

**THE EVOLUTION OF ONLINE NARRATIVE JOURNALISM**  
**A Content Analysis of Longform Narrative Pieces Published on NYTimes.com**

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## 1. Introduction

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When digitalization started to drastically change the way in which journalism was done in the mid-1990s, many in the field began to speculate that narrative or literary journalism – more popularly known now as longform journalism – would become obsolete (Columbia Journalism Review 2013). Since readers would not likely have the attention span to scroll through 10,000 word articles, many believed that news texts, including feature pieces, would become increasingly shorter. “The magazine-reading future, in other words, will be bite-sized. The narrative will surrender to the newsflash. Image will subsume the written word. It is already happening. It can’t be stopped,” wrote Michael Scherer of the *Columbia Journalism Review* (2002, p. 33).

The opposite is true, however. Longform has actually experienced a resurgence online in the last few years (McBride and Rosenstiel 2013). Defined as “lengthy, relaxed, deeply-reported, literary nonfiction” by those in the field (Columbia Journalism Review 2013), longform journalism is now the sole focus of tech savvy startups that are emerging with greater frequency, especially in the United States, while conferences focused on the future of this type of journalism are growing in popularity. In December of last year, for example, one of the most prominent of these – The Future of Digital Longform, hosted by Columbia University’s Tow Center for Digital Journalism – gathered the founders of brand-new ventures such as Epic, Matter, the Atavist, Narratively, and The Big Roundtable, along with editors from seasoned longform outlets such as *The New Yorker*, ProPublica, *Sports Illustrated*, and *The New York Times* (Tow Center for Digital Journalism 2013). To further signal that longform is far from extinction, successful new-media initiatives such as *Politico* and BuzzFeed have recently recruited longform editors (USA Today 2013), while online curators of longform – such as Byliner, Longform and Longreads – have sprouted across the Web, securing sizable followings (The Independent 2014). A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism also seems to confirm the unexpected but welcomed trend: 73% of adults living in the United States who consume news on their tablet read in-depth

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articles at least sometimes, including 19% who do so daily. Meanwhile, 61% of smartphone news consumers at least sometimes read longer stories, including 11% who do so regularly (Pew Research Journalism Project 2012).

Such a counterintuitive unfolding of events has sparked both optimism and curiosity across newsrooms. Most in the industry speculate that the so-called resurrection of longform is mostly due to the embrace of mobile devices and tablets that allow readers to read between tasks and locations, the rise of social recommendation, the emergence of sites such as Longform and Longreads which organize this type of content, and the creation of applications that allow readers to save content and read it later with or without an internet connection (The Atlantic 2014; The Independent 2014; Forbes 2012).

For much of the journalistic world, it was officially confirmed that longform could successfully make the shift from print to the digital world – and open up a whole new world of possibilities – when The *New York Times'* widely acclaimed piece of digital narrative journalism “The Snow Fall” won a Pulitzer Prize in 2012 (Nieman Storyboard 2013). Since then, major news organizations and magazines such as the *Washington Post*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Rolling Stone* and the *Guardian*, among others, have invested more time and money in creating digital narrative pieces that blend text with sleek visuals and multimedia. The journalistic world was so captivated by the possibilities afforded by the *New York Times'* interactive storytelling that “snow fall” actually became a verb for those in the industry: to tell a story with captivating graphics, video, audio, and animations that are integral to the textual story itself (University of Texas Knight Center 2013).

Given the growing number of digital media experts that now believe that longform journalism will not only survive but thrive in the digital age (McBride and Rosenstiel 2013), it is timely and necessary to ask how the genre of narrative journalism has evolved in this digital era. Although the consensus among digital media scholars is that mainstream news organizations do not take full advantage of the multimedia storytelling capability of the Internet, several trends have been identified in the evolution of multimedia journalism in general. These include the increase in number and

sophistication of multimedia packages, the incorporation of elements native to digital environments such as hypertextual links, interactivity, and the use of features borrowed from digital games and social media tools (Jacobsen 2011). It has yet to be investigated, however, how the digitalization of the news has affected narrative journalism in particular. Questions that necessitate answers not only include to what extent multimedia elements have been incorporated into narrative pieces, but also how these new elements now interact with the textual story, whose communicative prowess in the form of literary and narrative techniques have been accustomed in a pre-digital era to do all the work in terms of engaging and transporting the reader to the center of a riveting story. Now that the storytelling act is done not only through the written word, but images, video and sound, has the narrative nature of the textual story itself in some way been altered as a result of digitalization? Does the incorporation of digital elements enhance the literary act of storytelling or inhibit it?

Those in the industry and some scholars alike believe that the specific electronic properties of cyberspace – hypertextuality, multimediality and interactivity – not only allow for new narrative possibilities but also offer enhanced means of immersion for the reader. Berning (2011a), for example, compares the possibilities of immersion offered by digital environments to the dramatic devices used by literary journalists in the 1960s and 1970s to captivate readers. These included detailed scene-by-scene construction of events, the use of symbolic details, and the recording of dialogue in full length. Scholars such as Marie-Laure Ryan, however, warn also of the dangers of combining immersive and interactive elements in one story, arguing that an engaging and immersive story requires a “space-time continuum that unfolds smoothly” without distractions, while an interactive digital environment presupposes “a broken-up and ‘windowed’ structure, since every link teletransports the reader to a new island within the textual archipelago,” thereby disrupting the immersive process (2001, p. 352). Her theories of transgeneric narrative immersion – which apply to narratives told via all types of mediums – establish that for a story to be successful in engaging and transporting the reader/viewer/listener to the center of a story, it must have a spatial, temporal, and emotional dimension. The nature of the medium, whether it is comprised solely of text, or images and video combined with text, determine to what extent these dimensions can be fully developed (2001).

The purpose of this study is to provide some headway in the investigation of the aforementioned questions through the prism of relevant transgeneric narratological theories. As one of the few studies focused on longform journalism, its objective is to offer a preliminary descriptive analysis of the evolution of this genre, both in its textual and multimedia qualities, by focusing on the changes observed in the narrative pieces published on the online version of the *New York Times*, which continues to be a global frontrunner in the production of interactive longform pieces. Due to the fact that the first successful longform content curation site was launched in 2009 – which is used as the sampling frame of this study –, and since the major changes in longform have occurred recently, this investigation is limited to the changes that have occurred in the last five years (2009-2013). It sets out to answer the following general and specific research questions (RQ):

**GENERAL RQ:** How have the storytelling techniques of online narrative journalism published on NYTimes.com evolved in the last five years?

**RQ 1:** How have the textual and multimedia characteristics of online narrative journalism pieces changed over the last five years?

**RQ 2:** Has the use of immersive textual narrative devices increased, decreased or remained the same over the last five years?

**RQ 3:** Has the use of immersive multimedia narrative devices increased, decreased or remained the same over the last five years?

**RQ 4:** Has textual and multimedia content become more integrated over the last five years?

A quantitative content analysis will be performed on a total of 100 *New York Times* longform narrative pieces selected from the longform content curation site Longreads.com, which stores editor-picked and highly recommended English-language longform journalism pieces since the year 2009. Twenty pieces will be selected per year,

giving preference to those pieces that have the highest word count (since “longform” journalism is the subject of investigation) and those that fulfill the criteria of a narrative journalism piece (excludes pieces that lack narrative elements such as a plot, setting, and characters). Each piece will be evaluated for the presence of multimedia features – such as the number of images, videos, animations, and audio files –, as well as the use of immersive narrative techniques – such as scene-by-scene construction of events, the recording of dialogue, and the use of detailed descriptions of setting and characters. Finally, each piece will also be evaluated for the level of visual integration between the multimedia features and the textual content, as well as the extent to which the multimedia features contribute to the textual story.

The results of the study will not only shed light on practical concerns regarding the future of longform journalism, such as the way digitalization is affecting the way journalists tell feature-length stories – whether they are using more or less narrative and literary techniques –, but it will also give insight into the applicability of transgeneric narratological theories – specifically theories of narrative immersion – to the study of digital longform narrative journalism. Although it is limited to the analysis of the evolution of American narrative journalism, of which the *New York Times* is a representative outlet, it is nonetheless applicable to global narrative journalism trends that have, up until now, followed in the footsteps of this international news leader.

