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I'd be surprised if you get anyone admitting to these things: New Zealand journalists' experiences of aggressive reporting practices

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Abstract

Aggressive reporting practices involving deception or intrusion have long been controversial, yet little is known about how often journalists use them, and why. This study of New Zealand journalists is the first since 2003 that has asked a representative national sample of journalists about their experience of these practices. Some practices were commonly used despite being highly controversial amongst journalists. The main predictors of use of these aggressive practices were a journalist's role orientation, or goal in journalism, being influenced by journalism ethical norms and social influences, and to a lesser extent gender, attitude, and organisational factors. The profile of a journalist who would use these practices is one with a clear belief in their journalism goal, who is more influenced by journalism ethical norms and friends and family than workplace policy, authority figures (politicians) or organisational pressures such as time limits or editorial policy, and in some cases, who is female. This study gives further support to a risk model as an explanation for journalists' use of these practices.

Keywords
Journalism, risk, newsgathering, ethics, controversial, intrusion, deception, goal, role orientation

Introduction

A crowd of shouting journalists, waving cameras and microphones, hammering on a bereaved person's front door has become a staple shot for movie depictions of journalistic practice. Known in the trade as "door-knocking", it is one of several so-called "aggressive" (Weaver et al., 1991) journalistic practices using intrusion or deception at the extreme end of journalistic practice. Others include using "leaked" official or personal information without permission, pressuring informants for a story, using hidden recording devices, publishing unverified information, using dramatisations or recreations of events and pretending to be someone else.

Journalists in many countries receive backing for use of these practices from professional codes of ethics that justify them if they are used for a higher social purpose, usually defined as the "public interest" (i.e. serving a public purpose). They can produce extraordinary stories that do just that; as far back as the 1850s, undercover journalists in the U.S. antebellum South were warning Northern readers of the horrors of the slave markets (Kroeger, 2012); in the 1980s Gunther Walraff's undercover exposes of Turkish migrant experiences did something similar in Germany (McDonald & Avieson, 2020). More recently, the Panama Papers have shown the power and reach of leaked documents (Wicaksono et al., 2021). Wikileaks is probably the pre-eminent example of the uneasy questions raised by publishing leaked unverified information, with many journalists conflicted about whether it is justified (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2014).

Given the use of these practices in the mainstream media, it is important to understand more about when and why journalists use them. Although there is a solid tradition of research about journalists' attitudes to these practices, remarkably little is known about how often they use them and what factors encourage their use or disuse. It is also important not just to understand the reasons why journalists resort to them, but why they do not, when circumstances may call for them.

This study uses a sample of New Zealand journalists gathered as part of the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS). As well as the WJS questions about perceptions of these practices, the New Zealand sample measured actual use of the practices. Traditionally used as measures of ethical orientation of journalists, grounded in philosophical concepts of ethics, these results are also discussed in the light of more recent risk-based and social psychological approaches to the study of intrusion and deception.

Aggressive practices in journalism

In journalism, while deception is near universally proscribed in news publication, there is a long tradition of its use in newsgathering, such as the undisclosed use of listening devices and not disclosing one's role ("undercover journalism") (see e.g.Kroeger, 2012). Undercover journalism is still rare in larger news outlets, not just because of the expense, risk and time involved, but because many journalistic ethical codes proscribe deception in newsgathering except in very limited circumstances. For example, the *New York Times* does not allow its journalists to pose as anyone else, but does allow its foreign correspondents to "take cover from vagueness" (Times, 2016). In New Zealand, the subject of this study, the New Zealand Media Council proscribes subterfuge in newsgathering "unless there is an overriding public interest and the news or information cannot be obtained by any other means" (NZMC, 2021), wording very similar to that of the British Association of Journalists: "Engaging in misrepresentation or subterfuge, including by agents or intermediaries, can generally be justified only in the public interest and then only when the material cannot be obtained by other means" (BAJ, 2021).

In journalism, intrusion can involve approaching and pressuring people for information after they have indicated they do not wish to respond, or the use of personal photographs or information without permission, such as from social media (Hollings et al., 2017). As with deception, the public interest is sometimes used to justify the intrusion of door-knocking or recording someone or using personal documents without permission. In New Zealand, ethical codes are self-imposed by industry, with a voluntary self-regulation system for most text-based news media (which is privately owned) and broadcast media (mostly state-owned) governed by statutory regulation. The text-based industry codes (see E.G. NZMC, 2021; NZME, 2016; Stuff, 2020) generally follow U.K. journalistic norms closely in such things as the use of undercover, protection of sources, use of confidential documents, taking money from sources, and so on. For example, in Britain: "Members shall not encroach the private life of a person, their grief or distress unless justified to do so in accordance with the guidelines of the Editor's Code of Practice regarding public interest" (BAJ, 2021). In New Zealand: "Everyone is normally entitled to privacy [but] … the right of privacy should not interfere with publication of significant matters of public record or public interest." (NZMC, 2021). Publication of personal and official documents and information has been widely allowed (NZMC, 2021) and rules governing use of unverified information are vague: "Publications should be bound at all times by accuracy, fairness and balance, and should not deliberately mislead or misinform readers by commission or omission." (NZMC, 2021). Sanctions for breaches of ethical codes vary; for print publications in the U.K., the Independent Press Standards Organisation can order a correction or apology (IPSO, 2022) as can the New Zealand Media Council (NZMC, 2021). Broadcasters in New Zealand can be fined up to $5000, be ordered to pay costs, or in very rare cases, be taken off air (BSA, 2021).

