself. I'm one of three beat writers who cover the Broncos at my paper, and I've been told about two weeks ago, I was the one who maintained our Twitter account. Obviously, it got me a lot of exposure and connections with other writers and editors and ESPN folks and all that stuff that is positive for my own positive career. It's definitely changed a lot. I definitely didn't see the value early, but I guess now I'd say it's invaluable.

K: Give me a typical day for you using Twitter.

L: I can give you an example of like a day during the season. Let's say it's a Wednesday, which is the big press conference day. So we get out to the facility in the morning, and we have conference calls with the coach and a player from the opposing team for that week. Usually after

that, I'll send out a couple of highlights on Twitter: "Oakland coach Tom Cable says Sebastian Janikowski won't kick this week," or whatever, just a couple of newsworthy nuggets. Then we'll have the press conferences with the Broncos head coach and quarterback, and then we'll have a locker room session. So during the press conferences, I basically sit there with my laptop on my lap or on my desk and live-tweet it. There are people asking questions, and [former coach] Josh [McDaniels] is answering questions. A lot of the stuff would be newsworthy-type stuff: injury updates, somebody's not going to start, somebody's going to start, somebody's playing, not playing, basically press conference highlights. I do the same thing with the quarterback. If there's anything in the locker room, I might tweet a highlight or two from there: "Champ Bailey said that Vincent Jackson is the best receiver in the league today," or something like that. Then we get to watch the first 15 minutes of practices, which is basically enough time to take roll. If somebody's there or not there, that's usually how you can tell if they're going to play or not play. You get to see enough at the beginning of practice that you can tell sometimes if they've made any depth-chart switches, especially with the offensive line. The last couple of weeks of the season, we were paying attention to see if Kyle Orton was taking snaps or if Tim Tebow was getting all of the snaps early in practice. So those are the kinds of things you race back out—since we're not allowed to tweet from the practice field—and send from your phone or go back to the media room and post it. It's definitely a race with the other beat writers, because getting retweeted is kind of a big deal. If I post that Kyle Orton is throwing passes while Tim Tebow is getting all the first-team reps, and I'm the first one to get it, and Adam Schefter, or Pro Football Talk, or one of the major, major sites sees it and retweets it, that's a big deal. That's a lot of people who are crediting me for whatever the news might be. It's a constant stream, and I guess the other side of it would be the interaction with readers. The Broncos fans, in particular, will ask

questions, and I answer questions. During the season, we do that a lot. It's all about engaging with the readers in a way that was unheard of before now. It used to be that you would get emails, actual physical letters, and that still happens, but I think my most direct interaction with readers comes from Twitter. There are people that I talk to all the time. There are people who just will send periodic question. There are people who really hate me, people who really like me, and I try to interact with all of them. So that's been really fun. And also, I guess, that kind of shapes my coverage, because I get a better sense of what people want to read about, what type of stories they're interested in, what stories they want to see, what stories they don't want to see. I don't always listen because sometimes people are like, "Oh, I don't want to hear about Jay Cutler anymore." Well Jay Cutler's still a pretty big NFL story, and I know you don't care because he's not a Bronco anymore. But he's still a big story, so I'm still going to write about Jay Cutler. On game days, I do a lot of tweeting. I actually wrote a piece for the Harvard Nieman Reports back last fall about tweeting and how Twitter's kind of changed the beat. I wrote that the day after a game, and I went back and counted, I think, 120-something tweets during the course of a game, from the pregame stuff to the postgame quotes. So I'll tweet stuff before the game, behind-the-scenes type stuff that's going on during warm-ups. People will go crazy for that stuff, like they want to know what uniform the team is wearing, so I'll say, "The Broncos are wearing their orange jerseys today." I'll maybe tweet the inactives. Then I kind of just do a running commentary from the game via Twitter, kind of a live chat, or whatever, which is where I engage with the readers. And then after the game, I just post a lot of quotes from the press conferences, from the locker room. I get the best things out there right away, so people don't have to wait for the full story. They can get the little nuggets.

K: Talk to me a little about a couple of uses of Twitter, and we've already hit on these, so maybe just add anything you want to add. The first is as a source of information, from athletes, from coaches, from fans. How does Twitter compare to the other sources you have available?

L: It's definitely a source of information, both good and bad. I think we've seen this offseason, the Broncos have been so proactive. They've been so different from any professional team or college program that I've seen in using Twitter to break their own news. They've been kind of their own source. So, as soon as John Elway hired as the new front-office executive, they opened up a Twitter account that was @JohnElway, and then he personally updated via his Twitter account the coaching search, saying, "These are the guys we're bringing in," "This interview went well," "We're excited to meet this guy," whatever. That is completely unheard of. Usually if you're covering a coaching search, you're tracking plane tail numbers and super-off-the-record sources about who's coming in and when they're interviewing. They keep it so super hush-hush-hush, and if you want to find out anything about these guys, you've got to go to the airport and stake them out at the airport, because they've got to fly in somehow. You know what days they're coming in, so you just wait and talk to them in the airport, which we still do all these things too. But he was getting all this information out and using Twitter as a primary way of doing so. The team used Twitter to announce that they fired Josh McDaniels, to announce that they hired John Fox, to announce last week that they resigned Champ Bailey to a four-year extension. It's just completely unheard of in the NFL, where the teams try to be so super-secretive about everything. It's been pretty crazy. It's been weird from a beat-writer perspective, because we want to break all the stories. I don't want the team releasing the information. We want to be the ones who are the authority on breaking the information. But at the same time, it's also nice to have the official confirmation right there, because there are things that we've

definitely been ahead of, with a lot of the coaching candidates for example. We would say, "John Fox is coming to interview this week," and then six hours later, John Elway would say, "We're excited to bring John Fox in for an interview," and actually give on-the-record confirmation, which we used to never really get. They've been very upfront and proactive about the way that they've handled their social media strategy, and I think a lot of that—and they're not saying this—is to try and counteract the super-secretive regime that they had under Josh McDaniels. So in my case, there's a lot of stuff coming from the team, but on the other side, there is also stuff coming from the players directly. You sometimes learn things that you wouldn't know. You sometimes see guys say things that they probably shouldn't about partying or women or drinking or whatever the case may be. Or you see guys like Tim Tebow who use their Twitter account generally as promotion for where he's going to be for his fundraising efforts and commercial appearances and book tour and Jockey commercials and all that kind of stuff. It's definitely a way to keep track of the guys, and it's also a way for the guys to kind of connect more directly with the fans than they did before.

K: Talk to me now a little about how Twitter plays a role as an outlet for your own content. How does it compare to outlets like the print edition, the website, and others?

