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Socializing Journalist Trainees in the Newsroom

On How to Capture the Intangible Parts of the Process[1]

Gitte Gravengaard & Lene Rimestad

Abstract

In the present article, we investigate socialization practices in the newsroom. The analyses demonstrate how journalist trainees are socialized into this particular professional culture and community of practice. Theoretically, we combine traditional news ethnography with linguistic anthropology, conversation analysis, and theories of profession in order to investigate and interpret social and cultural (re)production in the routinized practice in the newsroom. The units of analysis are interactions between journalist trainees and their editors concerning ideas for news stories. These interactions play a key role in the socialization process as important loci for learning about the craft because of the constant reinforcement of competent practice which takes place here. Thus, these interactions are important sites for cultural production and reproduction that support the building of professional vision.

Keywords: newsroom ethnography, socialization, journalism practice, journalist trainees, linguistic anthropology, ideation format

Introduction

Within journalism education, we often see the *apprentice model* in which journalist trainees, during their education, experience two fundamentally different ways of learning the trade: First, the university's lectures about journalism along with a range of assignments as the students learn *about* practice. And second, internship in a newsroom during which the intern learns to be a competent practitioner *through* practice. In Denmark, the period of internship is rather long compared to other countries. The journalism students work for one or one and a half year as trainees. This internship is preceded by at least one and a half years at the educational institution and followed by yet another year at the educational institution. The period of apprenticeship is with salary, approximately $2700 a month, and the interns' tasks in the newsroom are almost identical to those of the trained journalists. They are not just "helpers", they are *novice journalists*.

The focus of the present article is on internship, during which the journalist trainee finds himself, in the middle of praxis, attempting to put into practice what he has learned at journalism school. The professional socialization begins at the educational institution. However, the beginning of the internship is where the actual newsroom socialization process starts (cf. Cotter 2010), and this is our focus.

The research question for this study is: How do socialization processes take place in the routinized practice in the newsroom? In the present article, we initially describe socialization in general and how this has been studied within journalism studies. Then we set out our interdisciplinary theoretical framework, present our research design, and describe and discuss important findings showing how socialization takes place in the newsroom, focusing in particular on conversations and interactions between interns and editors.

Novices in a Community of Practice

In general terms, Baquedano-López (2001:345) defines socialization as "the process of becoming a competent member of society, of internalizing the norms, role expectations, and values of the community; in sum, of becoming culturally competent". When it comes to socialization into the news culture, the trainee needs to learn to become a competent member through acquisition of a range of *practice-related skills,* how to construct an idea for "a good news story", how to present an idea, how to write a good news story, how to conduct an interview etc., as well as through acquisition of the complex *set of values* underlying these skills, that is: assimilating a professional identity of being a journalist (Cotter 2010).

The socialization process is embedded in a specific *community of practice* (Wenger 1998) in which the professional veterans have common goals and share a repertoire of resources, for instance: attitudes, values, knowledge, assumptions, reference systems and experiences. In the newsroom, the interns, via *situated learning* (Lave and Wenger 1991), learn about this community of practice – for instance what does and does not constitute "a good news story" – by participating in the actual practice and monitoring acceptance and elimination of ideas (Donsbach 2004; O'Neill and Harcup 2009; Gravengaard and Rimestad 2011). The newcomers learn in practice and from practice – from what is said and what is not said by their superiors, thus becoming an even more competent member of the social group. This situated learning takes place because of the newcomers' *legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave and Wenger 1991), in which they are slowly introduced to the tasks of this community of practice. This involves the professional veterans and "interactions that cojoin less and more experienced persons in the structuring of knowledge, emotion, and social action" (Ochs 2001:227). Cotter (2010) emphasizes how the newsroom in this way provides a constant reinforcement of competent practice for the novice building a *craft ethos*.

