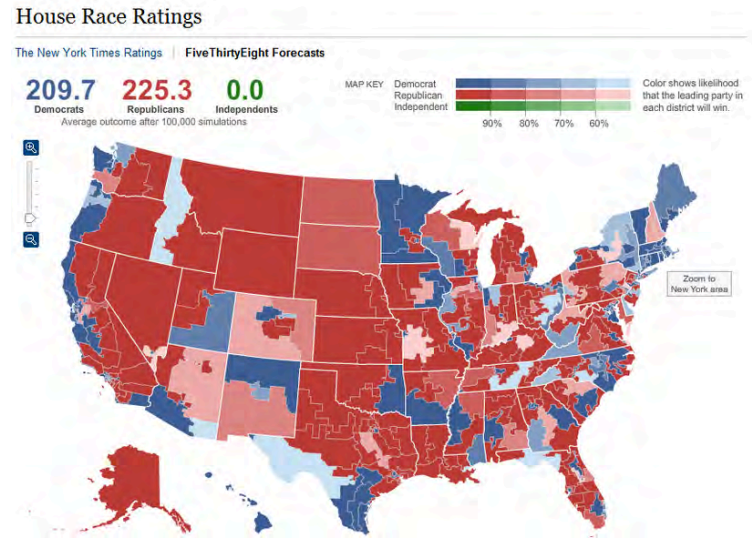
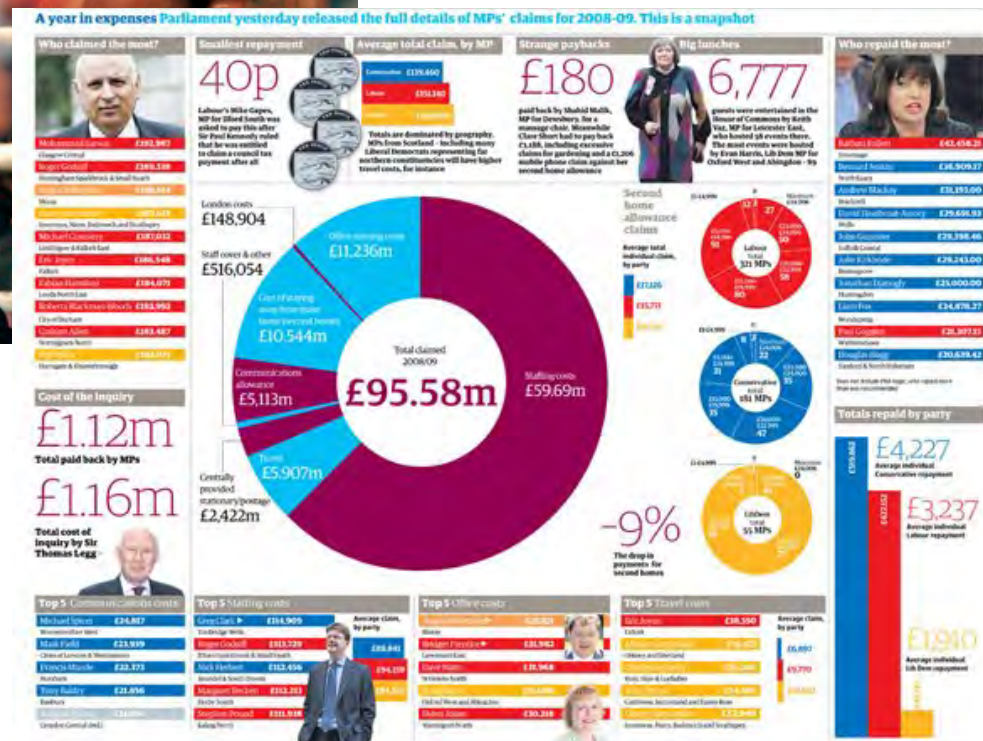


F is for Fake, A is For Angry, B is for Boring: Sophisticated News in an Irrational Age



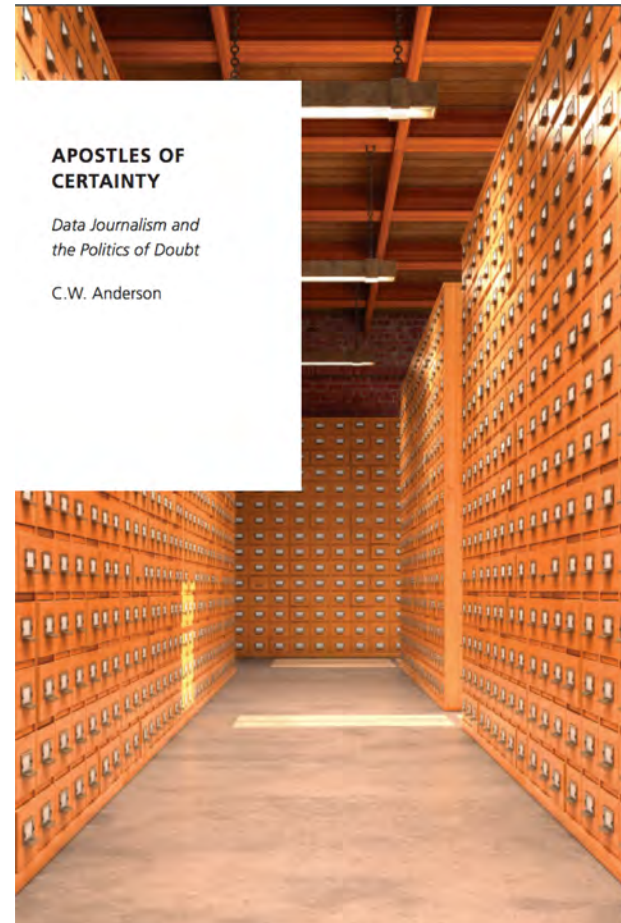
C.W. Anderson
University of Leeds
Montreal, Canada
April 13 2019

Opening Puzzle



Apostles of Certainty

- Part of a larger book project; Oxford University Press 2018
- The history of how American journalists have used documents and data-(non-oral evidence- in news reporting.
- Attempt to draw journalism more into dialog with other works in the sociology of knowledge and STS.
- How these shifts relate to larger changes in U.S. culture, politics.



Varieties of Quantitative Journalism

Journalism of Occurrences	Journalism of Social Science	Computational Journalism
Episodic, individualized, narrative-format, oral evidence) (Context via narrative)	Use social science techniques to factualize journalism (context via application of statistics and variables)	Applications of computational thinking to news reporting (context via computable “events”)
Traditional Journalism	Precision journalism, data journalism	Structured Stories

Journalism's Assemblage of the Public

Journalistic Practice

Journalistic Culture



News Products



PUBLICS

Journalistic “Visions
of the Public.”