Journalists' attitudes to aggressive practices

Although little is known how often or why journalists use such practices, there is solid research about their attitudes to them (Ramaprasad et al., 2019; Weaver et al., 2009). In New Zealand, which is the subject of this study, and elsewhere, many journalists approve of several of them, despite the opprobrium of the public and often their fellow journalists (Hollings et al., 2017; Ramaprasad et al., 2019). We know this because journalists' attitudes towards these practices have been surveyed over the past 50 years. Building on Johnstone's (1976) seminal study of U.S. journalists, David Weaver and others asked U.S. journalists in three separate surveys from 1992 to 2012 whether they approved of a set of 10 "ethically aggressive" (at least in the U.S. and Anglo-Western context) journalistic practices, claiming to be someone else, agreeing to protect confidentiality and not doing so, using re-creations or dramatisations of news by actors, paying people for information, badgering unwilling informants to get a story, using personal or official documents without permission, using hidden microphones or cameras, disclosing names of rape victims and getting employed in a firm to gain inside information (Weaver, 2007). Weaver et al. essentially saw these practices as proxies for ethical reasoning; they represented how "ethical" or unethical journalists were in relation to U.S. normative standards of journalistic behaviour.

More recently the Worlds of Journalism Study has extended this inquiry globally to 27,000 journalists in 66 countries (Hanitzsch et al., 2019). It asked for agreement with 12 statements, mostly the same as Weaver's, but excluding the rape and confidentiality statements and including taking

money from sources, publishing stories with unverified content, altering quotes, and altering photos. It grouped these practices on the dimensions of "aggression", "loyalty to stakeholders" and "autonomy and truth-telling"(Hanitzsch et al., 2019, p. 202) . It found "somewhat similar" approval of journalists to the U.S. studies; the three most approved practices were using hidden cameras or microphones, using confidential business documents, and getting employed in a firm to get inside information, with paying for information the least justified globally (Hanitzsch et al., 2019, p. 216). Journalists' attitudes to these practices vary widely, not only by practice, but by continent, region, and even country. The acceptability of these practices to journalists varies widely. For example, exerting pressure on informants to get a story is disapproved of by around 80 percent of journalists in Germany, Bulgaria, Mexico and parts of the Middle East, yet journalists are much more evenly split in the U.S., U.K, Nordic countries and much of Asia and Oceania (WJS, 2017). There is a similar spread for use of personal information without permission (WJS, 2017). New Zealand journalists' attitudes towards these aggressive reporting practices are close to those of U.K. and U.S. journalists (WJS, 2017).

Theoretical approaches

One way of considering moral decision-making in communication is through an ethical lens, the presumption that journalists make choices according to their own inner ethical orientation, specifically whether one is guided by set rules about what is right and wrong (the deontological approach) or by the general aim of doing what benefits the greatest number (the utilitarian approach). This presumption has dominated much analysis of this set of practices; they were initially formulated as a proxy for ethical orientation, and indeed ethical orientation has been found to correlate with and predict attitudes to these practices (Hollings et al., 2017). Using Forsyth's Taxonomy of Ethical Ideologies (Forsyth, 1980), Ramaprasad et al. have shown how journalists' position on this taxonomy correlates with their global region and in turn varies according to external factors such as levels of press and individual freedom, and measures of individual freedom such as the willingness to disagree (Ramaprasad et al., 2019, p. 224). Deontologists (or absolutists) have no view; situationists (people who don't follow rules closely but adhere to a higher moral value) dislike them; subjectivists (utilitarians, who decide in the moment whether they are justified) support them.

Other factors have been found to predict approval of these practices, including organisational factors such as ownership, and medium (particularly whether journalists worked for television) and journalists' perception of their role (Hollings et al., 2017). Numerous studies have found journalists tend to see their roles on an established set of dimensions that reflect their understanding of what journalism should be. These dimensions reflect their attitudes to neutrality vs participation in society, independence vs collaboration with authority and scrutiny/analysis vs simple observation (see E.G.Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Mellado, 2019; Weaver, 2007). The labels for these dimensions vary (investigator/monitor, observer, popular mobiliser/interventionist, collaborator, disseminator/accomodator), but the underlying journalists' attitudes about the role they should play have proved largely stable across time and region (Hanitzsch et al., 2019). Investigator/monitors see their role as to hold power to account, mobilisers see their role as being to bring about change, observers just want to report things as they are, collaborators see their role as being to support government or business, and disseminators/ accommodators see their role as being to inform or entertain. These roles are seen by leading scholars as central to what journalism is: "the discourse of journalistic roles is the central arena where journalistic identity is reproduced and contested; it is the site where actors struggle over the preservation or transformation of journalism's identity." (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017).

Weaver et al. found that approval of these practices tended to correlate with those who favoured a more aggressive "adversary" or "interpreter" role, rather than those who thought journalists should mostly just be "disseminators" of news (Weaver, 2007, p. 173). More recent work has that social and organisational pressures, role perception and education underly journalists' approval or disapproval of these practices (Hollings et al., 2017; Ramaprasad et al., 2019).