L: We tweet out the links to all of our stories, all of our NFL, Broncos-related stories, blogs, columns. We have links back to our site, so the hope is that somebody's primary news source right now might be Twitter. So if they're a Broncos fan who is living in California and they're not getting the Denver Post delivered, they'll see the links to our stories and click through to our site. That's the goal. Then, I guess it's constantly evolving about how we break news, where we break news, if we're allowed to break news on Twitter, if we need to have it on our site first or link back to our site first. It's kind of been an ever-evolving process, and our editors obviously

want everything on our site first, but sometimes that's not exactly feasible. Because Twitter is instantaneous, I can type directly from my fingers and it goes out to over 13,000 people immediately. If I send it to our web editor, it might take 20 minutes for somebody to look at it and format it and stick it up on our site and all that kind of stuff. So that's kind of a challenge that we're going through and sometimes butting heads between the people who are doing the reporting and the writing with the people who are in the office. We definitely have a box on the Denver Post sports page that has my Twitter feed. In the paper, we'll also put, "Check out live updates from Broncos reporter Lindsay Jones @PostBroncos," so we try to compliment it all, but obviously, the priority is the print product and DenverPost.com. You kind of have to try to adhere to the same standards that you would for the print edition or the website. Twitter's a little bit more user-friendly, and you can have more personality, interact more.

K: Do you see any other important uses besides as a source and as an outlet for content?

L: I guess the other one that I kind of already mentioned would be engaging with readers. I think those are the three goals—to break news, to provide some type of discussion, and then also engaging. I've gotten stories from Twitter. I've gotten sources. I've put out, "Hey, I need to talk to some season-ticket holders about so-and-so issue. Direct message me if you want to talk." Also, we went to London last year for the Broncos game, and I was looking for Broncos fans who live in the U.K., and I put out a Twitter message, and I had 15 or so people respond and say, "I live in Scotland, and I'd love to talk to you," or, "I live in Ireland," or whatever. I've definitely gotten sources that way. I've gotten to know some Broncos fans and gotten more perspective that way. So I think that's a very important aspect of Twitter that you don't really get from the traditional media forms.

K: Talk to me about how you feel Twitter has impacted the decision-making process involved in the work of a professional sports journalist.

L: It's definitely tricky, because it's so immediate. There's that race to be first, and with Twitter, it makes it even easier to put stuff out there. I think there are a lot of people that probably use it in different ways. I know I mentioned earlier that there's that irresponsible journalism where you can kind of just throw stuff out there and hope that it sticks, and there are a lot people who do that. But I think most beat writers, people who work for print, or ESPN.com, or Yahoo.com, or some of the main places adhere to traditional standards. But it's so crazy, the world out there. Anybody can put something out there, and it will catch fire, and then I'll get 1,000 emails, and then I'll get emails from my boss saying, "Well, we heard that Tim Tebow had a beer at the Nuggets game." And I'm like, "Where did this come from?," and he's like, "It came from some fan's Twitter." And I'm like, "Let's verify the story first. Let's go through this whole process and do it right." Like I mentioned, I think the most important thing is to always keep your journalism standards in place regardless of what form and remember that when I'm tweeting, I'm still representing the Denver Post, and what I do needs to represent myself well as a journalist, represent my paper correctly. I need to make sure what I'm putting out there is accurate, that I'm spelling names correctly, that I'm not making incorrect assumptions, all the kind of stuff that you would do if you were putting up a story on the website or writing a story for the newspaper. And I don't know that everybody does that. There have definitely been instances where maybe you know something, and you haven't authorized the source. Well then, I'm not going to put it out on Twitter yet, or I'm going to wait and find out for sure. Then there's also decision-making involved in when do we tweet things. Is this a viable source? Like, if Adam Schefter writes something, I feel pretty confident that I can retweet it. If it's something from Bleacher Report,

I'm going to double-check it probably before I go ahead and say, "Send that story." Probably more often than not, I'm not going to retweet something from that kind of a source. Ideally, I think our editors want us to get something confirmed on our own before we retweet it out. It's different when John Elway says, "We've hired John Fox as head coach." I don't have to go and get confirmation from the team. That is the confirmation from the team. But let's say Adam Schefter reports that the Broncos have cut a player or the Broncos have signed a player, we'll probably go and get our own independent confirmation before just retweeting his report. We'll say, "The Denver Post has confirmed that Jamal Williams has signed," or whatever the case may be. I think the decision-making process is pretty standard for what we do everywhere else, although with Twitter we get a little more freedom to have a little more fun, as well. I honestly haven't really had the conversation with my bosses about if they think I do too much fun stuff or interacting or joking around or something like, but I haven't had any complaints yet, so I'm just going to kind of keep doing what I'm doing until I'm told not to.

K: We've already covered a lot of the benefits and also the pitfalls that are involved with using Twitter as a journalism tool. Are there any others that you want to mention?

L: I guess the biggest pitfall is just being very careful about what information is out there, making sure that you're reading the right information. And I guess another pitfall of it is that I don't know how often people are actually clicking links that they see on Twitter, beyond getting their news in 140-character bytes and reading headlines, instead of actual content. I can see that as being kind of dangerous in just getting the news that you want, instead of the full story with the full context. I can't tell you how many times I've written a full story that's on our website or in the paper or even if it's just a blog post, and just the headline comes up, and I get 100 responses about the headline asking questions that are answered in the story. I'm like, "Click the

link, read the story to get those answers." Maybe it might be making some people lazy in terms of how much they read or where they're getting their news from or that type of thing. At the same time, it's another way to be getting yourself out there, and I can't control how people necessarily use it. I guess maybe the other benefit is that a lot of times it's fun. I definitely enjoy it. I enjoy the interaction with my colleagues, with sports writers around the country. I enjoy talking to Broncos fans and Denver Post readers and following people—actors and actresses and sports figures and politicians, and all of that kind of stuff that I'm interested in personally outside of my job. It's definitely fun and time-consuming and time-wasting.

K: Do you think that this discussion of the marriage of sports journalism and Twitter easily extends to other types of journalism?

L: I'm sure it extends to politics and news reporting and stuff like that. The thing about Twitter and sports journalism, I think, is kind of the insatiable desire sports fans have for their information, the way that they team up for their teams and their favorite players. They're probably more obsessive about it than people are about their local governments or whatever it may be. I think it's been a pretty interesting form for journalists across beats. Not to say our Denver Post news Twitter feeds and politics feeds and stuff aren't important, because I think they definitely have been very active in getting the breaking news out there like, "There's been a shooting at this building downtown," or, "There's a traffic accident," or, "There's a blizzard and a power outage," or whatever it might be. But I don't think you're going to get the interaction and the crazy, passionate fan or reader interaction that we get with Broncos fans or whatever the case may be.

K: Do you see the impact that Twitter's having lasting long-term?

L: Yeah, I think so. Maybe when it first got going, you kind of thought, "Maybe this is just a fad," but I don't really see how we go back after this. It's been pretty revolutionary. It might not always exist in this format. I mean, five or six years ago, MySpace was the big deal, and then it became Facebook, and then it became Twitter, and next year, it might be something completely different. But the general precedent is going to remain, and it's only going to keep getting bigger, whatever the form might be, whether it's some new site or some new social media. Social media as a whole is not going away in the way that we do our business, the way that we get our news, break our news, all that kind of stuff. I don't see it going away at all, and we'll probably be having these discussions in 10 or 15 years, thinking about the early days and how primitive all of this stuff was, maybe like we're talking about the mid-90's and posting stuff online. That's just the way that it's going, and I don't really see it going away at all, which is kind of the argument I have sometimes with some of my colleagues who are resistant to it is, "Well, get with or don't. But I think you're only hurting yourself if you don't."

K: Do you see the work across the field as being enhanced, or reduced, or remaining the same as Twitter as risen as a journalistic tool?