The professional veterans, i.e. the trained journalists and editors, are perceived by theories of profession as *intuitive experts* (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986) with a large degree of tacit expert knowledge, based on their repertoire of experience from the routinized practice, cognitively structured as intuition (Polanyi 1958, 1983; Wackerhausen and Wackerhausen 2000; Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986). Large parts of this tacit, professional knowledge about a particular community of practice and its professional norms are passed on to newcomers in tacit ways (Gravengaard and Rimestad 2011). As Carr (2010) underlines, expertise is transmitted through verbal interaction between master and apprentice, but also through observation, internalization and imitation of patterned behaviours. Hence, novices are socialized through discourse and interaction. In order to become a competent member of a given group, it is not enough to receive

explicit instructions only. The novice also needs to *be in the task* (Lave and Wenger 1991; Duranti 1997).

Through this process of socialization, the journalist trainees acquire the knowledge that enables them to participate effectively and appropriately in this particular community of practice (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986; Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez 2002; Goodwin 2003), and they internalize the values and norms of the news organization. Aldridge and Evetts (2003) describe this acquired professionalism as one way in which news organizations create a control mechanism that works from a distance. As a consequence, the news organizations can minimize their direct control of work in favour of a more covert control of the autonomy of the journalists (Sigelman 1973; Berkowitz and Limor 2003; Preston 2009).

Socialization within Journalism Studies

As demonstrated in Figure 1, below, the concept of socialization into the profession of journalism has been conceptualized and studied in different ways. A major part of this research has studied socialization by focusing on the *products* of the socialization process: on the journalist trainees. By conducting surveys, researchers have been able to study how, for instance, attitudes, values and norms change during the period of internship (Bjørnsen et al. 2007; Hanna and Sanders 2012; Elmelund-Præstekær et al. 2008, 2009; Hovden et al. 2009).

As these surveys focus on the results and products of socialization, they are able to point out changes in attitudes, opinions, values, etc. However, they are not able to describe *how* this change is brought about and how the socialization process actually takes place in the newsroom. The socialization process itself still remains a *black box*.

A smaller part of this previous research focuses on socialization as a *process* and aims at describing what it takes to become a professional. In general, these scholars describe socialization processes through which newcomers in a newsroom learn both craft skills of the profession and internalize other tacit forms of knowledge that are difficult to trace (Sigelman 1973), diffuse and extremely informal (Preston 2009). Breed (1955) describes the socialization process as learning *by osmosis* and points to the covert ways in which editors can influence journalists and news content. In general, the policy of the news organization and the cultural and professional norms are tacit knowledge, seldom stated explicitly in the routinized practice in the newsroom (Furhoff 1986).

This previous research emphasizes the great importance of the socialization process. However, journalism research has not yet provided detailed empirical analyses of *how* this socialization actually takes place in the routinized everyday work practice in the newsroom. Machin and Niblock (2006: 177) refer to this as: “a significant gap in scholarly understanding of the socialization of young journalists”. The present study is an attempt at filling in this gap.

Figure 1. *Research on Socialization within Journalism Studies*

	Theoretical focus	Empirical focus
The professional practitioner as a PRODUCT of sozialisation		
The professional practitioner "in the making". Sozialisation as a PROCESS		Our current research project

Studying Socialization

Kulick and Schieffelin (2005) emphasize that language is the "most central and crucial dimension of the socialising process" as the novice becomes a competent member of a particular community of practice. Furthermore, Schiffelin and Ochs both underline that "all interactions are potentially socializing contexts" (Ochs 1988: 6; Schiffelin 1990: 19), and that ordinary conversational discourse is a powerful socializing medium (Schiffelin and Ochs 1986: 172). Therefore, in order to study the socialization process, we have to perform microanalytical studies of the social interaction in the newsroom involving both novices and experts, analysing language use and its social entailments in this particular community of practice (Cotter 2010).

The study presented here is interdisciplinary, as we bring together insights from linguistics, sociology, anthropology, theories of profession, and journalism studies in order to explore the socialization process. This is part of a recent shift in research focus towards combining 1) the traditional *newsroom ethnography* carried out by sociologists in the 1970s and 1980s focusing on routines with 2) *linguistic micro-analysis* inspired by linguistic anthropology focusing on "communicative practices as constitutive of the culture of everyday life" (Duranti 1997:xv) and 3) *conversation analysis* focusing on talk-in-interaction and how institutional practice is "talked into being" (Arminen 2005). The overall aim is to combine a detailed analyses of the micro-level of discourse and interaction with analyses of social structure, institutional roles and identities, and cultural practice (Coupland and Jaworski 2001) in what Catenaccio et al. (2010) call an "ethnographic, field-based, interaction-oriented news production research" investigating routinized practice in the newsroom. For other examples of this research trend, see for instance: Catenaccio et al. (2010); Cotter (2001, 2010); Perrin (2011, 2013); Van Hout and Jacobs (2008); Van Hout and Van Praet (2011); Gravengaard and Rimestad (2011); Gravengaard (2010, 2012).