While much has been learned about journalists' attitudes to these practices, there is still much we don't know. For example, there is still no convincing theoretical model to explain journalists' conception of them; the amount of variance explained by ethical orientation shows this is not the

whole story when it comes to how journalists see them. Also, the practices frame a culturally biased set of assumptions about what is ethical. While some practices have been framed as “loyalty” and “autonomy” choices (Ramaprasad et al., 2019, p. 202), recent work has framed them as risk choices, drawing on risk theory and dimensions used in social psychology, specifically intrusion and deception. Intrusive practices include exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story, using personal or official documents without permission, using hidden microphones or cameras, getting employed in a firm to gain inside information. Deceptive practices include claiming to be someone else, using hidden microphones or cameras, publishing stories with unverified content, accepting money from sources, using recreations or dramatisations of news by actors and altering quotes or photos (Hollings et al., 2017). It is worth now considering the literature in those areas.

Deception

Often defined as the intentional misrepresentation of information or emotions (Gaspar et al., 2019) it has been estimated that as much as a quarter of human interaction involves deception (Buller & Burgoon, 1996). There is a large body of work on deception, ranging from communication theories based on interpersonal communication, such as Interpersonal Deception Theory (Buller & Burgoon, 1996), to those based on a rational choice framework emphasising a cost-benefit approach, mediated by perceptions of the risk of deception (Gino & Shea, 2012; Lewicki, 1983). Theories grounded in social psychology emphasise more complex models of deception, avoiding simple ethical/non-ethical binaries and emphasising the role of emotions and personal schemas and identity choices in deception behaviour (Bandura, 1999; Gaspar et al., 2021) For example, envy, anger, and anxiety cause people to become more likely to use deception (Moran & Schweitzer, 2008; Olekalns & Smith, 2009). Recent work on deception and ethical orientation suggests that individuals tend to either be purely egalitarian or non-purely utilitarian; in other words they favour either doing what maximises social welfare (utilitarians) or do what they think is the right thing to do (deontologists) (Biziou-van-Pol et al., 2015). There is a substantial body of work showing that people are more likely to deceive when the goal of deception is pro-social (benefits others) rather than individual (Biziou-van-Pol et al., 2015; Conrads et al., 2013). Pro-social deception is often divided into Pareto lies (benefiting both deceiver and subject) and altruistic (benefiting only the subject) with Pareto deception being much more common, but no clear evidence as to which is favoured by females or males (Biziou-van-Pol et al., 2015). Gender has been found to be an important factor, with women more likely to deceive for pro-social reasons and men more likely to use deceptive behaviours to benefit themselves (Jazaieri & Kray, 2020). Recent work has shown that self-confidence predicts use of deception in negotiation, again mediated by the risks of deception (Gaspar & Schweitzer, 2021). In negotiations, such as journalists undertake, deception is more likely to be used in competitive rather than cooperative negotiation (Schweitzer et al., 2005).

Intrusion

In social psychology, intrusion is often studied in the context of stalking, and defined as “engaging in behaviours that you know are not wanted” (Tassy & Winstead, 2014). It can be either mild (unwanted telephone calls or emails) moderate (following, visiting) and serious (threats, violence). (Tassy & Winstead, 2014). Three common explanations include psychopathology, interpersonal skill deficits and attachment losses; stalkers are more likely to show signs of minor personality disorders, anger problems, and mild to moderate depression (Patton et al., 2010). Having an insecure-anxious attachment style and distress at break-up were the most robust predictors of both pursuit and aggression, but gender has not been found to be a predictor (Dutton & Winstead, 2006; Haugaard & Seri, 2004). Relational goal pursuit theory has also been advanced as an explanation for why some individuals become disinhibited in their pursuit. Under this theory, the effort to attain a goal is proportional to the extent to which it is seen to be desirable and attainable. When an individual encounters an obstacle to goal achievement, effort is intensified, because individuals exaggerate the significance and attainability of the goal and link it to higher goals such as life or work satisfaction (Susan Sprecher, 2008). These goal-related explanations for both intrusion and deception do appear to have a counterpart in journalism. If, as noted above, their perception of their role is central to journalists, it follows that those with the goal of monitoring power or using journalism to bring about

social change may be more willing to use these practices involving intrusion, while those who are neutral, disseminators or collaborators may not.

Risk perception

Another way of seeing intrusion and deception is as social risk-taking. Standard theories of risk taking such as prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) assume risk is seen in terms of an individual pay-off. However, many decisions involve risk not just to oneself, but a group; what is known as "social risk-taking". Some literature suggests that males are more likely to take physical risk, and females more likely to take social risks, if they have experience in the domain of risk (Blais & Weber, 2001). Other work has found females are less prone to social risk-taking if they perceive inequity; females "usually also take into account the payoffs of peers in a way consistent with inequality aversion, in particular behindness aversion – i.e. a subject dislikes being behind a peer more than she likes or dislikes being ahead of her" (Friedl et al., 2020). One meta-study found women are almost twice as likely as men to be inequity averters (Kamas & Preston, 2015). The inequity aversion concept suggests that for females, regardless of their individual perception of the practice, their judgement as to its social acceptability (its "controversiality") might be significant.