L: That's a good question, but a tough one at the same time, because it's kind of hard to generalize. I think that there are a lot of people out there doing really quality work and hopefully Twitter is being a way to showcase that quality work that's going on in newspapers and magazines and the websites—Yahoo and ESPN and AOL Fanhouse and all those types of places. I hope that it's just disseminating these good stories out to a wider audience. I hope that if I'm writing a story people beyond Denver are seeing it now because of Twitter. It might get linked other places. But at the same time, there's probably a lot more irresponsible stuff that's going on and shorter, quicker, less context stuff going on, as well. The other thing too is that the more

demand that journalists have, they're not getting anymore time, so maybe there is a case of being asked to do too much, and you're not spending as much time doing the big stories and stuff because you're having to blog and tweet and post 16 web updates per day and whatever. But that's kind of the way this business is. I think there is still a lot of quality work, and I'm not really sure how much Twitter impacts that. I don't think it's really changed the way we report necessarily, other than who gets more sourcing. I think it's just really changed more the way that the news is disseminated.

K: You've mentioned John Elway's Twitter feed and other personal examples. Do you have any other anecdotes or examples from your Twitter feed that you feel like maybe exemplify the relationship between Twitter and sports journalism or any aspect of that?

L: What the Broncos are doing is really interesting. When Tim Tebow joined Twitter last fall—and the same thing happened when John Elway joined in February—it was just crazy the way that their followers exploded. Tim Tebow joined at say four o'clock in the afternoon and by 10 o'clock at night, he had 800,000 followers or something just insane like that. It was pretty crazy to watch. I don't know the exact numbers. So it makes my 13,500 or whatever seem so miniscule. It's like, "Who cares what I'm writing when Tim Tebow can write, 'Hi, world,' and have 800 retweets and 1,000,000 followers?" It's just crazy. That was pretty funny to watch. It just seems like every story is somehow linked to Twitter or social media, every big story that's happened in the last two or two-and-a-half years. So it's hard to single out just one.

K: Do you have any other comments or anything else you'd like to say about this relationship between Twitter and sports journalism?

L: No. I think we covered it all pretty good.

I Colin Stephenson interview transcript from March 2, 2011

Kyle Sears: Tell me a little about your role at the paper and your years of experience.

Colin Stephenson: At the paper, I'm currently assigned to cover the Nets, which is generally a travel-everywhere assignment, although I didn't go to London with the team. They're in London this week, and they have a couple of games Friday and Saturday. Ordinarily, I go to all the games and travel and all that. Prior to that, I was a general-assignment, fill-in person for the better part of 10 years or so. I was covering college basketball at Seton Hall, but then I switched off after 2000 and basically was a general-assignment guy who filled in for everything. I've had beats on and off in the interim. In '04 and '05, I did the Knicks for half a season. In '05 and '06, I did the Rangers, which is the NHL team. I did that a little bit in '06 and '07, as well. And then, just before I got on the Nets beat actually, I was the back-up on the Jets beat, because people left, and we had some shuffling. So I was backing up on the Jets beat. That was my thing, and then, again, there was some more shuffling, and I ended up on the Nets. So this is my first season covering the Nets, but I've been in the business a long time. Overall, I've been at the Star-Ledger since December of 1997, and prior to that, I was at the New York Daily News. I covered hockey at the New York Daily News. I covered the New York Islanders as a beat guy for like five years. And then prior to that I worked at the Asbury Park Press. I covered hockey at the Asbury Park Press. And I started off at a small paper in New Jersey called The Courier News in Bridgewater, which is a 50,000-circulation daily. I did high schools there. I'm in the newspaper business since 1987. I'm in the sports writing business since 1989. So I've seen a lot of changes, mostly in technology and how we do things. When I started, we did have the old Radio Shack laptops. That's what everybody used in the beginning, and then we started using real laptops after a

while. So I went from that to where we are today. Obviously, we had no internet, no Twitter, and all that kind of stuff when I started.

K: Tell me a little about why you began using Twitter as part of your routine. Was it something that grew out of personal interest, or something that maybe some of your colleagues or bosses were encouraging you to do?

C: It definitely wasn't my choice. That's kind of the way it is now. You kind of have to be on Twitter, especially if you're on a beat. It's essential because the way it is now people are putting their stuff out on Twitter, so if you want to stay on top of what's going on you need to be on Twitter. I found it invaluable just recently in the NBA All-Star weekend when all the trade rumors about Carmelo Anthony were going on. I did not go to the All-Star game, so I was in New Jersey, and the Nets owner and general manager went out there, and Carmelo Anthony was out there. So there was a lot of stuff happening in Los Angeles, and I was in New Jersey, so Twitter was the way I kind of kept up on that stuff. And the story changed so often—the elements of the story—whether it was the Daily News reporting that Anthony had met with James Dolan on Thursday night or ESPN reporting that Anthony had met with the Nets contingent on Saturday night. There were all these things. The story was changing so fast, and Twitter was essential. That's how I kept up with what was going on.

K: How long have you been using Twitter?

C: I created a Twitter account just when I started covering the Jets, which would have been at some point after the season started, I think, sometime in September, I guess. And if I wasn't covering the Jets, I wouldn't have done it. When I was a general-assignment reporter, I didn't see any need to be on Twitter, because I wasn't necessarily responsible for anything. I'd get an assignment—go cover this team's practice or go cover that team on this day—and I would just

go, and I would just be responsible for that assignment. I didn't see a need to get on it as a general-assignment guy. But as a beat guy, and when I was on the Jets, being around that team everyday, the beat reporter now is a young girl—Jenny Vrentas—who, of course, is much more familiar with Twitter and has been on Twitter for a long time. So I saw her using it all the time, and all the football writers were using it all the time, tweeting this and tweeting that. So I kind of kept up with it, and I kind of felt like I had to get on it at that time. Up until that point, I refused.

K: Tell me a little about a typical day for you using Twitter. When do you get up and start using it and how do you use it and when are you finished at night using it? Because lot of reporters have told me how it begins to consume your day if you use it a lot.

C: I would agree with that. I actually don't like it. I feel like I'm a slave to Twitter oftentimes. I need to just buy in and give up and stop being a baby about it and just do it. But these guys—it's the first thing they do whenever they turn their computer on, and I, for whatever reason, just can't bring myself to do that. I feel like when I turn on my laptop, the first thing I want to do is check my email. Then I want to check the newspaper's website. Then I want to check all the sites that I usually check. Then if I have work to do, I want to do work. But the last thing I want to do is put Twitter on, because Twitter all of a sudden just dominates everything, and it distracts me from what I want to do. I really don't want to do it, but I have to do it. Everybody else is into it pretty much. As soon as they open their computers, that's what they do—they open up their little TweetDeck and see what's going on first, and then they do all that other stuff. I'm still struggling with coming to grips with that and accepting the fact that this is how it is these days: You use Twitter first and then the website and then the newspaper. It does dominate. You kind of feel like you get up in the morning and literally you get out of bed, you turn on the computer, and you put on Twitter, and you're getting tweets every few seconds all day. And finally, you go to bed, and

that's what it is. It really kind of dominates my life. We've always worked in a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week business, but never more so than now with Twitter. It's a necessary evil. I don't know what you can do. You can't put the genie back in the bottle. You can't not do it, but I really don't like it.