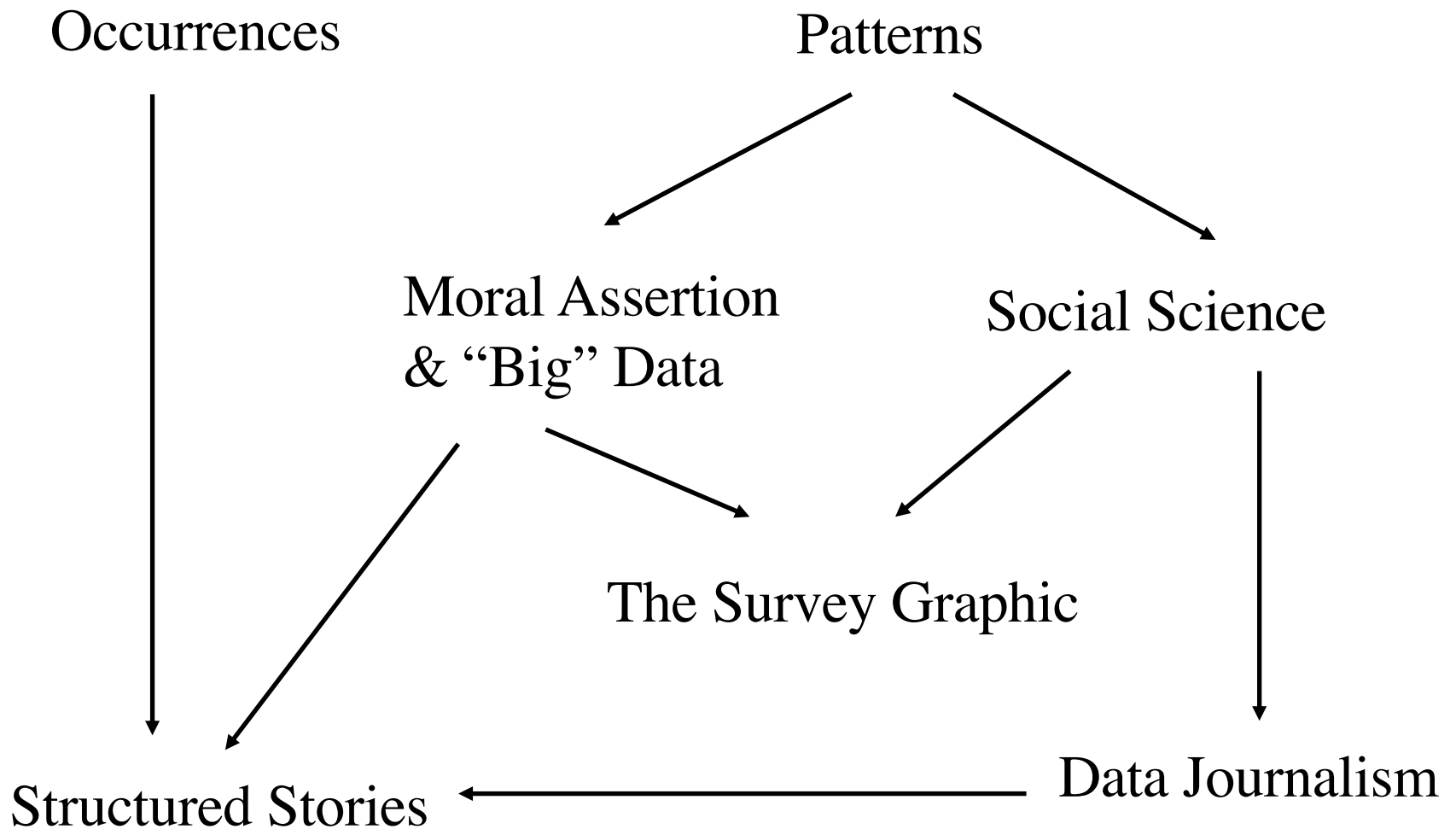
What Kind of Public Does Quantified Journalism Assemble?

- Neo-Progressive Vision
 - Line between “aesthetics” and “information” is blurred.
 - Information is politically “value neutral”
 - I.e., the question of “what kind of public” is assembled is deferred.
 - Embedded in this value neutrality are a series of liberal values; rationality, tolerance of alternate points of view, importance of deliberation.

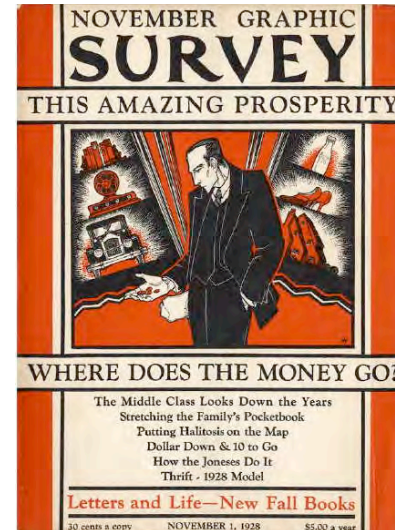
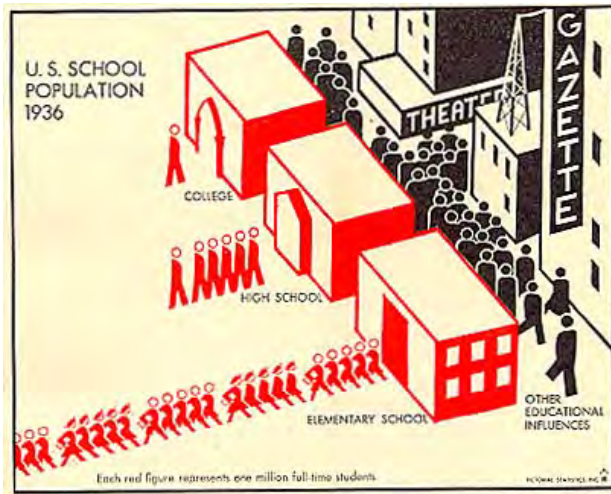
Methods

	Material	Method	Political Context	Epistemology
Progressive Era	City maps, survey sheets, questionnaires, tables, information graphics	Tablature, counting, classification and coding, visualization	Progressive social movements, public relations firms	Naïve empiricism
Precision Journalism	Government databases, reporter generated surveys	Variable-based, social science oriented	Gonzo journalism, 1960s urban unrest	Social science
Computational Journalism	User traces, previous journalism, semantic lexicons	The algorithm, high level interactivity with users, user control over results	Computer science, Silicon Valley, the turn to new empiricism	Events, linked events as context, machine readable language