Some of these practices involve direct personal risk. Pretending to be someone else in a dangerous situation (such as the antebellum South) can be life-threatening (Kroeger, 2012). Others can be seen as a form of social risk-taking; they risk not only being seen as careless or incompetent by their peers and wider social networks but pose risks to their organization and profession, e.g. through legal action or sanction by ethics regulators (NZMC, 2021). Indeed, recent work has shown that journalists are likely to see use of these practices as not simply an ethical decision, but one involving significant risk judgement (Hollings et al., 2017; Ramaprasad et al., 2019). This is because while economic and organisational influences on journalists, their role perceptions, and their ethical orientation predicted the extent to which journalists saw these practices as justified, organisational influences were moderated by experience (Hollings et al., 2017) and experience in practice (known as the "domain of risk") has been found to moderate risk perception (Blais & Weber, 2006; Weber et al., 2002). This risk lens suggests that gender, and experience in the domain of use are likely to affect use of these practices.

A social psychology approach offers promising insights into use of these practices, but some caution is needed. While it is well-established that attitudes can substantially predict future behavior (see E.G. Glasman & Albarracín, 2006; Kraus, 1995), recent work has shown that risk attitude in laboratory situations does not predict behaviour in the field, probably because of the domain-specific nature of risk perception and much more situationally complex nature of field vs lab risk decisions (Charness et al., 2020) Thus attitudes towards these "risky" practices may not correlate strongly with actual behaviour.

Indeed, we still know very little about to what extent and how attitudes towards these practices affects actual use of them. Only one survey has surveyed journalists' actual use of these practices (Weisenhaus, 2005). Of 422 Hong Kong journalists, three quarters had used anonymous sources, one third had used confidential government documents. Just less than half (46%) had used or worked on stories involving hidden microphones or cameras, and half had used another identity to get information, but they objected to paying for information or taking something of value from sources. This noted journalists were more willing to use them when the story involved a "public interest", confirming the notion that deception is often goal-driven. The apparently high incidence of use of these practices was attributed to the young reporter cohort, intense competition for stories, and lack of official access to information (Weisenhaus, 2005).

When it comes to actual use of these practices, "field" considerations would likely moderate theoretical predictors of risky decision-making. As well as the risk noted above, some practices are time-consuming (e.g., getting employed to gain inside information, using recreations). Some are more common in certain media (dramatisations or recreations are mostly used in television). Some organisations have more conservative editorial policies; some may allow more autonomy to journalists.

To summarise, the literature suggests that practice goal, gender, attitude to the practice, the risk of the practice, social and organisational influences (e.g., editorial influence, workplace autonomy, type

of medium etc.) and prior experience should all influence whether a journalist would have used these practices.

Based on the above, the following research questions were formulated:
RQ1: How commonly used are each of these practices by journalists?
RQ2: Which practices are most controversial for journalists, and why?
RQ3: What factors predict journalists' actual use of these practices?

Methodology

Given the relative lack of empirical research in this area, an exploratory study which aims to detect the factors listed above and quantify them where possible was considered useful.

This study therefore used a representative sample of New Zealand journalists (n=514) taken as part of the Worlds of Journalism Study in 2015. As respondents were anonymised, the survey was classified as low risk and approved by Massey University's Ethics Committee. Journalists completed the survey either online or by telephone interview. In this study, journalists were asked a set of attitudinal questions on their perception of their journalistic role, influences and ethical orientation, and the standard "Weaver" questions on aggressive practices asking to what extent they thought various intrusive and deceptive practices were justified, given an important story. An additional question, asking which of these practices they had actually used, was inserted. Respondents were also invited to comment on their use.

For RQ1, frequencies for each practice were counted and loaded into a table (Table 1). For RQ2, responses to the open-ended comment on these practices were counted and thematically coded into approval/disapproval and for common themes.

For RQ3, a list of likely independent variables was formulated based on the literature review above. These included the goal of the practice (e.g., to obtain information that could not be obtained by other means and for which there is a justified public interest), the risk of the practice (e.g., whether it was socially and ethically approved) gender, ethical orientation, experience in journalism, attitude to the practice, journalism education, social influences, and organisational factors such as medium and location and workplace influences.

As the study uses a standardised questionnaire, it was not possible to obtain independent variables which matched all the likely predictors listed above. Gender, attitude to the practice, social and organisational influences (e.g., editorial influence, workplace autonomy, type of medium) were all directly measured. For goal, an exploratory factor analysis showed that the role perception questions factored into the expected monitorial, populist mobiliser, observer and disseminator roles, and these roles were then used as a proxy for the goal of deception or intrusion. For example, having the goal of monitoring power or being a populist mobiliser was seen as likely to be used to justify deception or intrusion, whereas the goal of being a neutral observer or disseminator was not). To keep the number of variables to a minimum, representative variables for each dimension of role perception (the proxy for goal) and influence were chosen, based on those that showed strongest support for each role. For role perception, responses to the questions "advocate for social change" and "influence public opinion" and "set the political agenda" were chosen to represent the populist mobiliser role. Responses to the question "monitor and scrutinise business and political leaders" represented the monitorial role. "Report things as they are" and "let people express their views" represented the observer role, "convey a positive image of political leadership:" represented the collaborator role, and "provide news that attracts the largest audience", "provide information people need to make political decisions" and "entertainment and relaxation" represented the disseminator role.