K: Next I want to talk about a couple of different uses of Twitter and how you see Twitter comparing to other ways you could achieve the same goals. First, using Twitter as a source of information from athletes, coaches, even the fans, how does Twitter work in that way and how does it compare to the other sources that you have available?

C: I don't like it, but it's necessary, right? I follow Carmelo Anthony, and I follow pretty much all the guys on the team that I cover, because you never know when they're going to say something that is of use to you. When Derrick Favors was traded by the Nets to Utah for Deron Williams, he tweeted that day, and that's how I got a response from Derrick Favors because I didn't get him on the phone. It is a source of information. Guys do tweet stuff, but you still do have to do your reporting, so when somebody tweets something—when somebody from ESPN or Yahoo Sports or one of our direct competitors tweets something—I assume that the reporter has done their work and has reported the story just like you normally would. So when they tweet it as a news item, I know you're legit, right? So it just means that I get it that instant as opposed to waiting for the next day's newspaper to get it, so I get the information faster. So yeah, it's useful. I'm not saying that it's not useful. It keeps me on top of what's going on with the athletes, although most of these athletes are not saying very much. But it's still access and something that's good to have.

K: Next, talk to me a little about Twitter as an outlet for your own content. One of the big deals with Twitter is the brevity of it, so how does it compare as an outlet to the website, the blog, or even the hard copy of the paper?

C: Again, as I told you in the email, I'm kind of old-school and still slow to kind of develop this, but it's good. I mean, it's more work. You get the news out there in 140 characters. You have to make maybe two or three tweets to get something out, and then you go blog, and then you write. I'm actually still coming to terms with that sort of routine. I always think in an old-school newspaper reporter kind of way, "I don't want to put this out there so everybody sees it until I can nail it down and write it and get it 100-percent cold," and that's getting me in trouble to be honest with you, not major trouble. But we're competing to get stuff up five seconds before the next guy. I'm not getting in up first. Let's say four of us or five of us are in a group-interview setting, and we all get the same stuff. Well, I'm going to go back to my laptop and start writing that for my newspaper's website, for the blog. Somebody else is going to tweet it. So I see this guy tweeting something I already know, and now I have to tweet it, but, of course, I got it up second, or third, or fourth, as the case may be. So really I need to retrain myself to tweet first and then blog, whereas my instincts are to blog it as quickly as I can and not tweet it, because I don't want to alert the other reporters who are following me that I have this information. I'm struggling with dealing with it, and I really have to adjust my thinking differently so that I tweet first and not blog first. Other guys do it much better than me. I guess what I'm trying to say is they're much more familiar with it, much more comfortable with it, and much better at it than I am. I will say this also, the internet guys—the guys who write for ESPN.com and YahooSports.com and whatever other .com's there are—they don't also have the newspaper story to think about. They're doing two steps: first they tweet it and then they write it for their

site. Me, I've got to tweet it, write it for the website, and then kind of write a different version of it, a later version of it, a forward-spinning version of it for the next day's newspaper. And I do work for the newspaper. I'll call my copy desk, and they're always thinking about the newspaper. They're on deadline. They've got to get it in by a certain time, and so I've got to get it to them by a certain time. But I have to tweet it first and then blog it and then get it to them by a certain time, so it's complicated, but I really need to just sell out and do it, because this is what it is.

K: Do you see any other important uses of Twitter besides the two we talked about—as a source and as an outlet for your own content?

C: For me, no. When I first started seeing people use Twitter one or two years ago, a lot of times it was funny lines and stuff and you had real news, real sort of breaking, important stuff. And now people are on there all the time, and so I wish there was a way to filter it where I could only get the important stuff and not the silly stuff, because people can tweet whatever they want to tweet. The thing that bothers me most is that you live in fear, you live in dread that somebody's going to break a story on Twitter and you're going to have to drop what you're doing immediately and chase that story. You're sitting there, and you're trying to write a story or whatever, and it takes you that much longer to write the story because every second there's a tweet and you have to stop what you're doing and look and make sure it's not an important thing. Most of the time, of course, it's not relevant to what you're doing, and it doesn't make you stop, but you do stop for a few seconds to read it, and it's difficult to keep your focus and write your story. What other people have told me is maybe I follow too many people, but as a guy who has been a general-assignment guy and has multiple interests, I can't help that. I have to follow the football people. I have to follow the basketball people. I have to follow the baseball people. I've

got soccer and ice hockey that I'm interested in, as well, so I'm following a lot of people, so I get a lot of tweets that I have to check out. So I wish that it was just all about news, but it's not. Unfortunately, there's a lot of observation and other things that people put out there that I just don't have the time for, frankly. For my purposes, Twitter is an important source of news, and I wish there was just some way—I don't know that there's a way to do it—that I could filter the actual news from the junk and stuff like that.

K: I think we've already covered this, but my next question involves how Twitter is impacted the decision-making process, not only personally, but also for journalists across the country who are using it.

C: It does, and the main thing is it forces you to speed everything up. I'll put it like this—in my situation, at my newspaper that I work for, we have a very strict sourcing policy. When we use anonymous sources, our policy is very strict, and other newspapers and other news outlets don't have policies nearly as strict. So what happens is some guy from a competing newspaper can talk to some person, any person—a player, an assistant coach, a scout, an agent, a general manager, whatever—and they if they get a piece of information, they can put it out there and say, "A source said X, Y, Z." I can't do that. For me to use anonymous information, I have to run it by my sports editor who has to run it by our editor-in-chief who has to clear it before I can use it. So it puts me at a huge disadvantage. When I get something, in the world of Twitter where you're talking about seconds—getting something up one minute before the next guy or 30 seconds before the next guy—I'm at a huge disadvantage, because if I talk to somebody and I get some information and I want to put it up there right away, I can't do it. First, I have to get a hold of my sports editor, and then he's got to get a hold of somebody else, and then somebody has got to make the call and give me authorization to put that information out without attributing it to

someone. Let's say I speak to a player or a team executive or somebody at 11 o'clock at night after a game, and I want to put this information out there. I've got to wake up my sports editor who has got to wake up the editor-in-chief. Well, the sports editor may be making the call, but I've still got to wake him up if he's already at home with his family, so I can't just put it out there. It puts me at a disadvantage, because the guy next to me doesn't have to do that. The guy next to me can just say, "A source said." I find that a lot of times, even if I know something, even if I've found out some information. Let's say—and this has happened a couple of times—I've found out some information from a source, an assistant coach or whoever, and somebody else found out the same information from the same guy or a different guy, and they put it out there. I can't even respond to that, so what I have to do is I have to wait for that guy to put it out there, and then I have to credit him. You follow what I'm saying? Let's say there's a trade or something, and I found out about it about the same time as one of my competitors. Now I have to go through the sourcing rigmarole that I have to go through. And a lot times they won't even rubber-stamp stuff, so it's not like as soon as I get a hold of my sports editor, he's just going to say, "Go with it." A lot of times with a particular source, the particular information that I'm getting from this source is not something that we want to put out as anonymous, so he'll say, "No, you can't use that." So what I end up doing is I end up having to credit somebody else for breaking a story that I also could have broken. So in terms of decision-making, what Twitter forces you to do puts me at a disadvantage because it forces you to speed up the decision-making. This guy tweeted something. Should we retweet it? Is it true? Can we confirm that? You want to react to everything, and in my case, I'm at a complete disadvantage, because even if I confirm something that's out there, I might not get the authorization to go with it, and then I end up having to credit this guy's stuff. So it puts pressure on you, Twitter does. As I told you, it was

invaluable to me during the All-Star week, but I'm kind of torn on it. I mean, I understand the value of it, but at the same time, it makes me feel like I'm working every second of every day.