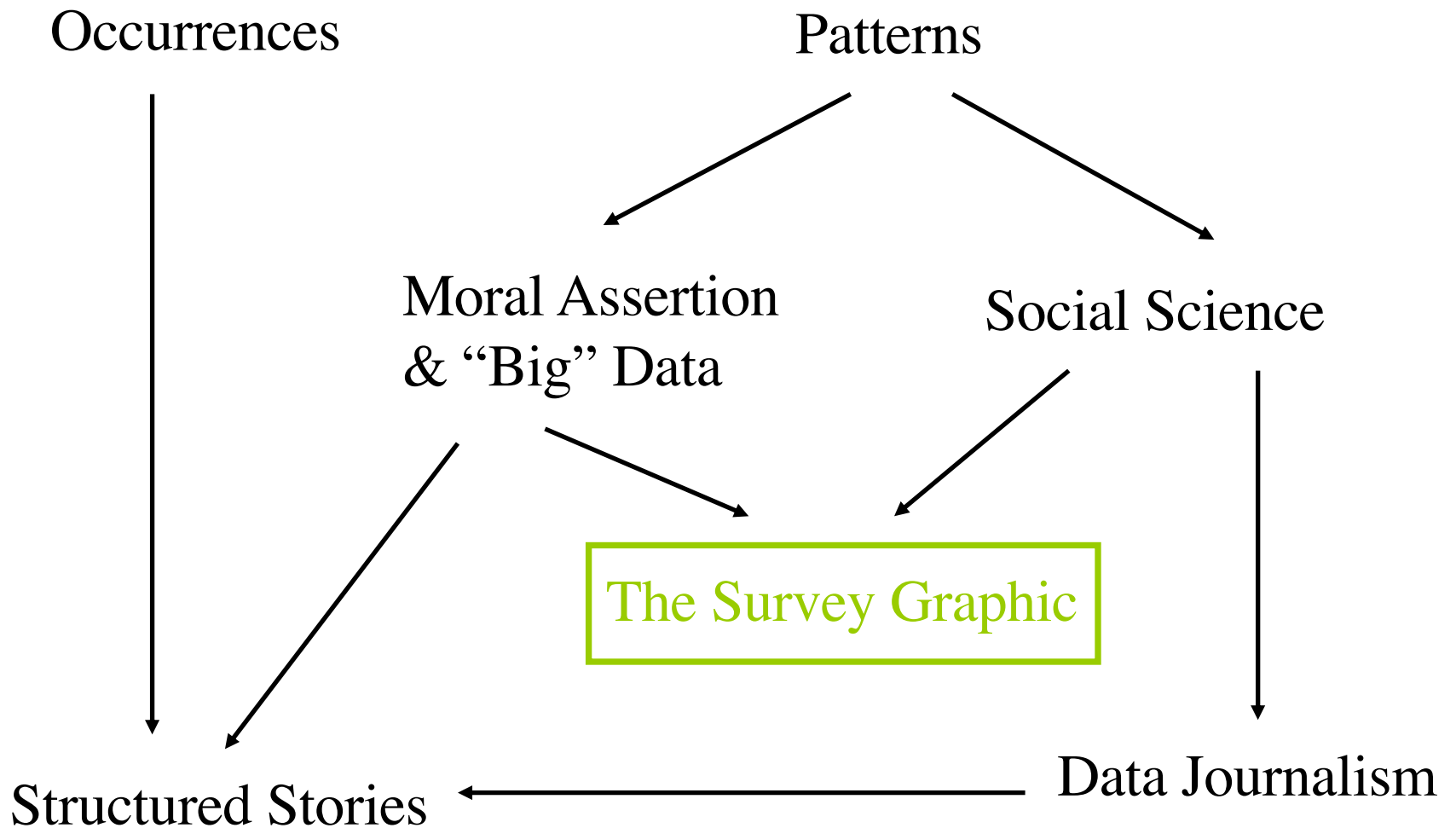
A Genealogy of Context In the News



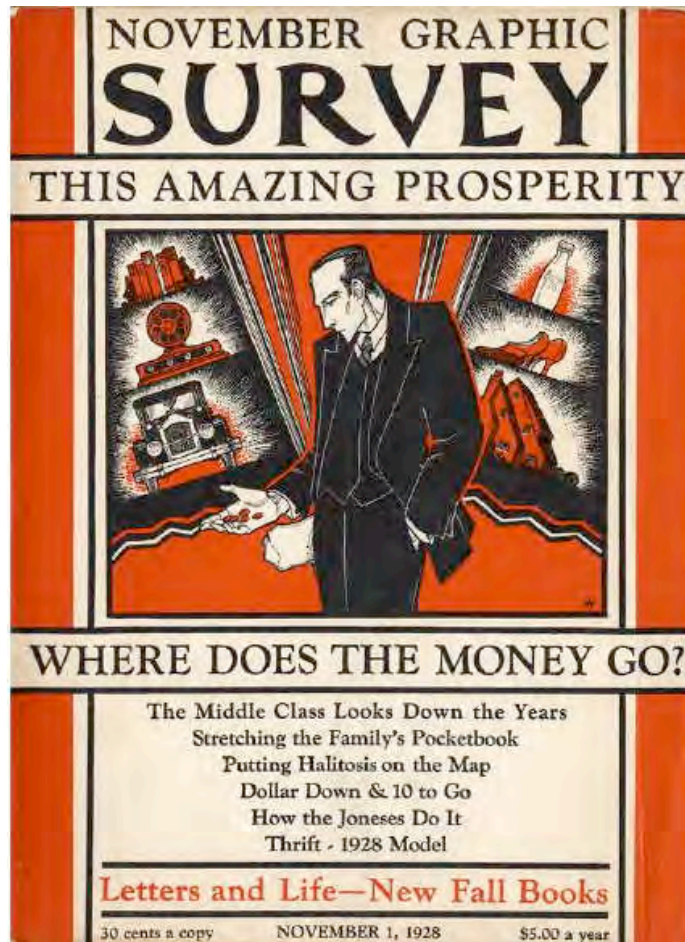
Social Survey Journalism



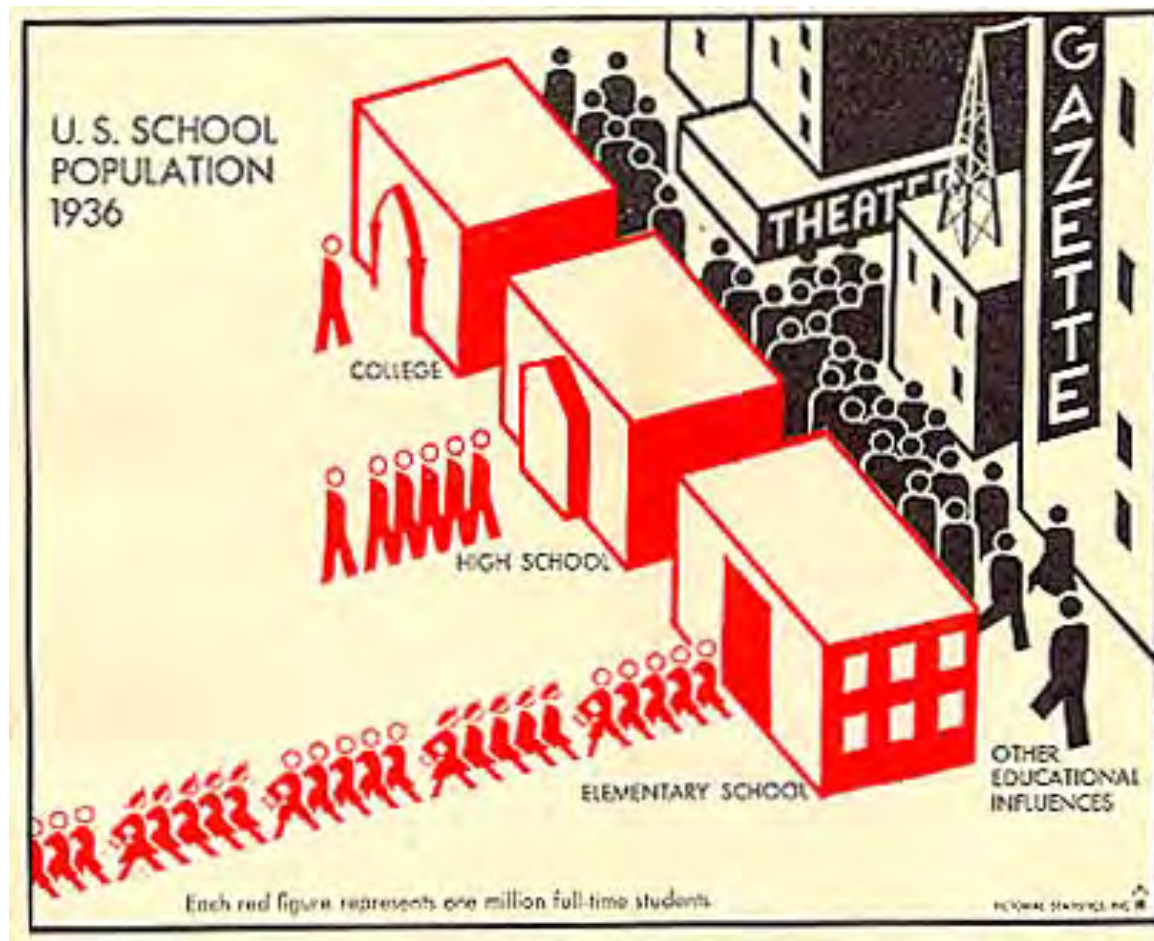
The Survey Graphic



The Survey Graphic

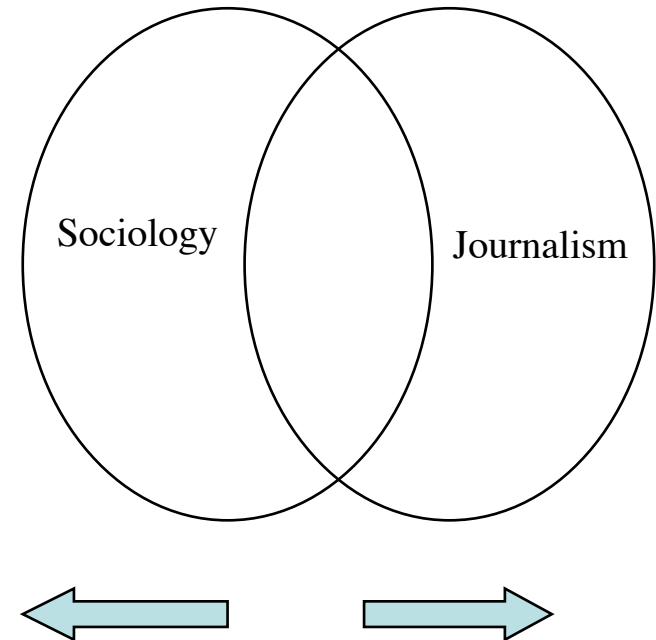


Building a Visual Fact Network



Professional Boundary work in Sociology and Journalism

- Muckraking
- Naïve Empiricism
- Problem-Oriented Sociology
- Objective journalism
- Variable based sampling
- Objective sociology



Professional Boundary Work in Sociology

- Content of articles with substantive discussions of journalism in top sociology flagship journals.
- Coded 564 articles
- Analyzed particularly relevant subject in chronological order.