The study is divided in five forthcoming chapters. Chapter 2 will focus on the theoretical framework of this investigation, starting with a review of extant research on the effects of digitalization on journalism and the emerging role of narrative journalism in this digital age. It will continue with a review of the history of narrative journalism, including a critical appraisal of overlapping terminology that is used to refer to longform journalism. Next, it will delve into theories undergirding the formal study of the narrative, called narratology, and focus specifically on the most recent reflections of interdisciplinary narratological research. It will go on to establish a working definition of a narrative and then to expound on the relevant theories of narrative immersion. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with a review of the current state of research.

Chapter 3 will provide a justification for the methodology and research design implemented, including a description of the procedures of sample selection, data collection, the measuring instrument, and the operationalization of the variables. It will conclude with a description of the methods of analysis and statistical techniques employed, which include the calculation of three different narrative immersivity indexes.

Chapter 4 will focus on the research results, starting with a basic description of the sample and continuing with a presentation of the results along the lines of the research questions and the hypotheses of this study.

Chapter 5 will interpret these results and come to a conclusion regarding each hypothesis and research question. Next, these results will be interpreted in relation to the narrative immersion theories operationalized in this study.

Lastly, chapter 6 will discuss the overall significance of the findings, their implications, and suggestions for further research.

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## 2. Theoretical Framework

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### 2.1 Technology and Journalism

#### 2.1.1 *The effects of digitalization on journalism*

The internet boom of the mid-1990s brought with it as many possibilities of revolutionary change to American journalism as it did risks of exacerbating existing downward trends. Although many saw the democratic and civic potential of the Internet as a way to keep the corporate and political elite in check, the hyper-commercial journalism that had already started to unseat investigative and public-interest reporting was in many ways given greater leeway to expand its presence with the advent of the Web. To cope with the conditions of the digital marketplace, most newsrooms experienced a drastic decline in expensive but necessary journalistic practices such as investigative reporting, foreign correspondence, and maintaining a large and diverse staff of reporters. In their stead, less costly and more profitable trends emerged such as “infotainment, news for the affluent, corporate and government publicity, and inexpensive, image-over-substance features” (Scott 2005, p. 110).

In terms of numbers, the initial expansion of online news occurred after the emergence of the World Wide Web and the dotcom boom of the late 1990s. Between 1994 and 1998, the number of newspapers with websites in the United States grew from 60 to 2,000 newspapers (Greer and Mensing 2006; Li, 2006). By 2002, the number of newspapers online grew to 3,400 in the United States (Gunter 2003). As a result, by May 2004, newspapers had become the least preferred source for news among younger people. According to a report by the Carnegie Corporation (Brown 2005), 39% of those interviewed under the age of 35 expected to use the Internet in the future for news purposes, while only 8% said that they would resort to a newspaper. The irony in this is that despite the exponential increment in news options for the reader, the vast majority of online content is aggregated from journalistic work that originated in a newspaper or

were reproductions of content that appeared in a news organization's primary distribution channels, called "shovelware" (McChesney and Pickard 2011).

Although many celebrate the participatory, collaborative, and self-expressive culture of the Internet (O'Reilly 2004), exemplified in the notions of the people formerly known as the audience (Rosen 2006) and 'produsage' (Bruns 2005), the medium has also added momentum to the economic and political forces that have lowered the quality of journalism. Since page-views counters and registration information now allow editors, managers, and advertisers to know how many people and what type of people are visiting certain articles on their websites – and for how long –, sensational content continues on the rise (Scott 2005), prompting sites such as Salon.com to move toward the so-called "smart tabloid" (Gross and Talbot 2000). According to Scott, these trends will only exacerbate the crisis in journalism: "There will be less process stories, investigative reporting, international news, and in-depth coverage on any topic that requires time, effort, and money to produce" (2005, p.114).

A 2008 comparative content analysis of 10 online news media in five countries (United States, France, United Kingdom, Germany and Russia), however, seems to contradict some of these assumptions. Despite predictions that online news pieces would have to be short and concise, the study found background articles and "documentation packages" that used the unlimited space on the Internet for an exhaustive coverage of events. The online version of most of these legacy media outlets offered many long articles, with up to 5,372 words in the case of the *New York Times*, reflecting the length of the stories in the print edition of the newspaper, which is above average (Quandt 2008). While the findings might indicate that the Web was not as calamitous to the profession as some had envisioned, they also do not give credence to the heady promise of a free and open information era. Online journalism was found to be similar to its offline counterpart, with a "fairly standardized repertoire of article types, missing options of direct interaction with the journalists, and news dominated by events of regional or national proximity" (Quandt 2008, p. 735).

A 2001-2010 longitudinal content analysis of online news in the mainstream U.S. press found that web editions in the year 2005 experimented with both serious and sensational content. While political stories published on authoritative outlets were long, explanatory, and temporally complex, breaking news topics such as accidents and content on less prominent news outlets shifted toward shorter, less analytical coverage centered on individuals and other current happenings, with a particularly local focus. By 2010, the online versions of the press included more of the latter type of news, although serious stories continued to be long and in-depth, especially at the *New York Times* (Barnhurst 2013).

Whether beneficial or detrimental to the quality of the final news product, it has been well-documented that the advent of the Internet has certainly brought with it an increase in the concentration of ownership, consolidation of production, and the homogenization of cross-media content (Scott 2005). As a result of the converging of media sectors, newspapers and TV broadcasters now compete for the same audiences online (Sparks 2000). At the same time that there has been an uptick in the production of prefabricated multimedia-friendly content, the number of low-budget independent news organizations, niche outlets that provide specialized news and information, and news aggregators has also increased, making the American and international media landscape all the more convoluted (Stanyer 2010). Ironically enough, however, 9 out of the 10 top most visited news sites in the U.S. in 2011 continued to belong to or were associated with traditional news organizations (Poynter 2011).

In terms of the actual layout and format of news, irrespective of the type or quality of the content that has been spurred by the Web, most scholars agree on the emergence of key characteristics of online publishing: hypertextuality, interactivity, multimediality, and immediacy or asincrony (Domingo and Paterson 2008). Empirical research on the extent to which the media actually exhibited these characteristics, however, contradicted the ideal models of what online journalism should look like. “Most of the websites do not offer any ‘online extra’ in respect to the traditional version of the medium, they do not use hypertextuality, multimediality, nor interactivity,” wrote Deuze (2001, p.2).

The first characteristic, hypertextuality, is defined as the “linking and ‘layering’ of digital information through a nonlinear hierarchical structure” (Kawamoto 2003, p. 4). Early research found that hypertext, interconnected through hyperlinks, could refer internally to other texts within the site or externally to texts located offsite. Very few sites, however, provided extensive offsite hyperlinks, ostensibly due to protectionist fears that limited the reader’s ability to explore the World Wide Web beyond the site that was first visited (Jankowski and Van Selm 2000). The second characteristic, multimediality, is defined as the presentation of a news story package on a website using two or more media formats, such as audio and written text, music, moving and still images, graphic animations, including interactive and hypertextual elements. It was found that very few news sites in fact employed multimedia and that those who did – such as the BBC – did so from a “modestly convergent perspective” (Deuze 2003, p. 213). The third characteristic, interactivity, is subdivided into three types: 1) navigational interactivity, in which the user is allowed to explore the site’s content in a more or less structured way, through ‘next’ buttons or scrolling menu bars; 2) functional interactivity, in which the user can take part in the production process of the site by interacting with other users or producers; and 3) adaptive interactivity, in which the site adapts itself to the surfing behavior of the individual user. It was observed that most news sites rarely developed interactivity beyond the navigational level (Deuze 2003).

### *2.1.2 The role of longform narrative journalism in a digital age*

There is a general consensus that during its first decade online, journalism was dominated by breaking news coverage, establishing immediacy as one of its main strengths (Domingo 2006). In the second decade online, however, several scholars contend that feature journalism is becoming increasingly important for the news industry, especially newspapers (Steensen 2011). Although feature journalism and longform narrative journalism are not completely synonymous, they are largely overlapping terms, with feature journalism being defined as “narrative” by Steensen (2009, p. 16). So when scholars talk of the “featurization of journalism,” (Steensen 2011, p.49), they are also referring partly to the upsurge in longform narrative journalism, which can take many forms, both off- and online. Brett and Holmes, for example, have noted that newspapers have “gone through a dramatic transformation, abandoning to

a certain degree their hard news rationale and adopting the ways of magazines” (2008, p. 190). Niblock states that British newspapers have seen an increase in feature journalism, from 10% of newspaper content in the 1750s to as much as 70% in some newspapers today (2008, p.46).