K: I think we've also covered a lot of this, but if you have any other benefits that you think Twitter provides to sports journalists or pitfalls that you want to discuss.

C: One of the benefits that I guess I haven't talked about is that it allows you to get some of your own personality out there, because you are a little bit more loose, and if you are a witty person, you can get a lot of that wit out there. If I'm covering a Nets game, I'll tweet during a game, and I'll try to tweet some offbeat things. If they're showing somebody from the Jersey Shore cast up on the video board, I'll tweet about that, or if the senior citizen dance team is out there and they're doing a good job, I'll tweet about that. So it does allow you to kind of, as a writer and a person, reveal a little bit of your personality to your followers, because you might have a funny line that you put out there to make somebody laugh. That's good, I suppose. Isn't it?

K: Right. As far as pitfalls, do you have any others that you haven't mentioned yet that Twitter offers?

C: The main pitfall, of course, is that if somebody, in a rush to get something out, is wrong, then we're all going to be wrong, because somebody got a piece of information and misinterpreted it, or—and we found this to be true with the Carmelo Anthony thing—I can tell you the New Jersey-based Nets media really felt like we were used by all kinds of people to get all kinds of messages out there. We were sort of misdirected a little bit, and Twitter just kind of enhances that. So if somebody somewhere gets a shred of information and tweets it, then the rest of us have to chase that down, follow it, check it out, and a lot of times the people that you're talking to—they're on Twitter also. So maybe they saw it. And it becomes like wildfire until somebody gets a hold of the one guy who says, "That's not true," or, "That's not quite accurate," or

whatever. It can take a bunch of people in the wrong direction, because it just moves so fast. People will just tweet, and then everybody just assumes it's true, and they just keep going on that assumption until somebody else proves them wrong, but you can go in the wrong direction for a long time before that happens. That's a danger of trying to get stuff out too fast, but that's always been a danger. Even before there was the internet, when we were just writing for the newspaper, that was always a danger. You get one source, and you want to beat your competitor, and you want to get it in tomorrow's paper as opposed to the next day's paper. That can happen too. But with the speed, obviously, you have a greater chance of being wrong, and that's not a good thing.

K: Next, your initial thoughts when you began using Twitter and how have those thoughts changed up until now?

C: As I've told you, I didn't want to do it. When I got on Facebook—and I didn't want to do Facebook either for a long time—it became a social thing for me, and I was OK with that, and then somebody says to me, "Follow me on Twitter." I didn't want to do that, because I felt like there are too many things now that I have to manage. So I've got to do Twitter, but I've got to do Facebook, and I've got to check email, and it's just too much. So that was why I didn't want to do it. As I've told you also, now that I'm doing it, it was invaluable to me, and so I understand why I need to do it. I also understand—and this is my own problem—that I just need to sell out and accept it and stop being a baby about not wanting to do it. It is what it is. I can't say I don't want to do it. It's just part of the deal, and I've just go to do it. My attitude is changing—perhaps not quickly enough—to where I just need to embrace it instead of resenting it.

K: Do you see Twitter having a long-term impact on professional journalism and professional sports journalism?

C: Yeah. I don't see how it couldn't. Obviously, we keep coming up with new things, and I imagine there is going to be something else that will come along that will kind of supersede it. But I think it's having an impact now, and I think it will have a long-term impact. I can't see how it wouldn't. With the whole thing with Egypt and a lot of that stuff, Twitter kind of spread the word faster and got people more involved, I think. So it's had an impact already, and I don't see what would change to roll that back, unless something else—some other new idea—comes out that is better and faster than Twitter. You can't put the genie back in the bottle. This is our life now. This is what it is.

K: Do you feel that the particulars of Twitter lend themselves to sports journalism particularly, or do you feel that most of the discussion that we've had translate to any type of journalism?

C: I think it translates to any type of journalism. But I think probably with sports journalism—because the readers are more familiar, by in large, with the reporters that are covering their teams and such—it lends itself to fans of a certain team following the reporter that covers that team or covers that sports. I don't know that people who live in New York City are necessarily going to follow the reporter who covers the New York City Board of Education for The New York Times. I don't think that people have that connection with the reporters who cover news the way they do with the reporters who cover sports, maybe because it's more concentrated and stuff. When I covered hockey, I knew that people who liked the team that I covered, they all knew who I was. Before I was a sports writer, I covered news as a young reporter out of college. I don't know who the people that read the story everyday in the newspaper bothered to read the byline everyday. I don't know that the people who were reading about Hillsborough Township Board of Education knew that Colin Stephenson was the guy who covered Hillsborough Township. I don't think that they read the byline. But the people when I covered the New York Islanders for the Daily News,

everybody who read about the Islanders in the Daily News knew who I was. So I think that connection that sports writers have with the fans of the teams they cover is a much closer connection, and so I think it lends itself more to things like Twitter. Because now it's easy for a Nets fan to follow me, because they know I cover the Nets, and they'll get updates on the Nets or observations or whatever. So I think it works for sports writing, but I think it works too in that I follow The New York Times and the Washington Post, so I get little stories every now and then that they'll tweet out, maybe a few a day that will oftentimes make me click on the link and read the story. I think it works for everybody.

K: As a whole, in your profession, do you feel like the quality of work has been enhanced, reduced, or remains the same since Twitter has become integrated as a regular tool for journalists?

C: That's a good question. I think the reporting is still as solid as it always was. I haven't found a different way to do it. I still think that we get our information by calling people on the phone or by speaking to people when we see them. So from that standpoint, I don't think the reporting aspect has changed. But Twitter as a tool helps because it adds another source of information, so now I'll find out stuff on Twitter that I didn't know. Oftentimes it helps me, because I can call the source or text the source and say, "Hey, so-and-so just tweeted X, Y, Z. Do you have a comment?," or "Can you tell me if this is true?" I don't know if it makes the reporting better. I don't think it makes it worse. But I think what it does do is it makes it so nobody gets left out. Like I didn't go to Los Angeles, but I was still able to write everyday on the Carmelo Anthony trade saga with the Nets, not because I was rewriting stuff that I saw on Twitter, but because a lot of times I was able to see stuff on Twitter and be able to call somebody and say, "So-and-so reported on Twitter. Is it true?" So it helps me do my job, because it made me aware of things I

wouldn't have otherwise been aware of. It's a long-winded answer to your question, but I think it definitely doesn't make reporting worse. I would say the reporting is probably the same, but the amount of news that gets out is probably a little bit enhanced, because now the reporters have access to more information. When someone from Yahoo Sports or ESPN puts something out on Twitter, if I happen to see it, I have access to it, where in the old days I might not have had access to it.

K: You've talked a lot about the recent NBA trade deadline, the Carmelo story, do you have any other anecdotes or personal stories from Twitter that maybe exemplify some of the things we've talked about or just the overall way that Twitter is impacting the profession?