Professional Expertise Acquired through Language

When building up professional expertise, both institutions and professions create boundaries between ways of knowing the same object (Abbott 1988; Goodwin 1994; Carr 2010) as they cultivate, authorize, and organize certain knowledge practices. The ability *to see*

a meaningful event (Goodwin 1994) – for instance to construct an idea for what will be conceived of as "a good news story" by the editor – is a socially situated activity accomplished through the deployment of discursive practices in the newsroom. The result of these processes is what Goodwin terms *professional vision*, that is, "socially organised ways of seeing and understanding events that are answerable to the distinctive interests" of this particular social group (ibid.:606). The professional vision is accomplished through practice, and our study focuses on *how* this is actually performed in practice.

As professional expertise is inherently interactional and accomplished and enacted through linguistic practices (Goodwin 1994, 1996; Carr 2010), the interns in the newsroom learn, in their relationships with veterans, how to define and interpret objects in an expert way and to master a linguistic repertoire (Carr 2010; Cotter 2010; Van Hout and Van Praet 2011). Therefore, we must analyse practice and the talk-in-interaction in the actual routinized practice in the newsroom and study how objects of knowledge are socially constructed through systematic discursive procedures within this particular community of practice where news is talked into being (Ekström 2007).

Within linguistic anthropology, *language socialization* focuses on how specific culturally meaningful practices become acquired (or not) by combining ethnography and linguistics (Kulick and Schieffelin 2005). When paying close attention to the linguistic forms that are used to socialize novices into expected roles and behaviours, it becomes possible to offer a processual account on how individuals come to be particular kinds of culturally intelligible subjects. The close analysis of situated language use can provide "insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity" (Rampton et al. 2004:2). Boden (1994) defines the structures of practical action as "the observable, accountable, and irreducibly local instantiation of structure in action". Therefore, studying interaction entails studying the organization as it is created interactionally in authentic practice through language and actions.

Conversation Analysis and Ethnographic Knowledge

As this research project aims at offering an insight into how socialization happens at the micro-level in routinized interaction in the newsroom, we draw upon *conversation analysis* (Sacks et al. 1974; Heritage 1984; Schegloff 1984, 1988, 1992) in order to perform micro-level analysis of actual everyday conversations. This gives us the opportunity to capture some of the intangible and blurred parts of the socialization process and to better understand the relation between social structure and the everyday practices of journalism.

Conversation analysis (CA) studies social interaction and focuses on practitioners' talk-in-interaction. CA treats talk as the primary vehicle for the accomplishment of social actions, as it looks at how social action is brought about through the organization of talk-in-interaction. This is an observable part of doing social actions in a particular context, and CA focuses on the construction of social realities and practices in these interactional practices (Pomerantz and Fehr 1997; ten Have 1999; Arminen 2005).

Our study is what Antaki (2011) refers to as *institutional applied CA* aiming at illuminating routine institutional work. Thus far, CA has had a rather limited impact on journalism studies (Ekström 2007), and only recently have researchers used this theory to analyse everyday talk-in-interaction in the newsroom (Cotter 2010; Van Hout and

Van Praet 2011; Gravengaard and Rimestad 2011). CA is a beneficial way to scrutinize the socialization process, as it facilitates an understanding of *how* institutional interaction is organized and constituted through language, thus providing the researcher with a bridge between linguistic analysis and the sociological investigation of reality, as Drew (2001) puts it.

From linguistic anthropology (Duranti 1997), we know that one cannot, however, rely on analyses of conversation and interaction alone. In order to understand and interpret the different layers of meaning involved in the interaction and to understand the values, routines, roles, and relationships in the community of practice, it is important for the researcher to acquire detailed background knowledge about this community (Duranti 1997; Antaki 2001, 2011).