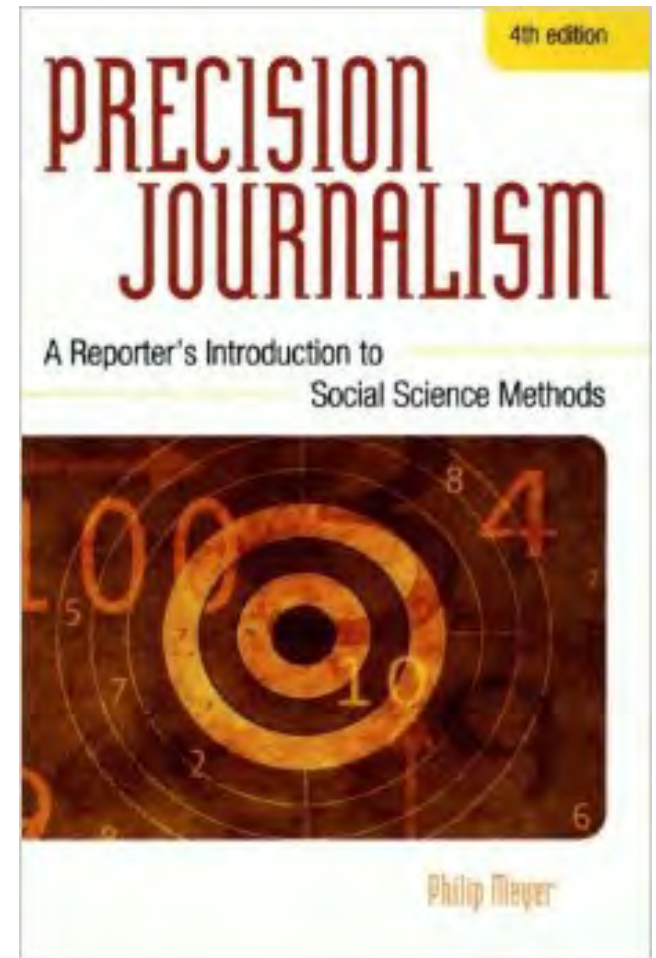


Content Analysis

- Journalism as a method to be emulated (1910s-1930s)
- Journalism as an “other,” representing a particularly well-written or a-theoretical piece of scholarship (1950s-1970s)
- Journalism as an object of empirical study (1970s and 80s)



Precision Journalism in the 1960s



The Rise of “Data” Journalism

- Increasing attention being paid to various forms of “quantified journalism” (Coddington 2015, Diakopoulos 2015, Usher 2017)
- Growth in the profession: 538.com, The Upshot, The Guardian
 - Often lump different forms of “quantified” journalism together.
 - Simplistic origin stories- primarily a story about technology and “entrepreneurial innovators.”

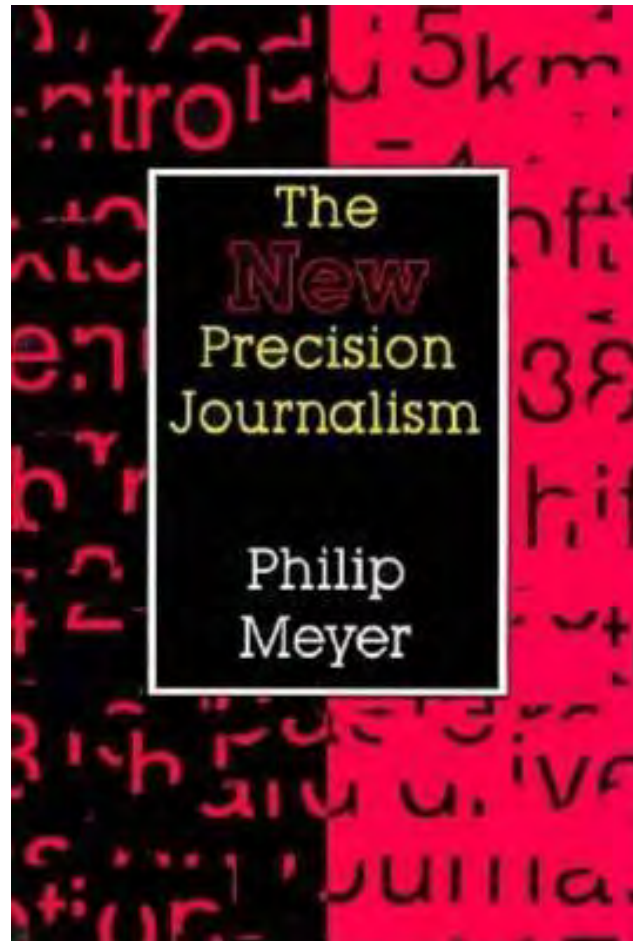
The Basic History



Philip Meyer Award



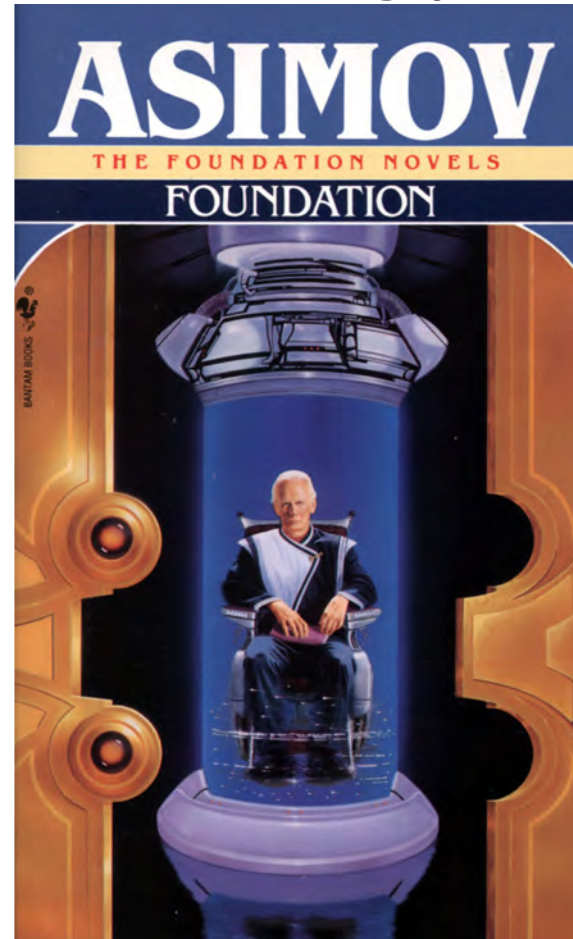
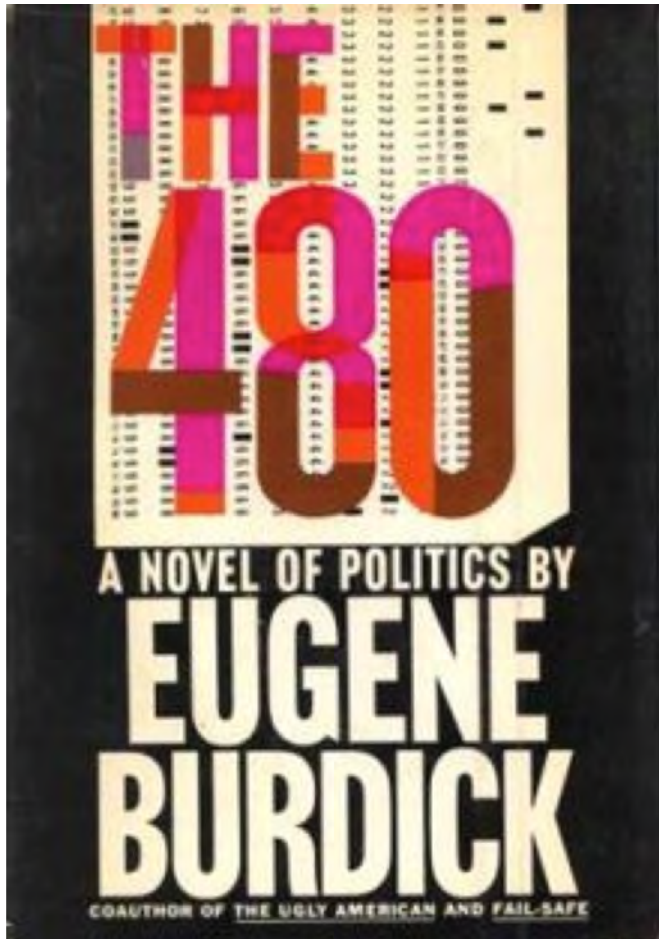
Precision Journalism (1973, 1991, 2014)