C: The NBA trade deadline, the recent one—obviously I've not done this before—but I'm told it was really crazy. The whole Carmelo thing was completely crazy. But even when the Nets got Deron Williams, I found out about that on Twitter, because the reporter who broke the story—one of my competitors—got it in the morning, and when he tweeted it, that was when I knew, because I happened to be online, and he tweeted it, and I saw it, and he was actually in the room with me. And it sent everybody into action. It's a good thing, I guess. I would've preferred that the reporter had not broken that story. I would've preferred that the source who called him would've called me instead, obviously. But whatever happened, the source called that guy and gave him the story, and he put it on Twitter, and yeah, he broke the story, but I had it posted up five or 10 minutes after he sent out that tweet, so it wasn't really that big of a deal for the people who read my newspaper's website or follow me on Twitter or get their information from me. Maybe they got it 10 or 15 minutes after the other guy's readers got it. So in the end, while it makes my job more hellish, my readers aren't getting killed the way they might have been in the old days. In the old days, if a guy had the scoop in the paper, you had to wait until the next day

before you could address it, chase it, follow it, improve on it. Now, if a guy has the scoop, you can get something up 10, 15 minutes later. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing, because in the newspaper business you want to have the scoop. But now you have the scoop for 10 minutes, as fast as somebody can type something up. So I don't know if that's good or bad, but it is what it is.

K: Do you have any other comments, maybe things that we didn't touch on that address any of your feelings about Twitter?

C: No. I tried to get some of that out there in my answers. I probably over-answered a lot of your questions, because I wanted to get my feelings out there. My feelings are that I don't like it. It makes my job more difficult. But I don't have a choice. It also makes my job easier. I think that the message is just shut up and deal. It is what it is. It's like with any other technological advance, you go from sailing across the ocean from Europe to America, to now you can fly, there's no point in sitting there and saying, "Well, in the old days it was better." It's just what it is. I'm 47 years old. I've still got a few years left in this business, I think, and I can't be spending my time thinking, "I remember the days back when I was young." I've just got to shut up and deal and just be ready for the next technological advancement that comes down the road. And it's hard to imagine what the next thing will be, but that's the way I've always thought through all of these technological advances. What more could come out that's easier, more convenient, faster, better than this? I just don't know. But something will come out. They'll be something else, right?

K: Right.

C: In the next year or two, I'm sure somebody will invent some other way of communicating, and we'll have to jump on that too.

J Adam Thompson interview transcript from February 28, 2011

Kyle Sears: Tell me a little about what you do at The Wall Street Journal and how many years of experience you have.

Adam Thompson: OK. I am the online sports editor, so I run all the sports content on WSJ.com. I've been doing that for three years. I've been at the paper since 2006.

K: Tell me when you began using Twitter as part of your daily routine.

A: Well, we created a Twitter feed, I don't know, a little over a year ago—the @WSJSports handle. But it was pretty much automated at first, so I wasn't really doing much. It was just to get it started. That wasn't going to be enough. I really started using it hands-on this time last year in Vancouver at the Olympics. I was there. There was just so much news coming all the time. It just seemed like a good place to sort of get going with it. Basically, we use it every morning to promote our stuff, as you know, from online, and beyond that, if I see an interesting story over the course of the day, I'll throw it out there. I'll make the occasional sarcastic comment when there's some major event going on that a lot of people are talking about. I guess, first and foremost, it's sort of a vehicle to let people know what we're doing.

K: When you first began using it, was it something that maybe you or one of your colleagues developed a personal interest in, or was it something that came down from the top, like "We need to start creating Twitter accounts for the paper"?

A: No, it was my idea. We brought in a guy who sort of specializes in social media, so I decided to get off my butt and do it after talking to him.

K: Tell me a little bit about how Twitter plays a role in a typical day for you.

A: Probably less for me than a lot of people you might end up talking to. There can be times when all I'll do is get the stories out and not a lot else. Like this time of year, mid-February, it's

kind of a slow news time in sports. I'm not out there all day long with my thoughts. I just have other stuff to do, and I kind of feel like as a user I kind of get a little exhausted when people are on there tweeting something every 10 minutes. I think some people do it well, but others don't, and it just gets a little tiring. Another one that drives me crazy is when people start live-blogging games from their alma mater that probably not that many people care about. I kind of like a little bit more of a less-is-more approach. I probably could be on there a little more, but I'd rather just save it for when I think I have something that is clever to say, instead of just being there for the sake of being there.

K: Next I want to talk about a couple of different ways to use Twitter. First as a source of information from athletes, from coaches, from fans, how do you see it working as compared to other sources that you have?

A: It's amazing. As a source of information, it's the first thing I check in the morning. It is such a more efficient way of getting up to date on what people are talking about each day. I'm much more reliant on media feeds than I am players and coaches. I follow some, but I think a lot of it is either kind of inane stuff, like some guys wake up every morning and say, "Rise and grind," or just answer reader questions that aren't interesting to me, or it's something promotional, and I don't care about that either. It's stunning how quickly I can get a sense of what people I respect are talking about. We have a morning round-up that we do called "The Daily Fix," and whenever we're on the fence about which topic to lead with, Twitter has been a great tiebreaker. It's not a coincidence that since I've started to check the feed every morning, traffic for "The Daily Fix" has gone up, and I don't think those two things are unrelated

K: Secondly, using Twitter as an outlet for journalistic content, how do you see that working as opposed to other outlets available, the website, the print edition, and stuff like that?

A: It's hard to know. You don't get nearly as much data from the print edition. Obviously, we're a giant paper, and lots of people are reading our stuff in print, but you don't know exactly in real time what those numbers are like. I would say Twitter is still not as big as Facebook. You're more likely to get a bump from some story catching fire on Facebook than you are from Twitter, and that doesn't bother me so much. I put stuff on Facebook also. I just like knowing that a lot of people are following me and I'm following a lot of people whose work I respect. Hopefully they respect our work too, and if the right people are talking about it, I don't see how that does anything but help.

K: Do you see any other useful ways to take advantage of Twitter other than the two we just talked about—as a source and an outlet for content?

A: Yeah. I don't actually do much reporting anymore. I used to report, but I'm more of an editor now. But it is sort of a Hail Mary way of reaching someone you're trying to get a comment from. It's probably a pretty low percentage, but all it has to do is work once to be useful.

K: How do you think Twitter has impacted the decision-making of a typical journalist? You said maybe you're not as high on being in front of Twitter all the time.

A: It sort of depends on what kind of stuff you're covering. I used to cover the NBA, and I see a lot of NBA writers who will put some pretty miniscule stuff up there like guys signed to 10-day contracts or somebody fined $5,000 for a technical foul. That's sort of a level of minutia that doesn't really interest me. I'm sorry. I feel like I'm sort of off of the track of your question. What was the question one more time?

K: How do you feel that Twitter has impacted the decision-making of a typical journalist?