For influences, responses to the questions "personal values/ beliefs, friends, and family" were chosen to represent personal/ social influences, "editorial supervisors, editorial policy, competing news organisations" represented organisational influences, and "media laws and regulation, government officials, businesspeople, politicians, audience research and data" represented external influences. As there was no direct measure of social risk of each practice, no independent variable was chosen to represent this.

Binary logistic regression was then used to establish predictors for the actual experience of each of the practices with a response rate of over 30. Direct entry logistic regression was used first to assess the impact of the 38 independent variables as recommended when no clear hypotheses about

order or importance of predictors and the need was to gain insight into power of each predictor (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). After this, a stepwise (backwards conditional) approach was used as a preliminary screening device when working with a large number of predictors, as recommended by Swanson and Holton (2005). A separate regression model was produced for each practice to ensure only the relevant attitudinal response was included, and to avoid multicollinearity. A minimum case to variable ratio of 10:1 was chosen, as recommended by Tabachnik and Fidell (2019). Three practices (paying for confidential information, getting employed inside an organisation, and taking money from sources) were not analysed as they had a response rate below 30 and the results were likely to be unstable.

The results of the direct entry models, where statistically significant, and the backwards conditional approach, where significant, are reported below.

Results

Using confidential business or government documents without permission was by far the most common and least controversial practice, with almost a third having done so. The other most common practices were using hidden microphones or cameras, exerting pressure on informants to get a story, using personal documents or pictures without permission, and publishing unverified information (see Table 1). Direct logistic regression produced a significant model in two of the seven practices, publishing unverified information and claiming to be somebody else. A backwards conditional logistic regression was statistically significant in all cases, indicating that the model was able to distinguish between respondents who reported experience of each practice and those who did not (see table 2). Goodness of fit was tested with the Homer-Lemeshow (HL) test, where significance values above 0.05 indicate the model adequately fits the data. Cox and Snell’s R-squared test and Nagelkerke’s R-squared test were used to assess the amount of variance explained by the model. A set of predictors was produced for each practice (see Table 2) and are reported below. To save space, RQs 1, 2 & 3 are responded to under each practice.

Using confidential business or government documents without permission

This was not a controversial topic, reflecting its implicit approval in New Zealand ethical codes. An overwhelming majority (83%) of journalists thought it always justified or justified on occasion, and it was the most common practice, with almost a third (31%) of journalists reporting having done it. It also had the highest mean approval (2.07, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being most approved). The lack of comments also suggests that journalists are not conflicted about this. Only one journalist raised a caveat; that document owners should have a chance to comment and that they should not be used unless authorisation was unlikely and the story important.

A backwards conditional logistic regression was statistically significant; X2 (5, n=287) = 23.8, p<.000. The model explained between 8% (Cox and Snell) and 11% (Nagelkerke) of the variance in experience status, and correctly classified 72% of cases (HL p<.324). The main predictors of use of confidential documents were gender (with the odds of females using confidential documents without permission being 1.87 higher than for males) and being influenced by journalism ethics (1.83 times) and friends and family (1.43 times) while for each step increase in being influenced by editorial policy or censorship, the odds of using confidential documents decreased by 1.5 times and 1.3 times respectively. No other factors were significant. Surprisingly, the strong attitude of approval of this practice did not translate into a predictive effect.

Using hidden microphones or cameras

Again, this was not a controversial topic, reflecting both its legality under New Zealand law and implicit approval in ethical codes. A fifth of respondents (20%) had experience of it, and three quarters thought it justified, and again with a high mean approval rating of 2.2. Many reporters clearly took hidden microphone to mean recording their interviews without asking for permission, a common practice in New Zealand, where it is legal to secretly record a conversation if you are a party to it. As one respondent noted: “Many interviews are done on the phone and are taped without the knowledge of the person on the other end.” All comments made the point that there had to be a public interest justification for the subterfuge, and usually that there had to be higher editorial approval: “Hidden camera here includes photographer standing, at distance, outside a store and 'secretly' photographing

the shopkeeper, who had been selling 'legal highs' despite having publicly said he was not." "For hidden camera and microphone work, my employer has a rigorous procedure for assessing the risks to privacy, safety, reputation and for weighing that against the likely value of those recordings and their intended use. This occurs before recording is attempted." "Hidden cameras can be justified if all other avenues of getting an interview have been exhausted and/or the subject is breaking the law." "I used hidden cameras to get evidence in a story."