Although scholars often conflate feature journalism with “soft news”, “human-interest stories” and, in general, “infotainment” that leads to a “dumbing down effect” (Allan 2004, pp. 202-203), Steensen warns that there must be a more “careful and less normative examination of what feature journalism is” (2011, p. 50). Niblock observes that the lines between “hard” and “feature” news are becoming more and more blurred as an increasing number of modern newspapers are “featurizing” their news and reporters of “hard news” stories are using feature-style techniques with greater frequency (2008, p. 46). Meanwhile, Steensen reports that all major newspapers in Norway have launched, in the past 10 years, new supplements containing featurized hard news to minimize drops in circulation (2011, p. 56). Thus, the social function of some feature journalism is to provide not only “entertainment, but also enlightenment and insight into complex and quintessential matters of culture and society” (Steensen 2011, p. 56).

Indeed, some of those in the longform journalism industry believe that the resurgence of longform is largely due to a backlash against precisely the type of low-quality journalism that has flooded the Internet, referred to by the BBC’s Andrew Marr as “bite-size McNugget journalism.” Srinija Srinivasan, one of the panelists at The Future of Digital Longform Conference, organized by the Tow Center for Digital Journalism in December of last year, expressed the general sentiment of her colleagues:

I think [longform] is a gut-level... social visceral reaction to the short-sound-byte-quick-hit culture; maybe we recognize some things need more. And we want more, and we demand more – more perspective, more engagement, more understanding, more context (Nieman 2014).

This is in line with what academics perceive to be the deficiencies of journalism in a fast-paced digital age. Sociologist Michael Schudson, for example, argues that in democratic societies, journalism must perform the following functions, among others: to provide

fair and full information; to investigate concentrated sources of power; to provide frameworks of interpretation to help citizens understand complex matters; and to create social empathy by telling readers about other peoples' lives and viewpoints so that they can appreciate alternative worlds and perspectives (2008, p. 12). These journalistic duties are precisely those that are most often carried out by in-depth reporting that takes on the form of longform journalism due to the length that is required either to explain complex issues, to provide context, or to tell a story that provides the necessary amount of detail to foster social empathy (Beston 2013).

In this sense, longform has actually found an unexploited niche online by providing the in-depth content that is so starkly needed in an online journalism inundated by listicles and 140-character tweets. Besides the increasing amount longform stories that the *New York Times* is churning out on a monthly basis – in 2012 it published 32% more stories over 3,000 words than it did a decade ago (Columbia Journalism Review 2013) – , the legacy outlet is now also preparing to launch a brand-new digital magazine, which promises to offer an “immersive digital magazine experience, a lean back read that will include new, multimedia narratives in the tradition of *Snow Fall*” (Owen 2013). Feature writers such as David Dobbs, who publishes stories in the *National Geographic*, the *Atlantic*, and the *Atavist*, confirms that there are now suddenly many publications who are demanding more longform stories, including well-established online-only magazines. “The market has shifted and the sorts of stories they want to place have shifted. I find it a really exciting time. There’s more popping up every couple of weeks,” he said (Bell 2014). David Remnick, editor of the *New Yorker*, has also expressed his own enthusiasm over the longform renaissance: “I think it’s fantastic that the first law of evangelical Web theology, that no one would read anything long on the Web, has been overturned thoroughly,” (Columbia Journalism Review 2013).

### 2.1.3 Longform and its digital characteristics

Far from being the death knell of longform journalism, the digitalization of journalism seems to work in the favor of in-depth, non-fiction stories that read like fiction. The one digital device that has significantly turned the tide for all types of journalism is the tablet. According to the Pew Research Center, a third of all Americans

now own tablets and nearly 60% of those surveyed said their tablets led them to consume more news (Sasseen et al. 2013). A study based on the results of two reports by the Pew Research Center – “The State of the Media 2013” and “Tablet Ownership 2013” – found that: 76.5% of tablet readers use the device to read books; 73.5% use it to read magazines; 62% use it to read newspapers; and 44% said that they use it to read stand-alone, in-depth or investigative articles (Rice 2013, pp. 10-11). Ju-Don Marshall Roberts, a digital media strategist and former managing editor of WashingtonPost.com asserts that “tablets, at best, support very immersive, interactive experiences... Smart magazine publishers are creating immersive experiences around their stories that allow for seamless multimedia presentations” (Rice 2013, p. 18).

Although the characteristics of online storytelling are evolving rapidly from one moment to the next, in recent years since the publication of the *New York Times*' epic piece, “Snow Fall,” digital longform journalism has mostly fallen in line with the standards set by this first pioneering work. Kiuttu (2013) found, for example, that most tablet storytelling applications implemented by longform startups, newspapers, and online magazines have a simple, minimalistic interface that contrasts with overcrowded Web sites. Most applications also provide a good design aesthetic, as well as clear and visible options for the reader so that he or she knows exactly what will happen when a certain button or feature is clicked. Part of accomplishing this is providing the reader with a holistic outlook of the whole application by ensuring that he or she knows exactly which section of the story is being read and giving options to jump to any other section of the story. The use of sub-layers within a story so that the reader can decide how deep he or she wants to explore information, while ensuring that the layout is as simple as possible without compromising the depth of the story, is also a characteristic of online storytelling (Kiuttu 2013, p. 18). The use of multimedia features such as photos, audio, videos, and graphics are also commonplace, although there are many instances in which these are inserted without evaluating the real contribution of these elements to the story. In the ideal case, multimedia elements are essential to the core story and should be embedded in the text in the locations where they have a natural connection to the story, not at the end of the article. In this way, readers access the content without leaving the story and follow the plot from beginning to end. Kiuttu also found that in

these cases, applications act as “cognitive containers,” in which the reader experiences the story without the distracting linked nature of the Internet (2013, p. 21).

## **2.2 Narrative Journalism**

### *2.2.1 New Journalism and its precursors*

The origins of what is called today longform narrative journalism can be traced back to the New Journalism movement of the 1960s and 70s, which gained popularity in American magazine journalism as a protest movement against so-called “objective” news journalism. A genre which combined journalistic research with the techniques of fiction writing in the reporting of stories about real-life events, New Journalism was pioneered by writers as diverse as Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, Gay Talese and Joan Didion. These “free-wheeling” journalists, as their traditional counterparts had labelled them, pushed the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction in works such as “In Cold Blood”, “The Right Stuff”, and “The Executioner’s Song,” and were often criticized for allegedly playing fast and loose with the facts (Roggenkamp 2005, p. 117). Although standard reporters claimed that this type of journalism was nothing more than flashy, self-serving, and subjective, modern literary journalists continue to insist on its merits. “Some people have a very clinical notion of what journalism is. It’s an antiseptic idea, the idea that you can’t present a set of facts in an interesting way without tainting them. That’s utter nonsense. That’s the ultimate machine-like tendency,” says Tracy Kidder, a literary journalist and winner of both the Pulitzer Prize and American Book Award (Sims 1984, p. 4).

Considered as one of the main founders of the movement, Tom Wolfe wrote in 1972 that the four techniques of realism that distinguished New Journalists from traditional reporters and had been previously the sole province of novelists were: the use of scene-by-scene construction, full record of dialogue, third-person point-of-view and the description of “status details” – the entire pattern of behavior and possessions through which people express their position in the world or what they think it is or what they hope it to be – to round out a character (Murphy 1974). The result, in Wolfe’s words, is:

...a form that is not merely *like a novel*. It consumes devices that happen to have originated with the novel and mixes them with every of device known to prose. And all the while, quite beyond matters of technique, it enjoys an advantage so obvious, so built-in, one almost forgets what a power it has: the simple fact that the reader knows *all this actually happened*. The disclaimers have been erased. The screen is gone. The writer is one step closer to the absolute involvement of the reader that Henry James and James Joyce dreamed of but never achieved (Wolfe 1972, p. 158).