A: First of all, I think there's this real conundrum that a lot of them are facing where they're often getting the news out on Twitter before their own sites, which is kind of stunning if you

think about it. You're basically giving to a third party. It benefits you, but not directly, and it benefits from you, from your work. I think that's something that I find that we're still sort of navigating and is a little confusing for people. We do live blogs pretty regularly, and I'm a little confused by people who live-blog and tweet at the same time. It's sort of like you're cannibalizing your own work. It's one thing to go on Twitter and say, "I'm live-blogging right now. Come join me," but if you're making pithy comments in both places, you may be hurting yourself as well as helping. The other major question I have is that it's obviously sort of shooting first and asking questions later. We saw the famous Mike Wise case. You know what I'm talking about, right?

K: Yeah.

A: I guess it wasn't so much him making a piece of commentary directly, but making up a piece of Twitter news just to make a point was a really bad idea, which he was the first to admit. It seems like people are throwing stuff out there well before their own editors would want them to both for reasons of having the scoop to yourself and also because it's not vetted fully. I sort of stumbled through that on my own a little bit with the McNabb thing. I started making some jokes about Donovan McNabb's reported contract with the Redskins before all the details were in, and when the details were in, it really didn't look as bad as people were first saying, and I felt bad about that. I actually tweeted an apology to the Redskins. You've got to know the whole thing before you start commenting on it.

K: I think we've kind of covered some of the benefits and pitfalls of Twitter. Are there anymore of those that come to mind?

A: The time suck. I would say that answer is a benefit and a pitfall. There is never a time now—waiting at the doctor's office or for an airplane or something—when you don't have anything to

read. There is always something to read, because you can always just pop it on your BlackBerry or whatever, and there are writers who you like saying funny and interesting stuff, unless it's three in the morning or something. And then on the other hand, you can sort of get addicted to that and become antisocial and not interact with other human beings while you're checking your Twitter feed all the time.

K: Do you think that the relationship between Twitter and sports journalism is particularly unique, or do you feel like most of the stuff that we've talked about that applies to sports journalism easily translates to any type of journalism?

A: I would say it translates. Obviously, most of my focus is on sports journalism. I have a few other beats that aren't sports related that I follow. But I think most of the same problems affect writers across the board.

K: Tell me a little about your initial thoughts using Twitter and how those thoughts have changed over time.

A: At first, it was sort of a chore. It was just one more little thing you have to do, and now it's very much something I like to do and something I can see the value in.

K: Do you see Twitter having a long-term impact on the practice of sports journalism?

A: That's hard to say. I sort of joke sometimes that it feels like we're sort of on the social media equivalent of the Atari 2600. It's so barebones, and I know that's part of its charm, but I've got to think that there are clever people out there—obviously the people who created Twitter are pretty clever—and they're going to change it in ways that people like, or somebody else is going to come along and improve it. We've seen how quickly these things come and go. I don't think there's any reason to assume that Twitter will be with us 10 years from now. It could be drying out, but it could also be completely off the map.

K: Do you feel like the quality of work in sports journalism is enhanced by the introduction of Twitter, or reduced, or do you think it remains the same?

A: I think for breaking news it has [been enhanced]. I always am finding about breaking news faster, and I also find myself reading more interesting stuff over the course of the day, because I have these 400 people helping to point me in the right direction.

K: You mentioned the McNabb story. Any more personal anecdotes that you may have that emphasize a unique aspect of Twitter or how Twitter is impacting sports journalism as a whole?

A: This isn't really a revolutionary thought, but just the way it sort of gives you a sense of who your audience is and the fact that there is this really wide swath of people following you, especially where we don't really have a region we focus on, although we do have a New York section now. But you've got people from all over the world, from all different professions, different ages, and occasionally people in the field who you're covering who are potentially important sources. That's one guilty pleasure of mine is checking to see who all is following me now, and most of the time, I don't know them, but once in a while I do. I grew up a Knicks fan, and when Charles Oakley starting following me—I'm usually not someone who gets excited about things like that—but that was kind of cool.

K: Do you have any final comments, anything that wasn't provoked by one of the questions or didn't come up in our conversation?

A: No. It seems like we've covered it pretty well. Anything else you want to ask me?

K: That's it, I think.

K Mike Wise interview transcript from February 28, 2011

Kyle Sears: First off, tell me a little about your position at The Post and your years of experience. Give me a little bit of background information there.

Mike Wise: I started at The Post in 2004, and I came from The New York Times where I covered mostly the NBA for mostly 10 years. I covered the Nets, I covered the Knicks for several years, and I was the NBA columnist for most of those years. I did the Olympics. I did some other stuff too, but mostly I was covering the NBA.

K: When did you first start using Twitter as part of your journalistic routine?

M: I started Twittering in, I want to say, spring of 2009.

K: Did you do so out of personal interest, or were you told at the paper, "We'd like you to make a Twitter account"?

M: One of our youngest editors, who is the Capitals' editor, the hockey editor, is very young and very astute in the ways of social media, and she asked if I could do it, and I said, "Alright, sure I'll do it."

K: Tell me maybe what a typical day is like as far as your usage of Twitter.

M: Well, it's never been consistent. I've never been a consistent Twitter user. I go back and forth with it when I'm engaged or when I have something to promote or I feel like seeing what's going on with some of my followers. It's not very consistent. You'll see these huge gaps in usage for me. So whereas I Twittered like crazy during the Super Bowl I covered in Dallas, for the last week, I had off at the radio show and the newspaper, so I didn't use it at all. Then today, I went back to the radio show, and I used it a bunch to promote a Clinton Portis interview we were doing.

K: I noticed, just looking at your Twitter feed, a lot of the tweets that show up now are replies to people. Is that where you see the majority of your tweets coming into play—in conversation with people—or is that just something that just happened to be currently what you were doing?

M: I hate to admit this, but I didn't really know what the mentions thing meant, and so I was sort of one of these ignoramuses where I didn't really know how people were responding to me or who was responding to me. So if I wasn't on, I'd have no idea that somebody was. So lately I've just found out what the mentions thing meant in the last month or so.

K: Next I want to talk about a couple of different uses of Twitter and maybe how you see those being successful or unsuccessful. So first of all, as a source of information from athletes, coaches, fans, etc., how do you see Twitter comparing to other sources that you have?

M: I think the immediacy is unmatched. You can literally see something in real time, within seconds. The immediacy part of it, the get-it-now part of it is seminal in how we look at covering things now in ways good and bad. In the good way, you'll literally find out from somebody's Twitter feed whether Moammar Gadhafi has been toppled, and everything sports-news-related will show up on Twitter often before it shows up on ESPN or in the newspaper or anywhere. So the immediacy part of it is incredible. The bad part of it and the you-need-be-careful part of it is that there is no editor. Just as if you were sending an email, Kyle, to a girl that tore your heart out and stomped on it, you'd be sending it emotionally in real time, and months later you probably might regret sending that. But where you were—in that emotional place you were at the time—you said, "Damn it. I'm going to fire this off." That part of it can be dangerous in many ways. It's almost like you tell people all the time to think about things before you hit the send button, but Twitter doesn't encourage you to pause. It encourages you to be faster, more immediate,

have the snarkiest, quirkiest, or most entertaining tweet there is, because God forbid that someone else beats you to it.

K: I think we've already kind of hit on some of this, but the second use of Twitter I want to talk about is as a source for content. So anything else you want to say maybe about how Twitter compares as a source for your own content to the print edition or the website or other outlets for content?