A backwards conditional logistic regression was statistically significant; X2 (11, n=283) = 32.9, p<.001. The model explained between 11% (Cox and Snell) and 17% (Nagelkerke) of the variance in experience status, and correctly classified 82% of cases. The main predictors increasing the odds of using hidden cameras or microphones were being influenced by politicians and journalism ethics (each increased the odds 1.87 and 1.67 respectively) and wanting to advocate for social change (1.38). On the other hand, having a journalism education reduced the odds of journalists using these devices (2.5 times) as did being an ethical absolutist or exceptionist (1.69 and 1.39 times respectively, calculated by inverting the ExpB score). No other factors were significant. The strong role of journalism ethics may be due to people needing to rely on external (ethics code) justification for an instinctively unpleasant intrusive practice; those who tended to be guided by external rules (in this case journalism ethics) were more likely to have done it, whereas respondents with strong internal ethical rules (i.e. absolutists) or who don't follow any rules (exceptionists) were less likely. The influence of politicians may be due to the fact that use of cameras and recording is particularly important for political journalists. The lack of clear explanatory factors here may reflect the confusion over what this question meant; for some it meant simply recording their interviews without explicitly mentioning it; for others it meant wearing a concealed wire and recording device. It is also a problematic question because while many journalists record audio routinely, setting up a hidden camera would be a much rarer step.

Exerting pressure on an informant to get a story

This is a highly controversial practice for journalists, with 47% approving and 53% not approving. Almost a fifth (19%) of respondents admitted they had pressured informants, a surprisingly high number, given the lack of ethical guidance from ethics codes and clear social risks (in terms of disapproval from other journalists and the public) of doing so.

A backwards conditional logistic regression was statistically significant; X2 (8,n=279) = 23, p<.003. The model explained between 8% (Cox and Snell) and 12% (Nagelkerke) of the variance in experience status, and correctly classified 80% of cases. The main predictor of exerting pressure was organisational (working on daily newspapers) the odds of those journalists having exerted pressure on informants to get a story were 2.35 times higher. Journalistic role was also important; particularly seeing it as important to monitor and scrutinise business (this increased the odds of exerting pressure by 1.4 times) and influence public opinion (1.31 times). On the other hand, wanting to provide entertainment and relaxation decreased the odds of having exerted pressure (1.4 times) No other factors were significant.

It makes sense that daily reporters are most likely to exert pressure; this is the most competitive area in New Zealand journalism. The fact that a monitorial goal predicts use of this clearly intrusive practice aligns with the literature on goal-related intrusion.

Using personal documents without permission

This was another commonly used, controversial practice, but this time with clear ethical guidance that "the right of privacy should not interfere with publication of significant matters ... of public interest." Close to a fifth (17.5%) of respondents admitted to this, but they were evenly split on whether it was acceptable or not.

A backwards conditional logistic regression was statistically significant; X2 (9, n=286) = 29.5, p<.001. The model explained between 9.8% (Cox and Snell) and 15.8% (Nagelkerke) of the variance in experience status, and correctly classified 81% of cases. The main predictor of using personal documents was an absolutist ethical orientation (believing journalists should always stick to ethical codes); the odds of them having used personal documents without permission were 2.18 times higher, followed by media law and regulation (1.6 times higher). Having an observer view of a journalist's role decreased the odds of using personal documents without permission; for those who felt their role

was to report things as they are, the odds dropped 1.9 times, for those who felt their role was to provide information to help people make political decisions, the odds dropped 1.48 times.

Likewise, being influenced by editorial policy or government officials decreased the odds of using personal documents by 1.5 and 2 times respectively. No other factors were significant. It is unsurprising that an absolutist ethical orientation and being influenced by media law predicts use of this practice; given its controversiality, many journalists appear to instinctively resist it except those that live by external ethical guidance and media regulation and thus can find a strong external reason to justify it. Having an observer role orientation unsurprisingly reduced the odds of using such an intrusive practice.

Publishing unverified information

This was not a particularly controversial issue for journalists, as most (77%) disapproved, though a surprising number (15%) of respondents said they had done so. This practice attracted the most (n=10) comments. All but two interpreted unverified to mean information which the journalist believed was probably true but could not attribute to a named source. Most justified this if it was clearly labelled as unverified: “It is acceptable to take risks, in certain situations, if you a) take responsibility and have confidence in the information you are using and b) protect your informants and sources.” "I have published information which I judge to be verified by two more sources, but not by any "official" source, so my answer above is not as black & white as it seems.” Two assumed it to mean incorrect comments: “Not very proud of it but I wouldn't do it for a substantial claim, only an eyewitness account that couldn't be verified otherwise.” One interpreted it as being a story without balancing comment: “When I first started out in journalism, I published a story that was unbalanced - I didn't want the story to go ahead because one of the people accused wasn't given enough opportunities to have their say. But my editor made that decision for me. In the end we paid a big price for it with my editor leaving her job. It was a mistake but a mistake that I have learned a lot from.”

A direct entry logistic regression produced a model containing all predictors that was statistically significant; X2 (37, n=287) = 76.4, p<.000. The model explained between 23% (Cox and Snell) and 40% (Nagelkerke) of the variance in experience status, and correctly classified 87.5% of cases (H&L p<.75). The strongest predictor of using unverified content was being female, increasing the odds of using unverified information 7.4 times, followed by having autonomy over emphasising aspects of the story, which increased the odds 4.4 times, having a favourable attitude to the practice (2.8 times) and wanting to influence public opinion (1.9 times). Conversely, for those journalists who believed their role was to advocate for social change the odds of using unverified content dropped by 3.5 times, and by 2.2 times for those influenced by politicians.