The Institutional and Cultural History of the 1960s

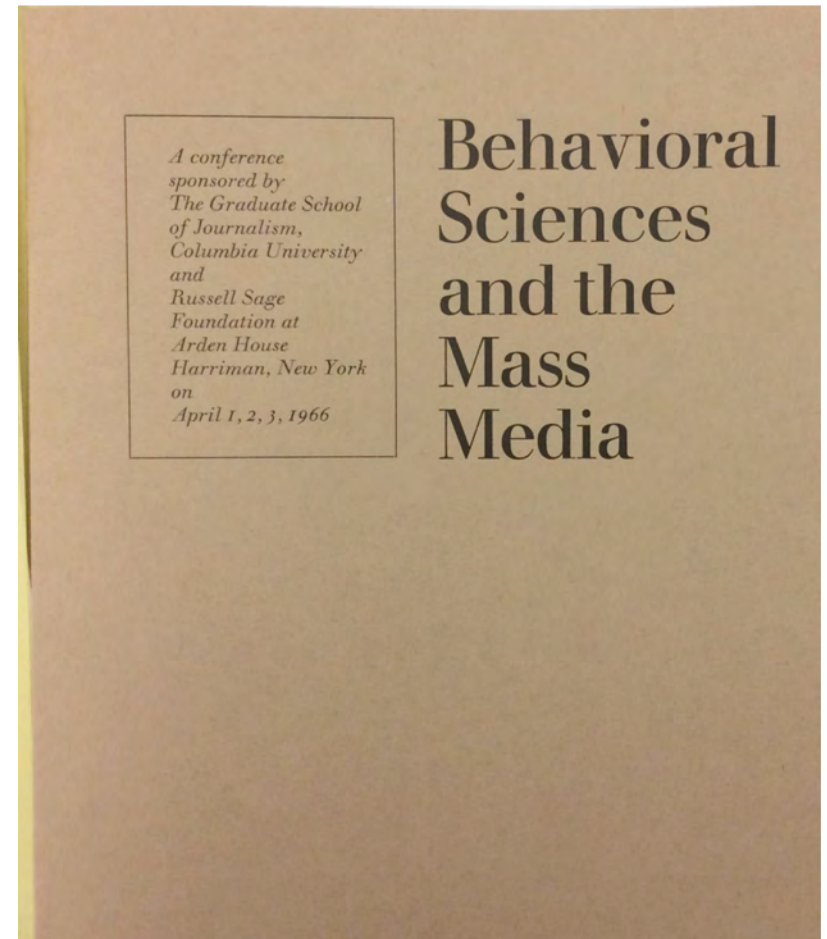
- Social Science and Foundations
- Varieties of “interpretive journalism.”
- New Visions of Technology- Computers and Databases
- Changing J-School Faculty
- CAR and NICAR

The High-Water Mark of “Normal” Sociology?



Russell Sage, Media, Social Science

- 1965 - 1975
- Student Fellowship Programs at Wisconsin, Columbia (“mid-career” program)
- Major study of news production
- Major Columbia Conference (1966)
- Primary goal: journalists should make



The “New Journalism” Enemy

- A retrospective adversary.
- Fact that it did meet Meyer’s criteria for finding a new “anchor point” made it both close and a threat.
- Primary sin: not the narrative but the methods.
 - Too much traditional “reporting.”



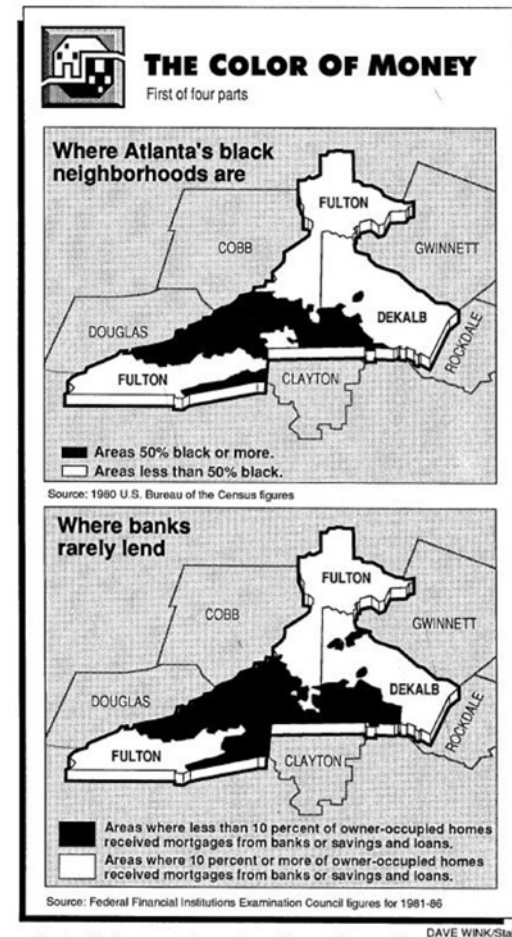
Rethinking the Database (and the Computer)

- The computer: not objective, but fast.
 - Journalists are professional enough to be objective.
- The actual important technology: not the computer, but the database.
- Specifically, the digitization of government databases.
 - Schudson (2015)



NICAR and Rethinking Investigations

- Quantitative and data-based journalism found their institutional home in IRE / NICAR
- Irony: Weapons of the bureaucracy now turned against the government.

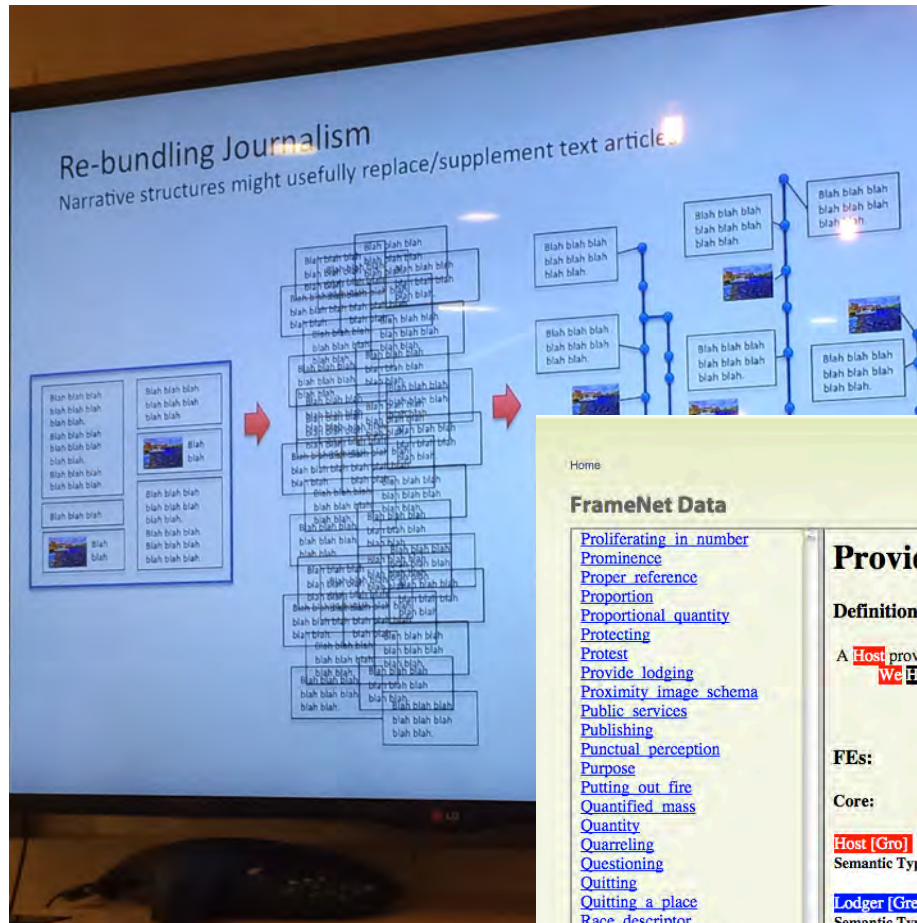


Green Eyeshades and Chi Squares, Revisited

- A way to give the PhD faculty at journalism and “mass communication” schools something to do to help the journalists.