M: Well, I don't really use Twitter for research in terms of preparing for a story or a radio show. But I find it helpful in the moment if I'm working on something or I'm talking about something on the radio and there's a new development. If a tweet is such that someone is being released, then it will force me to change my topic at the moment and go to the most newsworthy thing. But I still find researched and edited and written stories to be the most effective in terms of research and preparation, because the bottom line is people actually prepare that, and you can only get so many bits of information in 140 characters even if you tweet 20 times.

K: Tell me, other than a source of gaining information and then an outlet for your own content, do you see any other useful ways of interacting with Twitter as a journalist?

M: I think it's like Facebook and maybe some of the other social media in that it can help showing who you are as a person to the people who don't really know who you are behind the byline or as a TV person or a radio host. I think it's helpful with having what I call a more informal dialogue with your readers, your followers. I think in that way it almost personalizes you more, and you're not just the person who forgets to respond to their emails behind the byline. I've also found that the flipside of that one is that by in large when you work for a big news organization, people expect more from you than they do a blogger who's not connected to a larger website. They expect you to be more serious. They expect you to be more credible. And

I think Twitter forces you not to take yourself so seriously. Well, for some of us in this business, we need to understand that why people still pick up the printed newspaper or click us online is because after all the pablum that's out there, they still want real news and serious stuff sometimes, and you can tear down your own brand if you're not careful.

K: We've definitely hit on some of the major benefits of Twitter, as well as the pitfalls, any other of either of those that you want to talk about?

M: I think my own situation in August of last year when I was doing a bit for a radio show and I wrote that Ben Roethlisberger was going to get five games "I'm told," and I did as a social media experiment on the radio show that backfired against me. A major pitfall for me with Twitter was forgetting that—irrespective of my different media jobs—in each one, and specifically The Washington Post, whatever I do in whatever medium reflects on that job. I'm not somehow in an echo chamber when I do the radio show, and I found that out in a painful way after I was suspended for a month for putting out a false tweet with the idea that I was going to make all these other news organizations not research it, just put it out. Yeah it worked, but it was a lousy way to do that experiment.

K: Do you see the relationship between Twitter and sports journalism—and aspects of that relationship—being unique particularly to sports journalism, or do you think that most of the ways that Twitter and sports journalism connect translate to any type of journalism?

M: I think it relates to any kind of journalism now. I will say that food writers can't get their recipe in 140 characters, but sports writers can tell you who was traded in that long, or what they thought of a trade, or their opinion on something. I think it lends itself to sports more than a lot of other parts of journalism because so much of sports is minutia, and really, what is Twitter but minutia?

K: Tell me about your thoughts initially when the editor came to you and said, "Start using Twitter." What were those thoughts, and maybe how have they changed since then?

M: My initial thought was, "Oh, great. They're going to ask me to do something else. This is the modern-day world of journalism in which you're not just a writer anymore. You're a communicator with your audience in ways that have nothing to do with being a wordsmith or a reporter." And so my thinking was not necessarily that it was bad thing, but that it was going to take more time and take me away from other things. My biggest concern still to this day is, "Why would I give away my best lines in a tweet when readers of The Washington Post pay for that in their morning paper?" So I still feel that, and I still hold back a lot. But I've also since then gleaned some more respect for the medium as a genuine news source and also its overwhelming power. More people have read more about my suspension than they probably ever will do if I ever won the Pulitzer Prize, which a sports writer hasn't since—whatever—the Minnesota grade-changing scandal. But even if that ever happened—if I became a foreign correspondent somewhere—I will never be on the Yahoo homepage just because I won the Pulitzer Prize, but I was when I was suspended for screwing up on Twitter. That's sad, but it's also the reality of things.

K: Tell me a little about the situation in August. How do you think that maybe serves as a milestone or a moment along the path to Twitter being recognized as a legitimate tool for sports journalism? Do you feel like, as you said, that was something that was so big that it factored into that equation?

M: Not really. I guess I saw more and more of my colleagues using Twitter and people that I respected, and it wasn't just people trying to get attention and be provocative. It was actually thoughtful people that I respected in the business. And so when I saw them either promoting

their work or gathering their followers, I realized this is the way of the world now. So what do you do? It was more of a can't-beat-'em-join-'em thing. It wasn't sort of some watershed moment in which I saw something in Twitter and said, "Oh, this is tremendous. I need to do this." I also think Twitter will last only as long as its technology isn't outdated. If people began getting mobile apps on their phones and they can give their takes via video in seconds to followers on their phones, I think that Twitter will go the way of MySpace or whatever that other place that used to compete with Facebook was. It'll just sort of be, "It was fun thing for those years, but it's kind of been outdated."

K: As Twitter has risen as a tool for sports journalists, do you see the quality of work in the field as enhanced by it, or reduced by it, or just remaining the same?

M: That's a tough one. I'd say overall it's probably been reduced by it. On one hand, the immediacy has been great. But, for example, I saw a bunch of reporters at a Mike Shanahan press conference not too long ago at Redskins Park in Virginia, and literally, as he was talking, they were tweeting. So if you were writing a story as a beat writer on Mike Shanahan that day, you weren't getting his facial expressions. You weren't asking important follow-up questions that might lead you to a better story about what's really going on. You weren't building a relationship with a person you need to—the head coach of the team—because you were looking at your phone, tweeting some bit of news, and trying to beat your competitor to it. I've seen this time and time again. It's like A.D.D. journalism. It's great and it's immediate, but really after it's over, it's sort of like fast food. There were no nutrients, no vitamins. It was like a McDonald's sundae. It gave you some empty carbs, and it gave you some sugar, but it didn't enrich your journalistic experience.

K: Other than the Roethlisberger tweet situation we've already talked about, do you have any other personal anecdotes from your usage of Twitter that maybe exemplify interesting characteristics of Twitter and how it's impacting sports journalism as a whole?

M: Not really. The casual observation is people with large followings are consistently tweeting or they belong to a large news organization and their followers are dependent on where they work rather than—many of them—their own newsgathering abilities. So with all due respect to Chris Mortensen or Adam Schefter or Jason La Canfora of the NFL Network, if they were the NFL reporter at the Glens Falls Tribune in New York or the Reno Gazette, they would be followed by about 15,000 people rather than—whatever—150,000. It's nice that they have that kind of input and that they've been able to use that to break their stories, but people should think of Twitter like they do a lot of things—it's only applicable as it relates to how much work you put into earning followers and where you work. They never judge people by how they've treated me in my profession since almost 1994, because I got a job at The New York Times, and people treat you different when you work at The New York Times or The Washington Post. I judge people how they treat other people that might not work there. That tells me more about them than how they treat me. So I think people that get upset with their followings—with all due respect to Chad Ochocinco, I mean, if he were a swimmer at the North Baltimore Aquatic Club and he was the fourth guy on Michael Phelps' relay team, nobody would cheer or see his funny tweets. He'd just be a guy who had a Twitter account. Your Twitter account doesn't make you. You and where you are professionally makes your Twitter account.

K: That's all of the questions I have. Do you have any final comments or anything that you want to touch on that wasn't provoked by the questions on the subject?

M: Yeah, if you don’t get an A on this paper, I’ll feel like it was a wasted interview. Oh no, I’m good. Thank you. I hope I answered all of your questions.