This interpretation was underlined by a backwards entry (conditional) model, which reduced the number of significant variables to six, in rank order (wanting to advocate for social change, having autonomy, gender, wanting to influence public opinion, believing it justified and years working in journalism). This model was statistically significant; X2 (9, n=283) = 52.2, p<.000 and explained between 16% (Cox and Snell) and 28% (Nagelkerke) of the variance in experience status, and correctly classified 84.7% of cases.

As this practice implies more of a social (risking unfavourable opinion) than physical risk, the fact that gender (it was more favoured by females) and goal (wanting to change people’s opinions) and pre-existing attitude predicted use of this practice is in line with the risk and deception literature; females are more likely to take social than physical risks and undertake pro-social deception, while wanting to influence public opinion appears to reinforce the goal-linked literature on deception. It is also possible that females feel competition within and beyond the newsroom more intensely; this “behindedness-aversion” may predispose them to taking the risk of publishing unverified content to avoid being seen as behind the game in terms of the latest news. It is surprising that the mobiliser (those wanting to advocate for social change) goal negatively predicted this practice; perhaps the altruism of these journalists makes them particularly averse to deception.

Claiming to be someone else

This was one of the least common practices, with only 7.4% of those surveyed having experience of it, probably reflecting the level of social and potentially physical risk involved. Even though it is implicitly permitted by New Zealand ethical codes, only a quarter of journalists in this sample approved of it. Direct entry logistic regression produced a model that was statistically significant; X2 (35, n=290) = 75, p<.000. The model explained between 22% (Cox and Snell) and 53% (Nagelkerke) of the variance in experience status and correctly classified 93% of cases (H&L p<.935).

The main predictors of claiming to be someone else were being influenced by journalism ethics (6.2 times more likely), information access (4.9 times) or friends and family (3.6 times), attitude (believing it to be justified, 5.4 times more likely) and length of experience in journalism (1.15 times) Factors making it less likely were gender (being female, 7 times) having autonomy in selecting stories (6 times) feeling influenced by time limits (5 times) editorial policy (3.8 times) or media law (2.7 times) or being an ethical situationist – believing it is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it (2 times less likely).

A backwards entry (conditional) model reduced the number of significant variables to 10, in rank order organization (working on a weekly newspaper, 4.3 times), attitude (believing it justified, 3.2 times), influences (friends and family, 2.3 times and information access, 2.2 times), with years' experience increasing the odds by a factor of only one. Conversely, factors reducing the odds of someone have claimed to be someone else were mainly gender (being female, 3.3 times) influences, (editorial policy, 2.6 times) and time limits (2.2 times) role (monitoring and scrutinising political leaders, 1.8 times) and ethical orientation (those who believed it acceptable to put aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances required (1.8 times). This model was statistically significant; X2 (12, n=285) = 54.7, p<.000, and explained between 17.5% (Cox and Snell) and 39% (Nagelkerke) of the variance in experience status, and correctly classified 91% of cases (H&L<.935).

As potentially a physically dangerous practice, it is unsurprising so few have experience of it and so few approve of it. For those that have used it, it is not surprising that they are strongly influenced by New Zealand journalism ethics codes, as the comfort of professional approval would certainly assist anyone contemplating its use. Likewise, it is not surprising that believing it justified predicted its use and that having strong family and friend support are important. In New Zealand, weekly newspapers are at the more investigative end of the market, so it is unsurprising this organisational factor predicts use of this strongly investigative practice. The fact that women are less likely to take this risk seems to conform to the risk literature, as this is physically a potentially dangerous practice. Likewise, it is not surprising that concern about time limits mitigates against it, given the inherently often time-consuming nature of this deception. It is also interesting that this controversial practice is negatively predicted by editorial policy, suggesting that organisations are essentially conservative, and that personal dispositional factors are more important.

Using dramatisations or recreation

This refers to the use of actors to voice or act out scenes or interviews when original audio or visual footage is not available (e.g. when an interview has been conducted by email). It was not a controversial practice, provided it did not involve deliberate audience deception, with over two thirds (69%) approving of it. A small number of respondents had experience of this practice, reflecting that it is usually only needed in TV or radio. A backwards conditional model was statistically significant; X2 (3, n=283) = 24.095, p<.000. The model explained between 8.7% (Cox and Snell) and 18% (Nagelkerke) of the variance in experience status, and correctly classified 89.8% of cases. The strongest predictor of using recreations was role; believing it important to attract the largest audience; this increased the odds 2.3 times that a journalist would have used recreations. Given the commercial focus of New Zealand television, this is predictable. Conversely, being on a weekly newspaper, or having an education in journalism reduced the odds of having used this practice.

Discussion and directions for future research

It is clear that use of these practices are often difficult decisions for these journalists. While some practices are widely approved of, many are not. And yet, even controversial practices are commonly used and some of the most disapproved are still used on occasion. Why is this?