The Research Design

The present analyses of socialization processes are based on empirical studies of 12 Danish journalist trainees from the University of Southern Denmark during their one-year internship. The 12 trainees worked at two national daily newspapers, two national tabloid newspapers, and two national Danish TV stations. There were two trainees at each media. The research design consisted of:

1. Participant observations made over the period of a year and following all 12 trainees three days each
2. Semi-structured interviews with the journalist trainees before, during and after their internship
3. Three e-mail surveys among the interns during their internship period

This research design allowed us to be in the middle of everyday practice in the newsroom and to closely monitor and record all interactions and conversations during entire workdays. Moreover, we could talk to the interns during these days about their perception of this practice. The semi-structured interviews allowed us to spend 1-2 hours of undisturbed time with the interns, during which we could focus on their descriptions and thoughts about being an intern, on their feelings, problems, victories, wishes, and fears. The e-mail surveys were conducted three times during the internship period, and each time we asked very open questions about what was going on right now, and about how the intern was feeling. Also, we had 3-5 questions each time connected to a certain theme, for instance the relation between the intern and his or her editor.

The Relation between the Intern and the Editor

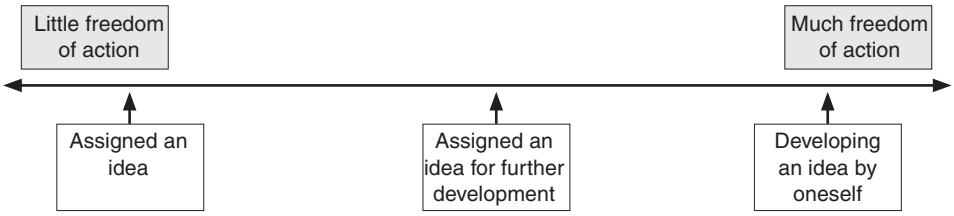
In the present article, we are particularly interested in analysing the relation between the intern and the editor. The editor is *the veteran* occupying the organizational role as "boss" and functioning as a gatekeeper for the intern trying to "sell" his idea (Gravengaard 2012). The intern is *the novice* about to learn and become a competent member of this professional culture. There is an obvious hierarchical difference between the editors and the interns as well as an asymmetrical distribution of cultural knowledge and influence and power in the organization among the two groups.

In general, journalism studies have not paid much attention to the important relationship between journalists and editors (Schudson 2000), and almost no focus has been put on the relationship between journalist trainees and their editors. Two Danish surveys show that Danish journalists feel a high degree of independence in relation to their editors; especially if they work in the newsrooms of daily papers (Gravengaard 2010; Skovsgaard 2010). At the same time, they also sometimes feel that their autonomy is constrained by the editors, especially when selecting and framing news stories (Skovsgaard 2010). Therefore, we consider the idea of development phase to be particularly relevant when studying socialization processes, as this is one of the key activities in news production (Gans 1980; Becker and Vlad 2009). We focus on this early process, and we will zoom in on what happens between the intern and the editor, when the intern is "getting an idea for a news story".

"Getting an Idea for a News Story"

By studying conversations and interactions between interns and editors in the routinized practice in the newsroom, we found that "getting an idea for a news story" can happen in several different ways – all of which socialize the intern into the professional culture in different ways, creating different identities for the novice and the veteran, respectively. We have placed these ways of "getting an idea" on a continuum stretching from the intern being "assigned an idea" to the intern "developing an idea by himself".

Figure 2. *"Getting an idea"*



In the following, we give examples of these different *ideation formats,* demonstrating how each of them affects the socialization process and creates different identities for the novice and the veteran. In the examples, the coding has been simplified to facilitate reading for scholars not familiar with conversation analysis.

Assigned an idea

In these cases, the intern is assigned an idea for a new news story by the editor. The editor describes the idea in detail and tells the intern how to move from idea to news story by issuing orders and directives about which angle to choose, people to interview, questions to ask, and how to build up the news story.