Although New Journalism was a movement that expanded journalism's rhetorical and literary horizons by placing the author at the center of the story, communicating a character's thoughts, using nonstandard punctuation, and breaking with traditional narrative forms, it did not turn out to be exactly the revolutionary movement that Wolfe had envisioned it to be. While Wolfe had predicted that the novel would no longer be the form to which great writing aspired since New Journalism would upend the novel as the ultimate literary work, in actuality, its influence has been more modest than expected (Boynton 2007). The novel has by no means been replaced by the so-called New Journalism, but the movement has paved the way for a whole new generation of journalists inspired by the feature writings of this era, such as the branch of modern day feature journalism depicted by Robert Boynton as the New New Journalism (Steensen 2009). This resuscitation of New Journalism brought with it some differences, however. While Wolfe's notion of status did not include explorations of race and class, New New Journalism frequently focuses on subcultures, especially impoverished ones. In addition, New New Journalists have developed innovative immersion techniques in order to lengthen and deepen their involvement with characters to a point at which the public/private divide essentially disappears (Boynton 2007). Feature journalists such as Adrian LeBlanc and William Finnegan, for example, spent years immersing themselves into their characters' lives before writing their stories (Steensen 2009).

Despite its title, however, there is hardly anything completely new about New Journalism, whose adherents apply unorthodox nonfiction styles that had been used for decades (Pember 1975). Before the 1890s, for instance, there were examples of the application of novel-writing techniques to journalism, such as Lafcadio Hearn's portraits of African American life on the Cincinnati levee, Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* and

*Innocents Abroad*, and the travelogues of Charles Dudley Warner. Earlier precursors include Henry David Thoreau's Cape Cod sketches – parts of which were serialized in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* in 1855 – and Augustus Baldwin Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* of the 1830s, which initially appeared in newspapers (Hartsock 2000, p.23).

Boynton (2007) also writes of the example of *The New York Sun* which began the transition from the partisan and mercantile press to the commercial Penny Press in 1833. Between the 1830s and the Civil War, the editors of the Penny Press discovered that news conveyed through “stories” drew a larger number of readers than the combination of editorial opinion and financial information that had up until that point dominated American newspapers. The *Sun's* first issue, which sold out immediately, contained many “human interest” stories – a form invented by the Penny Press – that appealed to an audience of readers “starved for information about other people like themselves, distressed souls from other lands or from upstate farms – people marooned in a rapidly growing city that was often inscrutable, uncaring, or unintelligible,” writes historian George H. Douglas (1999, p. 6). The Penny Press of the 1830s started the modern conception of new journalism and reporting. “The newspaper began to reflect, not the affairs of an elite in a small trading society, but the activities of an increasingly varied, urban, and middle-class society,” writes Michael Schudson (1978, p. 22). This would lead the way to the blend of sensationalism and muckraking on behalf of immigrants and the poor that was found in the 1880s in the *New York World* and other papers, termed “New Journalism” and which, although unrelated to Wolfe's New Journalism of the 1960s and 70s, shared many of the same objectives as the genre of writing called literary journalism. Lincoln Steffens, city editor of the *New York Commercial Advertiser* in the 1890s, made literary journalism – artfully crafted narrative stories about subjects of concern to the masses – into editorial policy (Boynton 2007).

### 2.2.2 Narrative journalism versus literary fiction

The differences between narrative journalism – in which storytelling techniques are used to report facts – and literary fiction – in which storytelling techniques are used to report fiction – appear to be obvious at first glance. While fiction writers have the

license to create and apply symbols to convey meaning, literary journalists must work within the boundaries of dialogue and scenarios that they have witnessed or have been conveyed to them by sources (Royal 2000). The nuances of these differences, however, are part of a wider debate concerning the borderlands between fiction and nonfiction.

John Searle (1975) observes that the distinction that is commonly made between factual and fictional statements is not based on any characteristic of the statements themselves, but on the perception of the kind of statement being intended. If, for example, one believes an anecdote to be a joke, one awaits a punch line; if one believes it to be a true story, one may formulate further questions about the events that are recounted. The appropriate response is indicated by the type of story one thinks he or she is being told, which is in turn influenced by the relationship with the storyteller, the social context, and properties of the story itself (Heyne 1987). The notion that the dividing lines between fiction and nonfiction are porous is taken to an extreme by Mas'ud Zavarzadeh who argues that “the epistemological crisis of our ‘age of suspicion’ has rendered the whole notion of fact versus fiction obsolete” (1976, p. 41). He posits that it will become necessary to abandon the fact/fiction distinction in the face of increasingly complex modes of telling applied to an increasing amount of information (Heyne 1987). Meanwhile, Genette believes that factual and fictional narratives “are not as far apart – and not, each in its own domain, as homogenous – as might be supposed from a distance” (1993, p. 82). In fact, he bases his theories on the assumption that there is no difference between fiction and nonfiction in terms of the narrative’s surface structure. At a deep-structural level, however, Genette (1993) recognizes that nonfiction narratives claim to be true while fictional narratives do not.

In this sense, a boundary line may be drawn between literary fiction and narrative journalistic reportages. Berning (2011a) proposes that the narrative reportage is embedded in a communication model that is compatible with the narrative communication model of literary fiction, which is based most importantly on the existence of a narrator in the first place (see Figure 1). In this first model, participants and levels are usually shown in a 'Chinese boxes' model. Basically, communicative contact is possible between (1) author and reader on the level of nonfictional

communication, (2) narrator and audience or addressee(s) on the level of fictional mediation, and (3) characters on the level of action. The first level is an 'extratextual level'; levels two and three are 'intratextual' (Jahn 2005). Berning proposes a modified narrative communication model for journalistic reportages that, when compared to the narrative communication model of literary fiction, differs in two important ways (see Figure 2). First, the insertion of two triangles – one on the production side and another on the reception side – serve to visualize the restriction of vision of the author – who is reporting on a fragment of reality, relying merely on what he/she has seen – and the broadening of vision on the part of the reader, who not only rehashes the events recounted, but constructs “narrative worlds,” which are imaginary perceptions that occur during the reading process (Berning 2011a, p. 47). This modification reflects the notion that narrative journalism differs from other literary genres first and foremost in that the author is restricted to reporting only what has occurred in reality. Second, in this model, the author and narrator are the same person, whereas in fictional narrative, the narrator is different from the author. To make this distinction clearer, the specifications “reporter” and “addressee” are added.

These models are based on the concept that narrative form is characterized by the formal signifying action of “narrating”, on the one hand, and the formal product of signifier, or “narrative”, on the other. Since a narrative is a form of communication, it requires a sender and a receiver. On the left are the narrator and author on the production side, and on the right are the reader and narratee on the receiver side. In Figure 2, the addressee represents the target audience of the newspaper or magazine in which the reportage is published. Since the reporter aims at engaging readers in a dialogue, heralding “the (re-)construction of reality in the readers’ minds,” the uni-directional flow of information that is present in the communication model of literary fiction is absent in the model for journalistic reportages. Thus, the boundaries between the levels are redrawn in the form of dashed lines which represent permeable borders (Berning 2011a, p. 48).

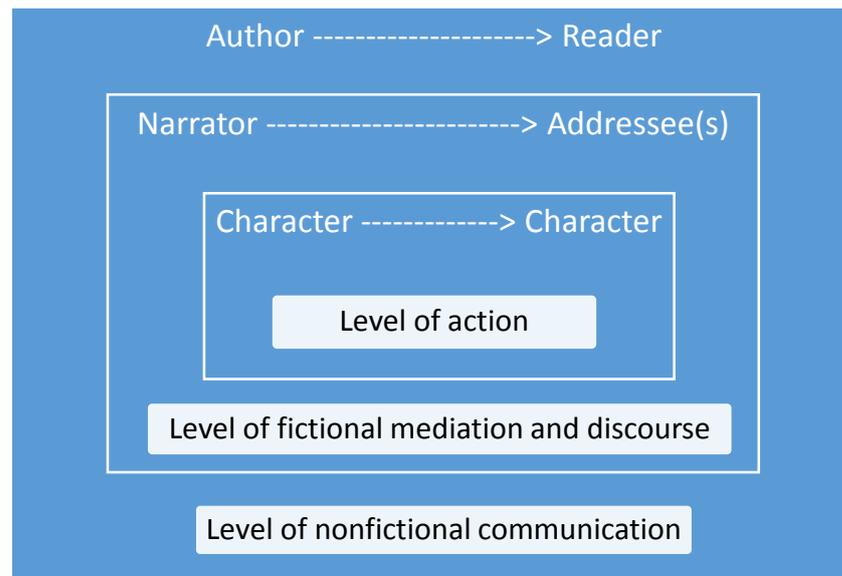


Figure 1: Model of literary narrative communication (Jahn 2005)