Structured Journalism Today



Home

FrameNet Data

- [Proliferating in number](#)
- [Prominence](#)
- [Proper reference](#)
- [Proportion](#)
- [Proportional quantity](#)
- [Protecting](#)
- [Protest](#)
- [Provide lodging](#)
- [Proximity image schema](#)
- [Public services](#)
- [Publishing](#)
- [Punctual perception](#)
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- [Putting out fire](#)
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- [Quantity](#)
- [Quarreling](#)
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- [Quitting a place](#)
- [Race descriptor](#)
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- [Rank](#)
- [Ranked expectation](#)
- [Rape](#)
- [Rashness](#)
- [Rate description](#)

Provide_lodging

[Lexical Unit Index](#)

Definition:

A **Host** provides a temporary **Residence** for a **Lodger**.
We HOUSED her in our home for a while.

FEs:

Core:

Host [Gro]
Semantic Type: Sentient
The **Host** is the individual (or group of individuals) that own or control the **Residence** and allow the **Lodger** to temporarily stay there.

Lodger [Gre]
Semantic Type: Sentient
The **Lodger** is the individual who is given permission to lodge in the **Residence**.

Residence [I]
The location controlled by the **Host** which the **Lodger** stays at temporarily.

Non-Core:

Circumstances [cir]
The **Circumstances** are the conditions under which the **Host** provides lodging.

The Neo-Progressive Vision of Quantified Journalism

- Increasingly exact information is provided to largely rational and deliberative news consumers.
- Informational content is embedded in an aesthetic form, with the exact relationship between aesthetics and information blurred.
- Political stance is present but absent
- Values are subordinated to procedures

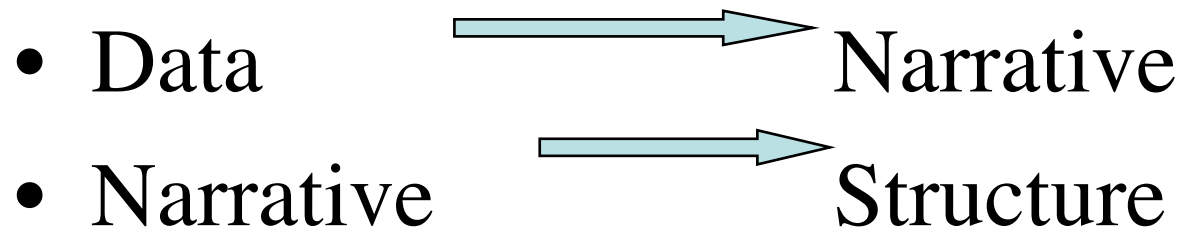
Structured Journalism

- What Is It?
- Why Does it Matter?
- Daily Practices
- Issues, Areas of Interest, and Questions

(1) Structured Journalism

- “The gist of Structured Journalism is to change the way we create content so as to maximize its shelf-life, as well as structuring – as much as possible – the information in stories, at the time of creation, for use in databases that can form the basis of new stories or information products.” (Reg Chua, 2010)

Data Journalism and Structured Journalism



(2) Why Does it Matter?

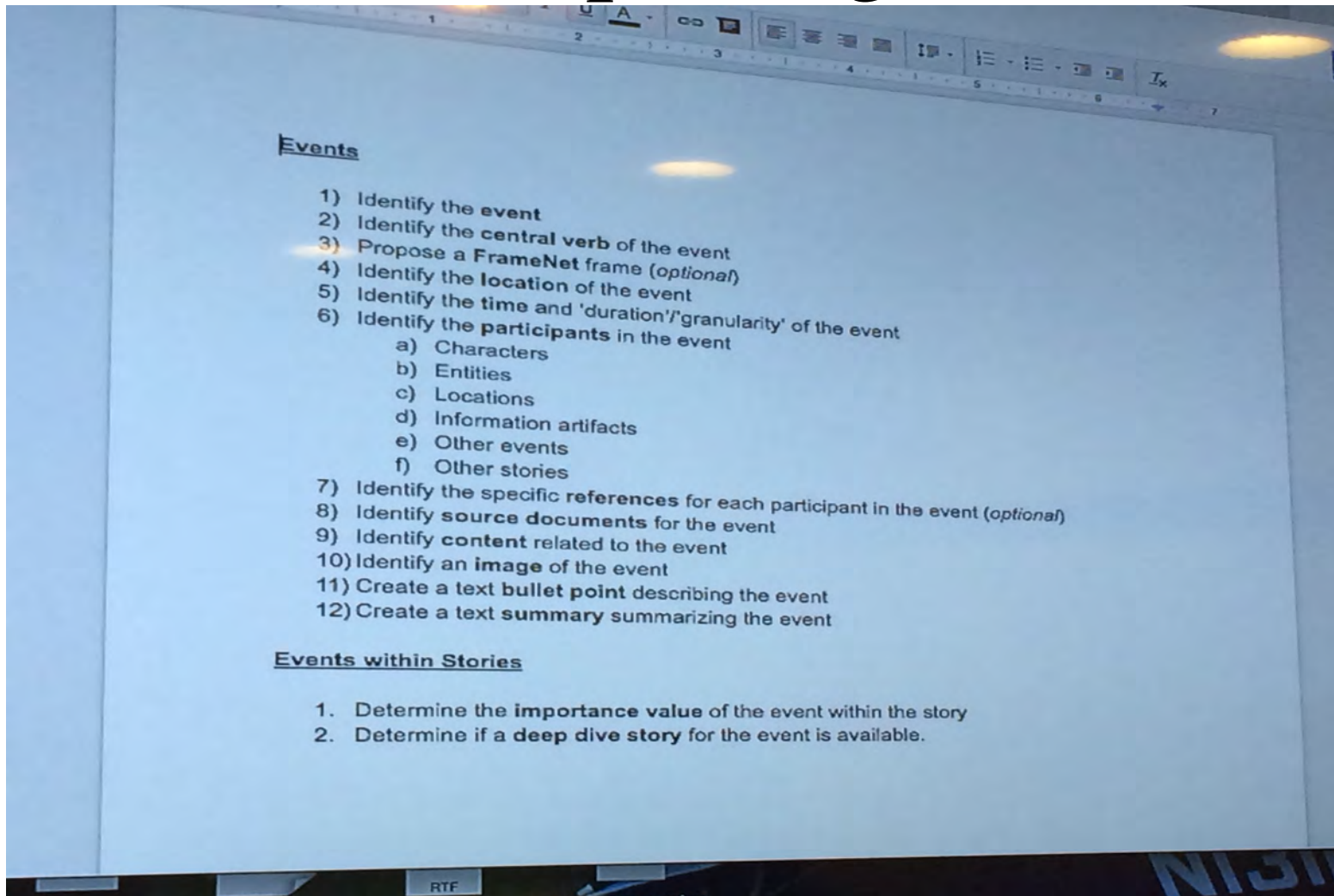
- Objectivity Reasons
- News Business Model Reasons
- Public Reasons

Ethnographic Fieldwork



- Embedded in “Structured Stories NYC” experiment for 8 weeks (June - July 2016)
- 21 days total
- 3 60 minute interviews (one w/ each staff member)
- Informal conversations w/ Bill Adair and David Caswell
- Methodological complexities of screenwork
- The experimental notion of Structured Stories