The following example is from a face-to-face conversation between an editor and an intern at a national daily paper. The intern is assigned an idea by the editor and has to write about a major Danish (and international) company that is about to choose a new chairman of the board of directors. The candidate for becoming this new chairman is

currently a professor at a Danish University. "I" is the intern, and "E" is the editor. They are sitting at the intern's desk in the newsroom.

> E: "I would be happy if you would look at: Who is he, this potential new chairman? Right now, it's only the present chairman who points to him. It could be someone else in the end (…) He's a professor in – I think – nuclear physics or something like that. At the University of XXXX (…) So this is what we're going to do. First: We're going to try to find out: Who is he?"
> I: "Yes"
> E: "Call somebody at the university in XXX. Call him. Does he see himself as the new chairman or only as a candidate? What does he have to contribute? Then we also have to write some kind of portrait of him – and try to come closer to: What kind of person is he? What is he capable of? What is his background? What are his qualifications for this job? Ahh… and what is his attitude towards: "How do you feel about 'one of your type' sitting in this chair? You are an expert within a totally different field?""
> I: "Mmmm"
> E: "What is the justification for you sitting there? Do you think this is a good solution? He will probably not say much. Perhaps he will not say anything to you"
> I: "Yes"
> E: "Let us try that. Try also to talk to some of his colleagues at the faculty. Will anybody say anything about him? What type of person is he? Then we have to talk to (…) some experts on this. I've sent you some phone numbers and stuff"
> I: "Yes"
> E: "How does this work? Do they know of experiences abroad where people from higher education institutions occupy these positions? Does it work well? Are they actually competent? Do they know of any data showing how these organizations perform compared to those with a more 'classic' chairman of the board of directors?"
> I: "Yes"

The editor is dominating in the excerpt, as he is instructing the novice by issuing orders and directives. The editor defines angles, sources and questions for the interviews. The intern answers by saying "yes" and "mm". These minimal affirmative responses (Heritage 1984) indicate both his attentiveness to and positive acknowledgement of the orders the editor is giving him. Not much is left for the intern to decide, and as a consequence not much freedom of action is given. This creates an identity for the editor as "the boss in charge" making the decisions, controlling the workflow and telling the newcomer exactly how and what to do, and it creates an identity for the intern as the newcomer following orders – and also as a novice lacking the expert knowledge that is required in order to complete this task. In these instances, the novice learns about what is "a good news story" by following the veteran's orders.

Assigned an idea for further development

More freedom of action is given to the intern when he or she is involved in the development of the idea. In these cases, the intern is assigned an idea – typically a topic

(algae and dead fish) or a case (undeclared employment and new legislation) – by the editor combined with the question: "Could you look further into this?" The editor might, in such cases, suggest possible angles or possible interviewees, but the idea is not final as in the previous example. The intern has to finish the development of the idea himself.

The following example is from a face-to-face conversation between an editor and an intern at a TV station. The intern is assigned an idea about a topic – algae cause dead fish – by the editor. The editor thinks that this idea could be developed into a news story and asks the intern to look further into it. "I" is the intern, and "E" is the editor. They stand near the intern's desk in the newsroom.

> E: "Listen, XX (name) has just arrived at the newsroom saying – as he always does this time of year: "There are algae everywhere"…. At first, I don't pay attention because he says this every year because his son is an angler"
> I: "Yeah, I know that"
> E: "In short, I couldn't help listening because he kept on talking about these algae"
> I: "I can imagine"
> E "But I cannot say if there is a news story"
> I: "We will have to find out"
> E: "But I think …. The only thing I can say for certain is that we have nice weather and we have a helicopter in the air anyway. And if it is true that the fish stock (…) suffers from these algae….. It could be: the Little Belt, North Funen, East Jutland…. Should we try to get an overview as to whether there actually is a problem here – that does not exist every March? (…) Because if you are going to make a spring reportage, anglers, helicopter – and also, check if there really, factually speaking, is a news story here, then you have enough work to do. I can picture it. In this weather it would be nice"
> I: "Yes, definitely"
> E: "Then you can have all afternoon to fiddle with this and go outside. And if you need to interview someone in Copenhagen, then we will take care of that for you"
> I: "Yes, yes"
> E: "So you'll make the reportage – if there is a story. Right?"
> I: "I'll find out. Yes"

In this example, the idea assigned to the intern is more open-ended than in the previous example, and the intern's responses indicate the shared knowledge about and responsibility for the idea. The editor suggests that the finished news story should consist of "something about" algae, dead fish, beautiful pictures from the sunshine (taken from a helicopter) and perhaps an expert (the person from Copenhagen in the extract above). And within this framework, the intern has to develop the idea and create a news story. In other instances, the editor only decides the topic for the idea, and the intern has to develop an idea for a news story about this topic.