If we group the predictors by the main themes of deception and intrusion, patterns emerge. The most common predictors of deception in journalistic practice, in order, were goal (measured by role

orientation) being influenced by journalism ethics, then gender (female), then to a lesser extent, attitude (approving of the practice), other influences such as politicians, and medium. Predictors of not using deception were, in order, having a journalism education, organisational influences such as time limits, editorial policy, media law, and politicians, being female, and goal. Predictors of using intrusive practices were, in order, being influenced by journalism ethics (including having an absolutist ethical orientation) or by friends and family, media law, or politicians, then about equally gender (being female), goal, and medium (working on a daily newspaper). Predictors of not using them were, in order, goal, influences (editorial policy) and having a journalism education. Overall, the likely profile of a journalist who would use these practices is one with a strong belief in their journalism goal (whether to influence public opinion, monitor power, or advocate for social change), who is more influenced by journalism ethical norms and friends and family than workplace policy, authority figures (politicians) or organisational pressures such as time limits or editorial policy, and depending on the practice, is either male or female. In many ways, this profile has similarities with that of whistleblowers; essentially idealists, outsiders, who cleave more to personal beliefs and family/social values than those of the workplace, with behaviour driven primarily by moral concerns (Dungan et al., 2019). It thus affirms the importance of goal orientation as a predictor of deceitful and intrusive behaviour, as the literature above suggests, and the importance of a journalist's role orientation in driving journalistic behaviour.

Similarly in line with the deception and risk literature, the role of gender comes through strongly. Females are almost twice as likely to use official documents without permission, and seven times as likely to publish unverified information, but are strongly (seven times less likely) against claiming to be someone else. These effects were particularly strong on the latter two practices, where a direct entry model was statistically significant and where the models explained the highest variance (publishing unverified information and claiming to be someone else), showing the stability of this gender effect.

Ethical influences or orientation, while important, predicted only four out of the seven practices analysed here. For what journalists thought one of the most controversial practices, exerting pressure on informants, ethical influences or orientation did not predict its use; but working on a daily newspaper and believing strongly in the monitorial role of journalism did. It is interesting that for this practice, where ethical guidance for these journalists is vague, their conception of their role and organisational pressures were stronger predictors than ethical orientation. This suggests that in the absence of clear rules, an individual's internal ethical compass doesn't guide them as much as their reason for being journalists and social influences. Thus it is clear that journalists' attitudes towards these practices, while grouped together historically, are not a good measure of their ethical approach to challenging situations. Indeed, their attitude to each practice has limited predictive effect; as the recent literature suggests, in the field journalists' feelings will often be put aside in the field under the pressure of workplace demands, higher goals or influences such as journalism ethics.

Taken together, it seems that the risk paradigm is the most likely overarching theoretical explanation for use of these practices. One possible explanation is that journalists make judgements based on two risk poles, individual risk and social risk, on a continuum from low to high. Some practices may be low in social risk and individual risk (using confidential business or official documents); others high on both individual and social risk (claiming to be someone else). Practices with low social and individual risk are unsurprisingly the most popular and well-used. Depending on where the practice "maps" on this quadrant, individual or social or organisational factors will be more or less significant in predicting or mediating their use. This is a very tentative exploration of what a theoretical model might look like; much more work, for example on how social risk mediates use and perception of these practices is required to develop such a model.

These findings are broadly in line with what might have been expected of New Zealand journalists, given what we know about their attitudes and dispositions from previous studies (Hollings et al., 2016; Lealand & Hollings, 2012). But how representative are they of journalists globally? As we know from the Worlds of Journalism Study, there is wide variation globally in acceptability of reporting practices, so caution should be exercised in extrapolating these predictors to other journalism cultures. Nonetheless, as shown above, this sample is reasonably representative of the Anglo-Western approach to news reporting, as represented by U.S. and U.K. journalists and these results can therefore be assumed to apply in some measure to this broad grouping. Furthermore, while

the exact proportions of the factors found to be important here may vary regionally, it is hoped that the overall findings that goal, attitude to risk, gender and influences affect journalists' willingness to use these practices will provide useful leads for other researchers to follow when exploring their own national and regional journalism cultures.

There are several limitations to this study. It could not adequately capture experience in the domain of risk as it did not measure how often journalists had used these practices. Nor did this analysis measure social risk, or how journalists' concern about what other journalists might think might affect their use of these practices. Future research could explore these deficits, journalists' roles and goals, and personal dispositional factors. As anger, envy and anxiety also make deception more likely (Yip & Schweitzer, 2015), gathering data on the impact of these emotions would be useful.

Secondly, as can be seen from the comparison between stepwise and the direct logistic regression model, the results from each approach vary, so results from the stepwise regressions should be seen as indicative rather than definitive. Nonetheless the strong similarities between the direct and stepwise results give confidence that these results provide leads worth following. In particular, use of an ordinal scale to measure experience of each practice would be valuable as it would allow linear regression and measurement of mediation effects. For example, it would be interesting to see what mediated the effect of gender and goal and the role of moral concern.

The fact that this study used a dataset from 2015 was considered valid as media law and journalistic codes of ethics have not changed substantially in New Zealand over that time, nor have technological developments impacted greatly on these practices. Technology for recording phone calls, for example, was as widely available in 2015 as now. The main development since then has been the expanded use of social media, and thus extended avenues for intrusion through use of personal material without permission, particularly through the growth of new channels such as TikTok. Another major development since then has been the growth in publication of deliberately false information, such as fake news. These journalists were more likely to consider "unverified information" as being information they presumed true but could not adequately check; future researchers may wish to explore journalists' willingness to publish deliberately false unverified information.

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