(3) Structure in Everyday Beat Reporting



Structured Events Tied Back Into Semantic Databases

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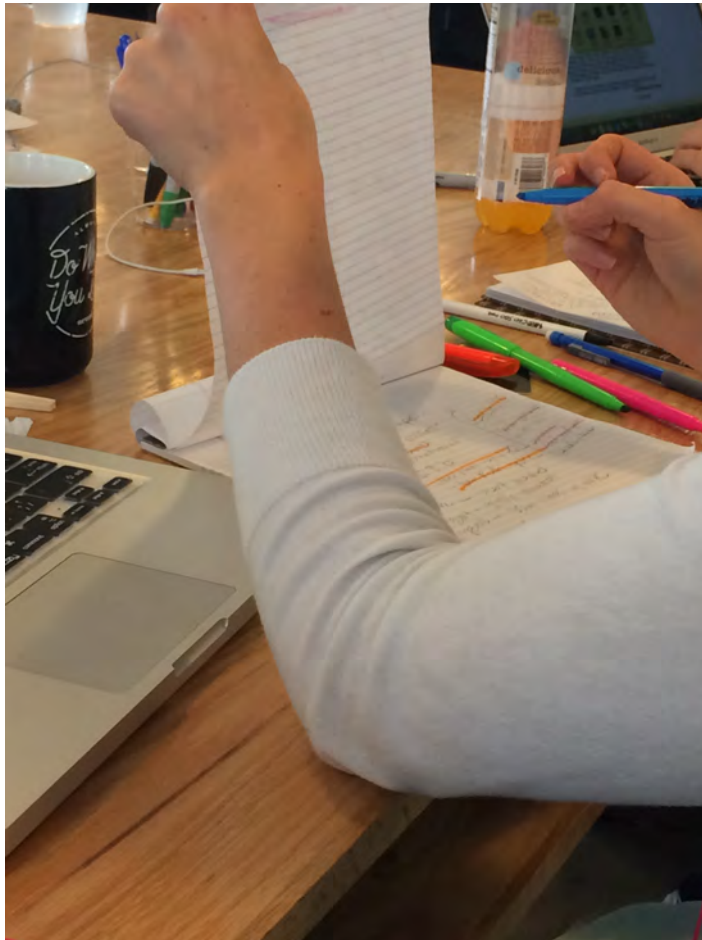
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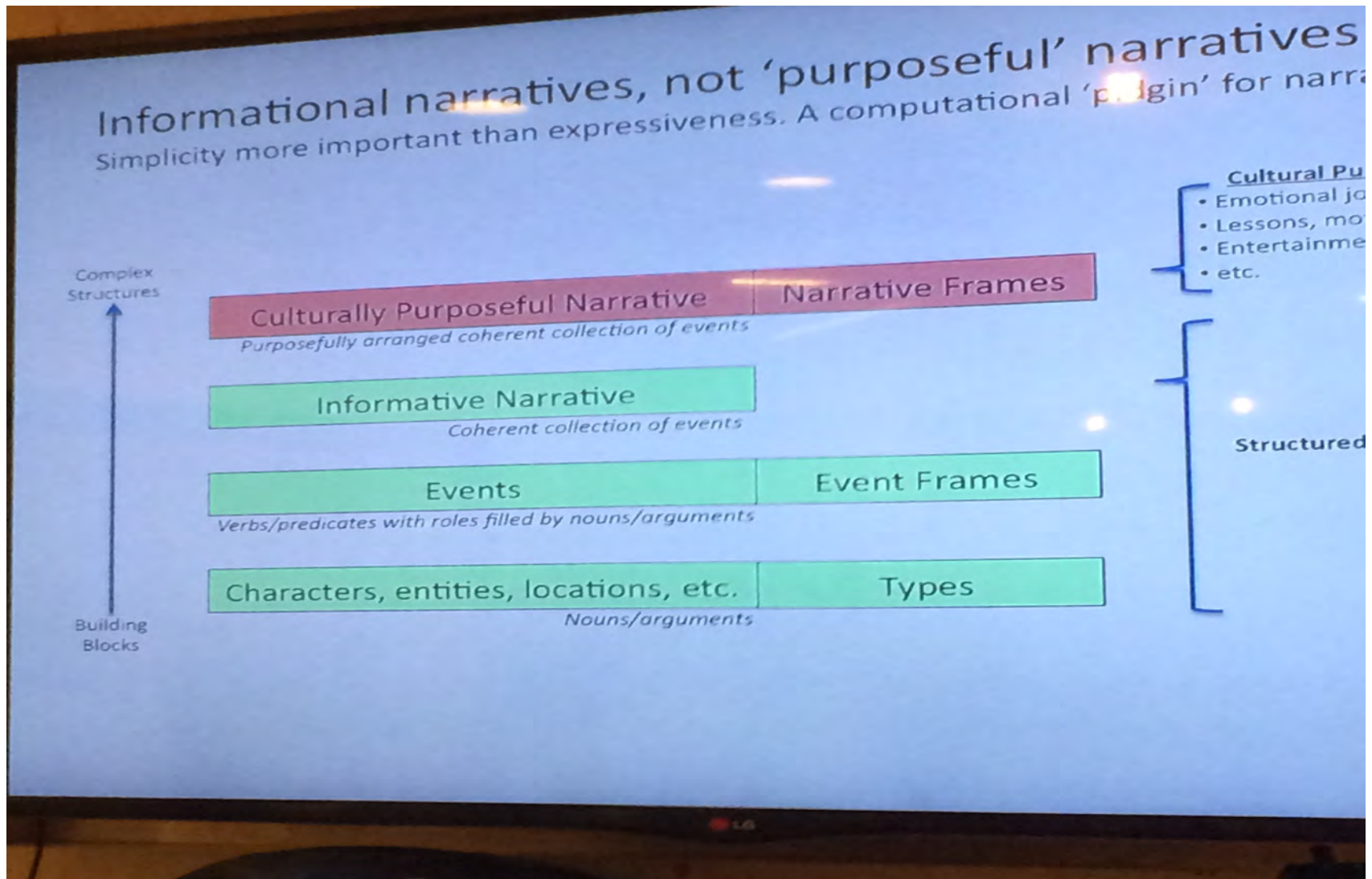
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The Daily Work

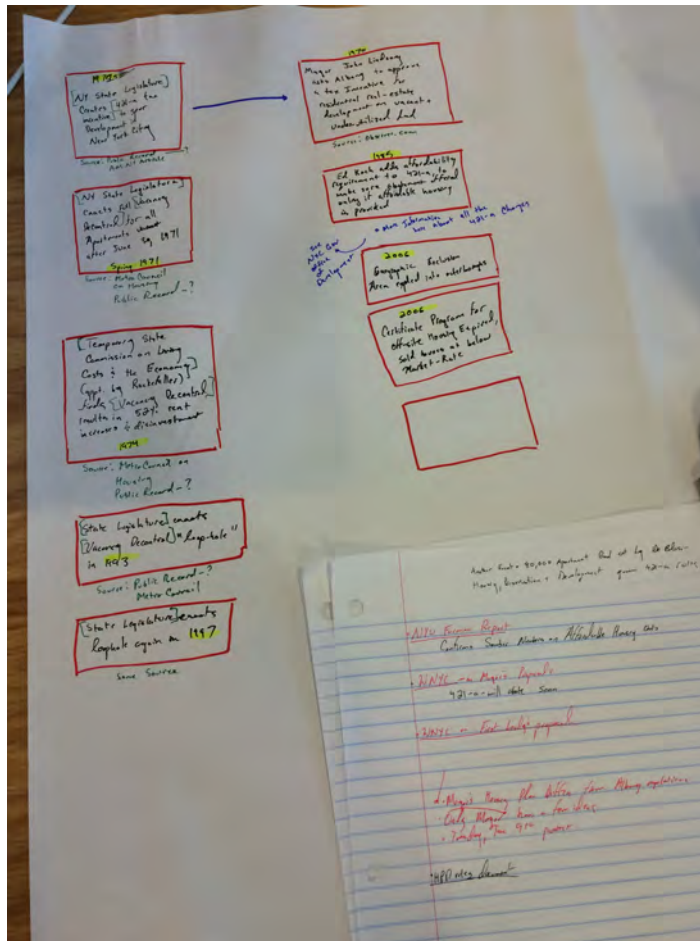


- Structured Stories
 - Threads (Uber, Public Housing, etc)
 - Stories
 - Events

Final Products



Final Issues and Questions



- What does it mean to ground “objectivity” on a semantic database?
- Should journalists bother going outside to cover stories?
- Is this rewarding work? If not, how to make it more rewarding?
- What’s the business model?
- What kind of accountability stems from structure?