These examples create an identity for the editor as the one who decides the topic for the news story, but who relies on the intern to be capable of transforming this vague idea into a news story. Simultaneously, the identity constructed for the intern is: a novice who has so much expert knowledge about the routinized practice that he is capable of completing the task at hand. Or at least the intern is given the opportunity to try to solve it.

In these instances, the novice learns about what is "a good news story" by being given the opportunity to create one within a more or less specified framework of suggestions from the veteran or perhaps with only a topic given beforehand.

Developing an idea by oneself

Most freedom of action is given to the intern when he himself creates and develops ideas for new news stories. In these instances, he develops the idea and the angle, researches it, and considers or even plans his sources, cases, and questions. After that, the intern presents the idea to the editor.

As a result, the very first part of the ideation process is rather independent from the editor, and the intern is not obliged to follow a range of orders pertaining to a given idea. This does of course not mean that the intern can make up any idea he wishes. The idea must still comply with the editor's conception of "a good news story", and there is no guarantee that the editor will accept the idea when it is presented by the intern. However, compared to the previous examples this way of working grants the intern more freedom to develop an idea.

The interns' own ideas can cover many things, from ideas about treasure troves or weapons disappearing from military barracks to ideas concerning juicers or parents' GPS surveillance of children. An intern at a national daily paper explains about ideas he has developed himself:

> Often it starts with something you have perhaps read somewhere. It is a very good idea to read XX (name of newspaper) if you write about matters concerning the church. Often they just know things first. However, the news story I did on the work environment in the national churches was because of a little theme on their own website. There it was not a critical story, but I developed the idea. My story about dealing with hash stems from a report. I think it was a PhD thesis. And the story I did on the trade union movement, that was just something I had been thinking about: Why is it that all the unions – or most of them anyway – almost 'cling' to the red block? (ed. the socialist wing in the Danish Parliament). Is it because they know that they might get more influence after an election – or what is it? And that was what we tried to find out

In these processes, the intern creates and develops the idea himself. He reads, sees or hears something that gives him an idea for a new news story. In these cases, the intern has a major influence on the idea development process.

This way of working and "getting ideas" creates an identity for the editor as a gatekeeper and a coach who expects the intern to be capable of finding, developing and presenting ideas that the editor will perceive as "a good news story". And the identity constructed for the intern is that of a novice doing what the trained journalists do: constructing ideas for "good news stories". When giving the intern this possibility, it is also implied that he has enough knowledge about the community of practice to be able to create such an idea and develop it into a news story. In these instances, the novice learns about "a good news story" by creating it himself in practice.

This is rather similar to the way in which professional veterans – the trained journalists – work themselves. And it displays expertise when an intern is capable of developing

and presenting an idea that the editor acknowledges as a "good news story". This is a sign of integration into the community of practice, displaying craft ethos and professional vision. Therefore, this is what the trainees see as one of their main goals.

Freedom of action is desirable to most of the interns in our study. However, some of the interns also stress that it is often a less demanding task to "just" follow the editor's orders compared to standing before this "abyss of freedom", as one intern puts it. Working this way demands considerable expert knowledge and independence on the part of the novice. In many newsrooms, interns are expected to create their own ideas. As one intern explains:

> Already the first day here, the editor asked: "Ok, what do you have for the front page today?" It was only for fun, and he smiled. However, every day we can sense these expectations from him

Some of the interns are very comfortable with these demands, other interns consider them strenuous. One intern describes:

> It's a little difficult to come up with ideas every morning. Every morning they ask you: "What are you going to do today?" And I don't know (…) It's hard for me not to be able to live up to these expectations

The intern feels uncomfortable not being able to produce ideas and thereby not being able to demonstrate professional competence. Another intern dreams of becoming better at "getting ideas":

> It's difficult for me. I don't get many ideas (…) And the others have a lot of ideas. Where do they find out about all that? (…) I wish I could be better at saying: "I want to do this" and get those ideas

Becoming a Competent Member

During the one-year period of apprenticeship, we saw progress in most of the trainees, as it became easier for them to create ideas for news stories. They became more and more competent members of the community of practice, learning how to create an idea and what constituted "a good news story" in that newsroom. And the longer they stayed in the newsroom, the more they were allowed to develop their own ideas.