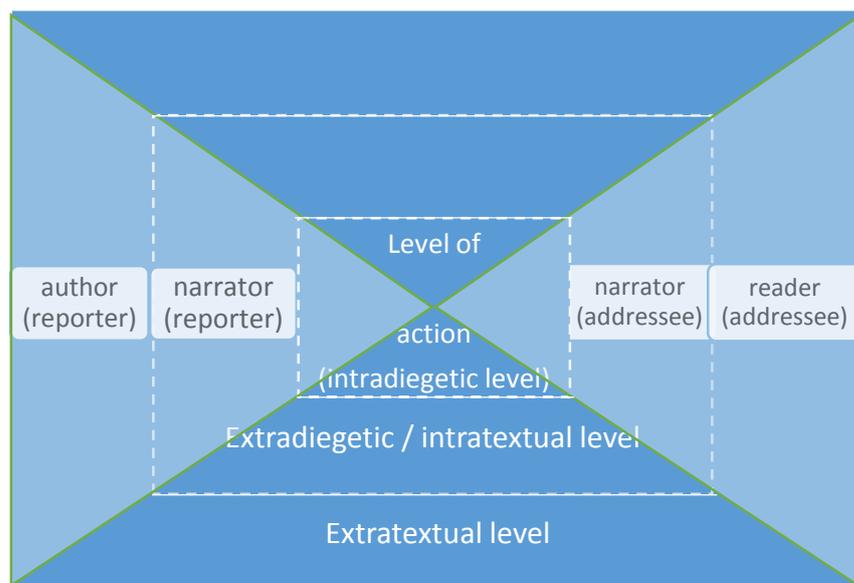


Figure 2: The narrative communication model of journalistic reportages (Berning 2011a)

Although some may argue that narrative journalism is nothing more than a hybrid form – combining the fiction writer’s techniques with facts gathered by the reporter – rather than a distinct genre, Berning (2011a) notes that the journalistic reportage is characterized by its multifaceted purpose of informing while offering interpretation and entertainment. It is further set apart by its distinctive linguistic style, authenticity, comprehensibility, and facticity (Konstenzer 2009, cited in Berning 2011a, p. 41). The journalist, as creator and teller of a story, assumes a “testimonial function”

(Genette 1988: 130), while signaling to readers that his or her report is a direct result of research done on the ground (Wolfe and Johnson 1973). Although symbolic language can be used in reportages, the reporter's duty is to present a story in an understandable way so that the "Five Ws" of journalism (who?, what?, when?, where?, and why?) are answered (Konstenzer 2009, cited in Berning 2011a, p. 42; Ramsden 2012).

### 2.2.3 *Definitions of a hybrid form*

Within journalistic practice, a piece which resorts to storytelling can be referred to by various terms, some of which are largely overlapping and others which are interchangeable. These include creative non-fiction, reportage, narrative journalism, and literary journalism (Hartsock 1999). To these may also be added feature writing, human-interest stories, magazine writing, and, most recently, longform journalism.

Of all these, literary journalism has perhaps been discussed for a longer period of time than the rest. A marriage of in-depth reporting and literary techniques in newspaper writing, literary journalism was defined by Berner as a type of reporting that included techniques such as "narration and scene, summary and process, point of view, drama, chronological organization, rhythm, imagery, foreshadowing, metaphor, irony, dialogue, overall organization (beginning, middle and end) – all girded by good reporting" (1986: 22). As discussed previously, this type of journalism later gave way to the New Journalism movement of the 1960s, which – despite its grandiose ambitions – did not give rise to anything completely new.

Literary journalism is contained within the term creative nonfiction, which is an umbrella term for a host of loosely related genres that include forms outside the realm of literary journalism, such as memoirs and essays. Although some scholars are bothered by defining the genre by what it is not, others by a conviction that the idea is oxymoronic, creative nonfiction has emerged as a widely used term to refer to works as diverse as Mark Twain's *Roughing It*, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, and Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (Hesse 2009).

Feature writing, which overlaps with magazine writing (but is not contained within it, considering that newspaper writing is becoming increasingly “featurized” (Steensen 2009)) and human-interest stories, is defined as that in which “the news element is made subordinate” (Harrington 1912, cited in Steensen 2009, p. 6). Steensen goes further in specifying that feature journalism can be conceived as a family of genres that fulfill the same need but in different rhetorical forms. It addresses the publicly recognized exigence to be “entertained and connected with other people on a mainly emotional level by accounts of personal experiences that are related to contemporary events of perceived public interest” (2009, p. 51). This can take the form a feature reportage, which usually has a narrative structure, first-person accounts of events, and a more descriptive style of writing; or it can take the form of a profile with personal characterizations and colorful writing.

The boundary between conventional feature writing and narrative literary journalism, however, is not always clear, although there are basic distinctive characteristics. One main difference is that descriptive scene construction usually serves to illustrate a discursive or expository point. Feature reporting is often formulaic in that it typically opens with scenic descriptions that help to illustrate abstract points and that are subordinate to a dominating discursive or expository mode. In contrast, the main purpose of exposition is to inform the larger “dominant narrative-descriptive modalities that frame the story” (Hartsock 2007, p. 264).

With regard to the term reportage, Berning (2011a) also expounded on the journalistic reportage as a hybrid form that puts forth something new in its synthesis of journalism and literature by deftly intertwining narrative elements into fact-filled stories. Although she concedes that the literary and the narrative reportage are similar, she distinguishes between them by stating that literary reportages are published first and foremost in book form, while the narrative reportage refers to lengthy, hybrid reportages that implement a narrator and which are published primarily in newspapers and magazines.

Lastly, longform journalism is the most recently coined term that overlaps with all the preceding and is defined as “lengthy, relaxed, deeply-reported, literary nonfiction” by those in the field (Columbia Journalism Review 2013). The term is

somewhat slippery in its common usage, however, and has not been clearly defined by journalists nor scholars. For example, it is not certain whether a piece is defined as longform by the quality of the writing, by the amount of time it took to write, by the research it entailed, or the length of the piece. The longform journalism site Longreads, for example, asks users to “post their favorite stories over 1,500 words” (Tenore 2012). For the purposes of this study, the latter definition will be used.

With the advent of the Internet and the digitalization of news, much of the journalism encompassed by all the previous overlapping terms is no longer found only in print magazines and newspapers, but increasingly online. Considering that the Internet is a platform that is fostering the re-conceptualization of story-telling in journalism (Berning 2011a), it is necessary, in the context of this study, to study journalistic story-telling within a theoretical framework that allows for a broadening of its definition. Since the terms literary journalism, creative nonfiction, reportage, magazine writing, human-interest stories, and feature writing are mostly circumscribed to pre-digital notions of journalism and do not offer this framework – even though within journalistic practice, they are used more or less used interchangeably –, the combined concept of longform narrative journalism will be used throughout this study, considering that longform is the term that is currently being used to refer to in-depth storytelling on the Web and that the theories and methods of narratology – or the “science of narration” (Kindt 2003, 1) – will be applied to study its evolution.

## **2.3 Narrative journalism from a narratological perspective**

### *2.3.1 The history of narratology*

Defined as the science of narrative (or a theory of narrative) by Tzvetan Todorov, who coined the term for the first time in *Grammaire du Décaméron* (Todorov 1969, p. 10) to refer to a structuralist description of narrative parameters that constitute narrative discourse, narratology is a humanities discipline focused on the “study of the logic, principles, and practices of narrative representation” (Meister 2009, p. 329). Narratology is mainly concerned with the “establishment, rearrangement, and mediation of plot” and usually provides a “systematic account of functionally related elements such as plot levels, narrative mediation, person, perspective, and temporal

arrangement”, most often in the form of a typology of narrative forms (Fludernik 1998). During its initial classical phase, which lasted from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, narratologists were especially engaged in identifying and establishing narrative universals (Meister 2014). However, a decade later, narratology was defined alternatively as a theory (Prince 2003, p. 1), a method (Kindt and Müller 2003, p. 211), and a discipline (Fludernik and Margolin 2004, p. 149).