Journalism's Assemblage of the Public

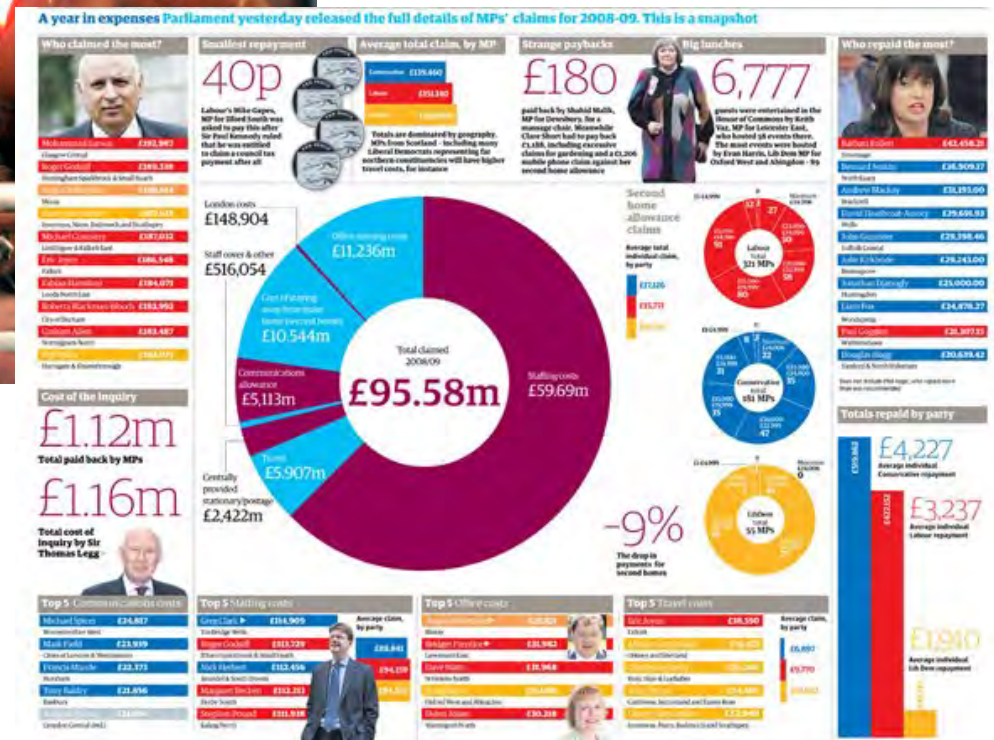
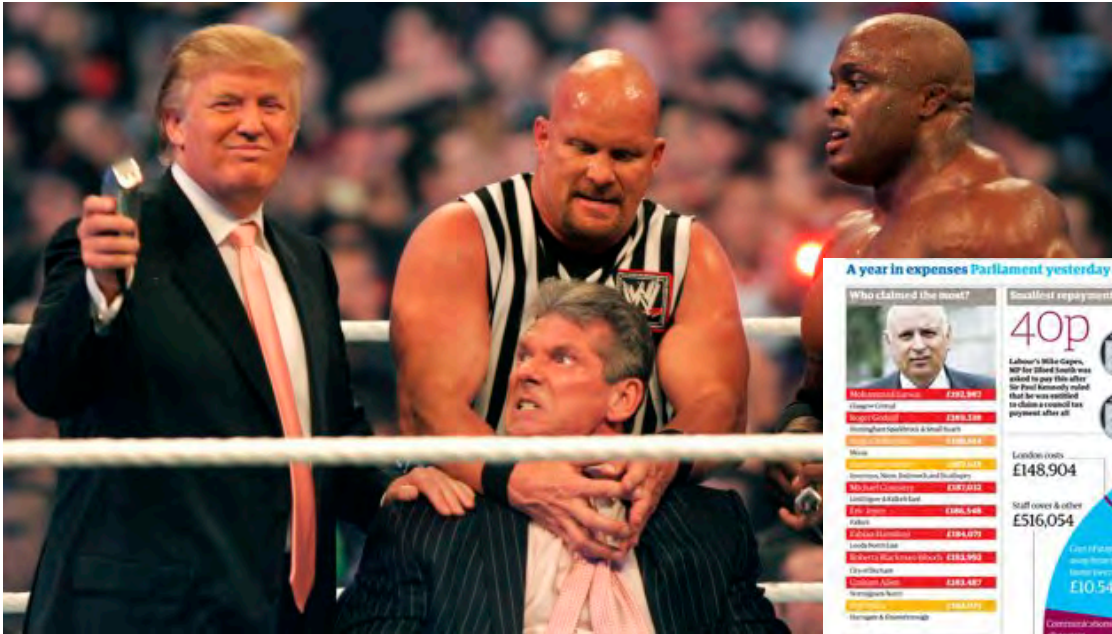
Journalistic “Visions
of the Public.”



PUBLICS

To what degree have scholars of data journalism adopted the journalistic vision of the public?

So, What's Next?



What a-rational publics are assembled by these rational journalistic forms?

What's Next (2)

- What are the emotional and aesthetic meanings of data for news consumers?



What's Next (3)

- What are the emotional and aesthetic meanings of data for news producers?
 - The passions of objectivity

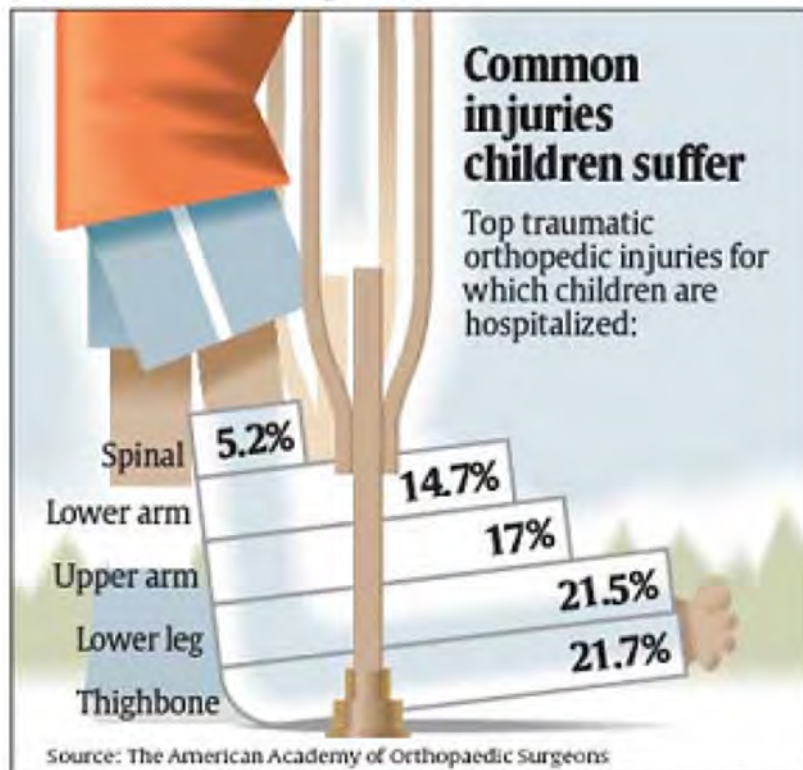
What's Next (4)



- What is the social role played by the *generic* news product and news image?
 - The wallpaper of data

What's Next (5)

USA TODAY Snapshots™



By Shannon Reilly and Frank Pempa, USA TODAY



Assembling Publics