In general, if the editors thought that the interns' own ideas were "good ideas", then the interns were more likely to be granted freedom to develop more ideas themselves. In the words of Schiffelin and Ochs (1986:166), the novices in the beginning carried out this particular task through *guided interactions*, and from that they developed skills in a zone of what Vygotsky would term *proximal development,* and in this way, moved forward from being guided to more independent ways of working. When the interns begin to participate in the routine of "getting an idea", the routine's predictable structure affords "an arena for practice and reinforcement" (Peters and Boggs 1986: 84) – in particular, a reinforcement of competent practice, of professional expertise and professional vision. However, when transferring from one news desk to another, as part of the intern program in the media organization, this pattern often repeated itself because it took some time to assimilate with a new editor and a new subject.

Conclusion: The Relevance of Studying Socialization

By combining an analysis of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction with ethnographic and contextual data, we have been able to explore the relationship between the micro-level of talk-in-interaction in the routinized practice and the wider social and institutional structures to which they contribute. In this way, we offer a behind-the-scenes look at important elements of the practice of socialization in the newsroom where news is talked into being. The interactional analyses made it possible to capture some of the intangible and blurred parts of this socialization process and the construction of craft ethos and professional vision, and how this is produced and reproduced through interaction. The findings complement previous research demonstrating how expertise is enacted in newsroom meetings (Cotter 2010; Van Hout and VanPreaet 2011, Gravengaard and Rimestad 2011). In the routinized practice in the newsroom, the different ways of "getting an idea" are not explicitly described, nor is the development towards more freedom of action and less interference and control. What we have described in this article is *done* in practice and *through* practice, but not explicitly voiced *in* practice. Hence, it becomes examples of how tacit expert knowledge is passed on in tacit ways in the routinized practice in the newsroom.

The increasing freedom of action experienced by the interns is interesting when discussing tacit socialization, because there might not actually be such a great difference between "little" and "much freedom of action". As the interns become more competent members of the community of practice, they internalize values, norms and knowledge, making the overt and direct corrections of culturally undesirable behaviour from the editors more and more superfluous. In this way, the socialization process has done exactly what Aldridge and Evetts (2003) define as creating a control mechanism that works *from a distance*. We see, towards the end of the internship period, much less direct control, as the gatekeeper who at first was personified by the editor has now been internalized.

The knowledge produced in the present study is relevant to the profession and the professional veterans. "Getting an idea for a new news story" is one of the most important skills for a journalist. However, the socialization process and the ideation process are parts of the veterans' routinized practice and expert knowledge seldom explicated, and hence seldom discussed. The analyses provide an opportunity to transform parts of the editors' tacit expert knowledge into a voiced knowledge. This creates an opportunity for editors to gain a more nuanced insight into their actual practice, and furthermore allows them to discuss and reflect upon this practice: Is this the most fruitful way to develop the competency for "getting a good idea"? Is this the most fruitful way to learn how to be an independent and innovative journalist? In this way, the analyses of the interaction may concretize, broaden, detail and perhaps even correct the veterans' professional stock of knowledge (Peräkylä and Vehviläinen 2003) and their understanding of their routinized practice and interaction in the newsroom with the interns (Perrin 2013; Zelizer 2013).

Furthermore, the study can also establish a general point in socialization research, demonstrating just *how* the socialization process takes place at a linguistic micro-level. By investigating, interpreting, and documenting social reproduction and analysing ways in which practice becomes acquired, we can also point out where and how it is acquired differently from what was intended, or not acquired at all (cf. Kulick and Schieffelin 2005).

Note

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