As a discipline, narratology began to take shape in 1966 when the French journal *Communications* brought out a special issue titled “The structural analysis of narrative.” Featuring articles by Roland Barthes, Claude Brémont, Gérard Genette, Umberto Eco, Algirdas Julien Greimas, Tzvetan Todorov and others, the issue was highly influential, to the point that it has even been considered a sort of manifesto (Herman et al. 2005; Bamberg 1998). Known as French structuralism, this new paradigm gave the “decisive impulse for the formation of narratology as a methodologically coherent, structure-oriented variant of narrative theory,” (Meister 2009, p. 337). It drew on previous works and traditions, such as Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Russian formalism, Proppian morphology, structural linguistics in the Saussurean tradition, the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, and Chomsky’s transformational generative grammar (Meister 2014).

Gérard Genette, however, was the one who played the decisive role in the further development of narrative theory. He brought together the insights of previous research to create a new terminological framework in accordance with strict, binary principles. For example, he distinguishes between *narration* (the narrative act of the narrator), *discours* or *récit* proper (narrative as text or utterance) and *histoire* (the story the narrator tells in his/her narrative). The first two levels of narrative can be grouped together as the *narrative discourse* by putting together the narrative act and its product, thus making a binary distinction between them and the third level, the *story* (Fludernik 2009). Genette’s approach mostly dealt with *how* a story was told (discourse) rather than with *what* it told (story) (Jahn 2005). Broadly speaking, he was able to fill a methodological gap in previous research by presenting a comprehensive taxonomy of discourse phenomena developed alongside a detailed analysis of narrative composition and technique. The terminology introduced by Genette, along with his taxonomy, soon became a common language among narratologists (Meister 2014). Building on Genette's

work, others in the field have developed a number of different, but mostly compatible, accounts of the basic narrative constituents, narrative levels, and major discourse features of narration. For instance, Mieke Bal's *Narratology: An Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1978) and Seymour Chatman's *Coming to Terms* (1990) introduce refinements to Genette's theory of focalization, which deals with the handling of perspective (Fludernik 1998).

While the works produced in the context of structuralist narratology, including those by Bal and Chatman, are considered to belong to the “classical” period of narratology, “postclassical” interpretative approaches refer to “new narratologies” that are built on all sorts of disciplines and are context-oriented rather than text-centered. This shift from a mostly unified discipline to a heterogeneous one has brought with it a myriad of new narratological approaches such as “cognitive narratology,” “natural narratology,” “feminist narratology,” “linguistic narratology,” “possible worlds theory,” among others (Bal 2004, p. 48). According to Nünning, structuralist narratology is focused on closed systems and static products, as opposed to postclassical narratologies which are focused on open and dynamic processes; the former has a preference for reductive binarisms and graded scales, while the latter prefers holistic cultural interpretation; the first emphasizes theory, formalist description, and taxonomy of narrative techniques, while the second emphasizes application, thematic readings, and ideologically-charged evaluations; structuralism focuses on the universalist features of all narratives and is ahistorical and synchronous in orientation, while postclassical narratologies focus on particular effects of individual narratives and are historical and diachronous in orientation (1999, p. 358).

Despite the skepticism with which structuralism’s presuppositions were regarded in the 1980s and 1990s, even postclassical studies admitted to the “usefulness of narratology” (Bal 1990, cited in Bal 2004, p. 50) and its importance as an “analytical toolkit” (Nünning 1999, p. 348). Bal states that the classical brand of narratology still works due to historical and anthropological reasons. Since cultures continue to generate narrative structures and processes as a way of perceiving and making sense of the world, it follows that narratology will probably remain useful as long as cultures are imbued with narratives (2004, p. 50). Herman and Vervaeck (2001) add that because many

postclassical approaches often lack practical models, structural analysis is still widely used as a methodology for the interpretation of literary texts, given that a great number of stories and novels lend themselves with ease to a structural analysis.

This tension between the classical and postclassical brought forth a multitude of new approaches that aimed at combining structuralism's concern for systematicity with a newborn interest in the cultural and philosophical issues of history and ideology. The postclassical onslaught also brought with it a shift in focus from text-based phenomena to narrative discourse couched in a variety of media, including cartoons, film, drama, and ballet (Fludernik 1998). Of the eight categories of "new narratologies" that emerged as a result of this, three are considered by Meister (2014) to be the "dominant methodological paradigms of contemporary narratology": 1) Contextualist narratology, which studies narratives in relation to specific cultural, historical, thematic, and ideological contexts; 2) Cognitive narratology, which focuses on the human intellectual and emotional processing of narratives (this is not restricted to literary narratives, but can include "natural" everyday and oral narratives) (Fludernik 1996); 3) Transgeneric and intermedial approaches, which explore the applicability of narratological concepts to the study of genres and media outside the traditional domain of text-based literary narrative, such as drama, poetry, the visual and performing arts, computer games, among others.

### *2.3.2. Transgeneric narratology*

Although transgeneric and intermedial approaches began to flourish from the 1990s onwards, it is tenable that the idea that narratology should transcend disciplines and media arose much earlier, in the earliest days of the birth of this discipline. Claude Bremond wrote in 1964 that:

[Story] is independent of the techniques that bear it along. It may be transposed from one to another medium without losing its essential properties: the subject of a story may serve as argument for a ballet; that of a novel can be transposed to stage or screen, one can recount in words a film to someone who has not seen it (cited in Chatman 1978, p. 20).

While it took years for this idea to prevail over the commonplace notion that narrative theory should be applied almost exclusively to literary fiction, it also took many years to come to the realization that not all media have the same narrative potential and resources. When a story migrates from one medium to the other, there are differences in the way it is processed by the reader/listener/viewer because each medium allows the narrative potential of a story to be actualized in a different way (Ryan 2006, p. 4). If media are regarded as conduits – hollow pipes, so to speak – for the transmission of information, then the shape of the pipe “affects the kind of information that can be transmitted, alters the conditions of reception, and often leads to the creation of works tailor-made for the medium,” such as films made for TV (Ryan 2014).

Intermediality, or transmediality (a special form of intermediality which refers to phenomena that occur in different media without regard to a possible origin in one specific medium (Wolf 2004, p. 82)), is defined in a broad sense as a concept that covers any transgression of boundaries between different media. In a narrow sense, it is used in reference to the participation of more than one medium – or sensory channel – in a given work (Wolf 2008). In recent years, the term “multimodality” has been used for works that combine several types of signs, such as images and text. Given that natural language is presented by Ryan (2014) as the original narrative medium and superior to non-semantic resources of image or sound – due to the notion that narrative is not perceived by the senses but constructed by the mind, either out of information provided by life or out of invented materials –, she delves into the question of why other non-verbal media exist. She concludes that these combine with language-based media to enhance a story:

The affordances of language, pictures, movement, and music complement each other, and when they are used together in multimodal media, each of them builds a different facet of the total imaginative experience: language narrates through its logic and its ability to model the human mind, pictures through their immersive spatiality and visuality, movement through its dynamic temporality, and music through its atmosphere-creating, tension building and emotional power (2014).

She goes on to argue that in multimodal media, the reader/viewer/listener can directly see, hear, and interact with objects, and the imagination, relieved from the cognitive

burden of simulating sensory data, can more easily immerse itself in the story. With regard to images, for example, although there is an innate narrative incompleteness due to the medium's inability to represent language and thought, casual relations, or to make comments and provide explanations, when compared to language, they give a much more complete idea of the spatial layout of a storyworld, as well as the physical attributes of characters. This does not mean, however, that multimodal media are necessarily superior to literature in terms of narrative power since every gain in the visual, aural and interactive domain may bring a loss of attention to the language channel.

### *2.3.3. A working definition of narrative*

Just as there are now a countless number of conceptualizations of narratology, there are also a myriad of ways to define narrative. While some theorists and scholars believe that everything is narrative, there are also those who believe that everything has the potential to be a narrative, and still others who believe that nothing is narrative because narrativity is culture-dependent and context-bound (Prince 2003, p. 1). Fludernik (2009), for example, defines narrative as anything that is narrated by a narrator. Since narrative is associated with the act of narration, it is present in all instances in which one person tells another about something: in daily conversations between students, in the lesson that a teacher gives at school, in the news report that is given on TV, among other examples. Jahn (2005), on the other hand, states that a narrative is a form of communication which presents a sequence of events caused and experienced by characters. In verbally told stories, there is also a story-teller, called the narrator. According to Genette (1980), narrative is a communicative system in which the formal process of signifying action (narrating) is distinguished from the formal product of signifier (narrative). In this communication, there are two parties involved: the addresser and the receiver. This is further elaborated by Jahn (2005) in the narrative communication model of literary fiction (see Figure 1), in which a fundamental concept of modern narratology, narrative levels, is represented (O'Neill 1996). Meanwhile, H. Porter Abbott reserves the term "narrative" for the combination of story and discourse – a common view among narratologists – and defines its two components as follows:

“story is an event or sequence of events (the *action*), and narrative discourse is those events as represented” (2002, p. 16).

For the purposes of this study which focuses on online longform narrative journalism, the definition of narrative established by Marie-Laure Ryan, who has written extensively on theories of transgeneric and transmedial narrativity, will be used. Ryan (2006) begins by modifying Abbott’s definition of narrative by stating that stories are not simply sequences of events – since events are in fact the raw material out of which stories are made –, nor simply a textual representation of these events. While she concedes that stories are a combination of story and discourse, she argues that it is the narrative’s ability to evoke stories to the mind that distinguishes narrative discourse from other text types. Ryan regards stories, rather, as mental images and cognitive constructs that concern certain types of entities and relations between these entities. She sets forth a scalar conception of narrativity, with a series of conditions that become increasingly narrow and presuppose previously stated items. In this way, by organizing multiple conditions into distinct areas, the lines that limit narrativity can be redrawn depending on the view that each person holds on the concept, whether a narrow or a broad definition of narrative. She organizes the conditions of narrativity into three semantic and one formal and pragmatic dimensions:

#### Spatial dimension

1. Narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents (characters and objects).

#### Temporal dimension

2. This world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations.
3. The transformations must be caused by nonhabitual physical events (happenings or deliberate actions by intelligent agents).

### Mental dimension

4. Some of the participants in the events must be intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world.
5. Some of the events must be purposeful actions by these agents, motivated by identifiable goals and plans.

### Formal and pragmatic dimension

6. The sequence of events must form a unified causal chain and lead to closure.
7. The occurrence of at least some of the events must be asserted as fact for the story world.
8. The story must communicate something meaningful to the recipient (Ryan 2001, pp. 7-8).

In her transmedial study of narrativity, Ryan proposes this alternative to definitions of narrative that are circumscribed to text-based literary stories, which have been common in classical approaches to narratology. As such, the definition does not limit narrativity to a certain medium, but it does rule out representations that cannot singlehandedly support narrativity. These include representations of: abstract entities; static descriptions; enumerations of repetitive events and changes caused by natural evolution; scenarios involving only natural forces and nonintelligent participants; interior monologue fiction; causally unconnected events such as chronicles and diaries; lists of instructions such as recipes; and stories without a meaningful message (2006, pp. 8-9).

## 2.4 Theories of immersion

### 2.4.1 *The storyworld*

As a literary theorist who has published extensively on transmedial narratology, Ryan is particularly interested in rethinking the concepts of narrativity in the light of new modes of world construction that are made possible by electronic technology, such as virtual reality, which is defined as an “interactive, immersive experience generated by a computer” (Pimentel and Teixeira 1993, p. 11). With the birth of new genres made possible by the digital revolution, such as hypertext and computer games, Ryan proposes to transfer the concepts of “immersion and interactivity from the technological to the literary domain” (2001, p. 2).

Defined as a “feed-back loop through which user input affects the behavior of a text, especially regarding the choice of information to be displayed”, interactivity is a “feature found mostly in digital narratives and may either be selective (clicking on links) or productive (contributing text or performing actions), and it may result in the real-time creation of a story” (Herman et al. 2010). In the weak literal sense, interactivity is “a choice between predefined alternatives,” and in the strong sense, interactivity occurs when the reader “performs a role through verbal or physical actions,” thereby participating in the production of the text (Ryan 2001, p. 17).

Meanwhile, in the phenomenology of reading, immersion is defined by Ryan as “the experience through which a fictional world acquires the presence of an autonomous, language-independent reality populated with live human beings” (2001, p. 14). For a text to be immersive, it must, according to the definition of narrative previously presented, establish a setting for a potential narrative action by creating a space to which the reader/listener/viewer/user can relate, and it must populate this space with individuated existents (pp. 14-15). Of the two concepts proposed by Ryan, both will be explored in this study, but the latter to a greater extent, since her theories of immersion are the ones that are more fully operationalized in this research.

In everyday usage, immersion is a term that can be used to describe a number of different absorbing activities, from playing an instrument, completing a crossword puzzle to reading a novel. It is the latter type which is of interest here. In this context, immersion usually refers to the sensation of being engrossed or captivated by the storyworld – usually fictional – presented by the text. Other metaphors frequently cited to describe the pleasurable reading experience include: the reader plunges under the sea (synonymous to the term immersion); the reader reaches a foreign land (synonymous with the term transportation); the reader is taken prisoner (synonymous with being caught up in a story or taken prisoner); and loses contact with reality (synonymous with being lost in a book). These metaphors have been explored by scholars from fields as diverse as cognitive psychology, literature, communication, and analytic philosophy to explain the phenomenon of immersion, which can be referred to by a variety of different terms. Green and Brock, for example, call the process of becoming fully engaged in a story “transportation into a narrative world” (2000, p. 701). In this process, there is “an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feelings” that can absorb the reader to the extent that his or her beliefs and attitudes are altered as a result of the experience (p. 702). Similarly, Gerrig (1993) notes that when a reader is “immersed” in a text, he or she travels from his or her world of origin to a textual world. This deep absorption in the construction or contemplation of the textual world in turn causes one’s immediate surroundings and reality to disappear momentarily. In the field of interactive media psychology, Schubert et al. (2001) applied the term presence, which is the reader’s sense of having entered a tangible environment, of being present in the fictional world.

The literary journalist Tom Wolfe offers a precise description of the way in which authors masterfully engage their readers to the point that they become engrossed in a certain story:

One’s memory is apparently made up of millions of [sets of images], which work together on the Identikit principle. The most gifted writers are those who manipulate the memory sets of the reader in such a rich fashion that they create within the mind of the reader an entire world that resonates with the reader’s own real emotions. The events are merely taking place on

the page, in print, but the emotions are real. Hence the unique feeling when one is “absorbed” in a certain book, “lost” in it (1973, p. 48).

This is the same process that is described by Ryan in her use of the term immersion, which originates from the metaphor of plunging into the sea to describe the experience of reading a captivating book or novel. It follows that for immersion to take place, the text must first offer an expanse to be immersed within. This expanse is a textual world which is not simply a combination of names, descriptions, verbs, and propositions, but the “extralinguistic realm of characters, objects, facts, and states of affairs serving as referents to the linguistic expressions” (2001, p. 91). In this sense, the text serves as a window to a reality outside of language that extends in time and space beyond the words on paper. The transportation from a concrete reality to a textual world occurs like this:

The idea of textual world presupposes that the reader constructs in imagination a set of language-independent objects, using as a guide the textual declarations, but building this always incomplete image into a more vivid representation through the import of information provided by internalized cognitive models, inferential mechanisms, real-life experience, and cultural knowledge, including knowledge derived from other texts. The function of language in this activity is to pick objects in the textual world, to link them with properties, to animate characters and setting – in short, to conjure their presence to the imagination (Ryan 2001, p. 91).

In this mental process of turning the codes of a language system into contents, a sequence of signs becomes a total environment or space, so much so that one forgets the preceding words and paragraphs on a page (Birkerts 1994) and only retains the visual image of the ever clearer and expanding storyworld. This notion of the textual world is applicable to narrative texts (as defined in section 2.3.3), which includes both fiction and nonfiction. Since both invite the reader to imagine a world populated by individuals, they elicit the same cognitive processes in the reader, with the difference that the textual world created by nonfiction is assessed by the readers in terms of what he or she already knows about the world, while the textual world created by fiction is an end in itself (Ryan 2001).

#### 2.4.2 *Spatial immersion*

It has been argued that for a reading experience to be truly immersive, it must have the potential of conjuring up a mental image in the reader's mind of a storyworld populated with characters who experience a series of events. In order to systematically analyze the textual features that are behind the immersive experience, it is necessary to look into the three forms of involvement with narratives that Ryan cites in her theories of immersion (and which correspond to three important elements of fiction): 1) spatial immersion, the response to setting; 2) temporal immersion, the response to plot; 3) and emotional immersion, the response to character (Ryan 2001). A fourth type of immersion cited by Ryan but which does not correspond with the three elements of fiction is spatio-temporal immersion, which deals with the question of how the author transports the reader onto the scene of the textual world.

The first type of immersion, spatial immersion, is defined by Ryan (2001) as having the sense of presence of a certain spatial setting, as well as a clear model of its geography. For spatial immersion to occur, not only must the text itself present certain qualities (such as those found in C.S. Lewis's *Narnia* and *Alice's Wonderland*, where setting comes alive), but the reader's personal memories must resonate with the text so that when the writer describes, for example, the smell of caught fish from the fishing boat, the reader can conjure up the scents and images related to this scene in his or her mind. Unlike images, which transport the viewer instantly to a certain place and point in time, text gradually transports a reader by accumulating details of the setting in the reader's mind with the end of luring the imagination into simulating sensory perception. Spatial immersion, however, does not depend simply on providing the reader with detail upon detail, but also on the ability of the text to project a map of the landscape. Since the text is unable to provide the reader with a panoramic view of the textual world as an image might do, it sends readers on a "narrative trail through the textual world, guiding them from viewpoint to viewpoint" (pp. 123-124). While descriptions of setting provide the reader with a sense of a certain place and its atmosphere, the gradual revelation of details of distinct locations that are interconnected through the linear

unfolding of events provide the reader with a mental image of the storyworld's topography.

Those in the literary field coincide with these observations, although perhaps with other terminology. Surmelian, for example, writes that description, as a form of narration, "gives a sensory representation of reality" that equates to "painting in words and [adding] a spatial dimension to fiction" (1969, p. 31). Like Ryan, he notes that descriptions of settings do not occur all at once, but emerge gradually from events. Depending on the type of story, the setting may be the most important element in a story, in which case "good narrative prose should be first of all accurate description" (p. 37). Similarly, Jewell (2011) writes that one of the most important differences between a good story and a bad one are sensory details. For a story to feel three-dimensional and sensually whole to readers, the writing must appeal to all five senses, which are sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. Croft (2006) states that the atmosphere is closely associated with the setting of a story and that writers often use description to create a sense of atmosphere, as in the following passage:

It was a large but exceedingly low-pitched room, the only one let by the Kapernaumovs, to whose rooms a closed door led in the wall on the left. In the opposite side on the right hand wall was another door, always kept locked. That led to the next flat, which formed a separate lodging. Sonia's room looked like a barn; it was a very irregular quadrangle and this gave it a grotesque appearance. A wall with three windows looking out on to the canal ran aslant so that one corner formed a very acute angle, and it was difficult to see in it without very strong light. The other corner was disproportionately obtuse. There was scarcely any furniture in the big room: in the corner on the right was a bedstead, beside it, nearest the door, a chair. A plain, deal table covered by a blue cloth stood against the same wall, close to the door into the other flat. Two rush-bottom chairs stood by the table. On the opposite wall near the acute angle stood a small plain wooden chest of drawers looking as it were lost in a desert. That was all there was in the room. The yellow, scratched and shabby wall-paper was black in the corners. It must have been damp and full of fumes in the winter (Dostoevsky 1917).

Here, descriptions not only create an atmosphere of misery, but also paint a detailed portrait of poverty without actually using the adjective and give the reader the necessary information to create a mental map of the location's spatial configuration. These same techniques were used by the literary journalist Tom Wolfe, who cited the detailing of

status life – or the entire pattern of behavior and possessions through which people express their position in the world – as a space-constructing device. One of the purposes of providing the reader with concrete details concerning seemingly trivial or unimportant objects or situations is to fix an atmosphere and to create a believable setting which the reader can experience through his or her senses (Ryan 2001).

### 2.4.3 *Spatio-temporal immersion*

Ryan notes that one of the most variable features of narratives is the “imaginative distance between the position of narrator and addressee at the time and place of the narrated events” (2001, p.130). When a story is able to place both the narrator and narratorial audience on the scene and at the time of the narrative events so that the distance between them is almost nonexistent, Ryan (2001) asserts that spatio-temporal immersion takes place. This does not occur frequently, however, as is evidenced by the majority of storytelling situations. Rather, most conform to the following model:

The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. The people of the village began to gather in the square, between the post office and the bank, around ten o'clock (Jackson 1948).

In this case, the narrator tells the audience about the events of a certain time and place that are removed from the current location. Neither the narrator nor the addressee are located at the time and place of the narrated events, nor are they able to perceive these events through the senses of the body. The opposite, however, occurs in the following passage, where the consciousness of the reader and narrator seem to fuse with the body of a character of the textual world as they both perceive events through her senses:

She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired. Few people passed. The man out of the last house passed his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the cinder path before the new red houses (Joyce 1914, p. 42).

Here, spatio-temporal immersion is made complete by the elimination of distance between the narrator and the addressee and the place of events.

Ryan (2001) contends that the imaginative transportation of the reader onto the scene of the events is made possible by the use of a series of narrative techniques that contrast with other commonly used devices. The first of these is the use of scene-by-scene construction of events – as stated by literary journalist Tom Wolfe – versus giving a summary of events, which is less immersive. This division goes back to Plato's and Aristotle's distinction between *mimesis* (imitation) and *diegesis* (narration), in which the first "shows" by means of action that is enacted, while the latter "tells" the story through a narrator. Most commentators on narratology believe that narrative fiction such as novels and short stories are a "patchwork" of both diegetic and mimetic parts, divided into a narrative of words and a narrative of events (Jahn 2005). In agreement with Ryan and Wolfe, Surlin (1969) writes that mimetic writing is more captivating than its diegetic counterpart. "When the writer speaks through his own voice the all-important element of mimesis is definitely less and the reader's interest decreases. Hearing is substituted for seeing, and the ear is weaker than the eye in the creation of mental images" (p. 16). Still, he concedes that both are found in most works of literature since the reader would be emotionally overwhelmed by witnessing one scene of events after another.

The second immersive narrative technique is the use of what narratologists call internal focalization, which Ryan contends is more immersive than external focalization. Focalization is a term coined by Genette and may be defined as "the perspectival restriction and orientation of narrative information relative to somebody's (usually a character's) perception, imagination, knowledge, or point of view" (Jahn 2010). Building on previous theories – and introducing this term as a replacement for the more traditional concepts "perspective" and "point of view" (Niederhoff 2009) – Genette establishes three types of focalization: 1) Zero focalization: where the narrator knows more or, more precisely, says more than any of the characters knows. 2) Internal focalization: the narrator says only what a given character knows. 3) External focalization: The narrator says less than the character knows (1980 [1972]: 188–89). The relevant question in these distinctions is "who sees?" (as opposed to "who speaks?"),

which is useful for identifying the narrator). It may also be asked: “who serves as a text’s center of perspectival orientation?” (Jahn 2005). With the first type of focalization, events are narrated from a wholly unrestricted point of view, which corresponds to the omniscient narrator. In internal focalization, the presentation of events is restricted to the point of view, perception, and cognition of a focal character, as occurs in the following passage: “Although it was so brilliantly fine - the blue sky powdered with gold and great spots of light like white wine splashed over the Jardins Publiques - Miss Brill was glad that she had decided on her fur” (Mansfield 1920). Across an entire text, internal focalization can present itself in a variety of patterns: with fixed focalization, for example, the events are presented from the point of view of a single character. In contrast, with variable focalization, the different events of the story are seen through the eyes of several different focal characters. In the case of external focalization, the presentation of events is restricted to outside views, to basically reporting what would be visible to a camera, which is unable to know the thoughts of any of the characters (Jahn 2010).

Although Genette’s model has drawn much criticism from scholars such as Mieke Bal, Genette’s classical model continues to be referenced and adopted for several reasons. First, it effectively differentiates between “who sees” and “who speaks”; second, it distinguishes between focal characters and narrators; and third, it allows for some versatility in the study of narrative phenomena since, in principle, all focalization types and features can co-occur with all other aspects of narration (Jahn 2010). Meanwhile, Bal (2009), in her revision of Genette’s theory, points out what appears to be a flaw: while the difference between Genette’s zero focalization and internal focalization is found in the agent that “sees” the story (in the first case, it is the narrator; in the second, it is the character), the difference between his internal and external focalization does not deal with the question of “who sees?” but with the object that is seen (in the first case, thoughts and feelings; in the second, actions and appearances). It follows, then, that she replaces Genette’s tripartite typology with a binary distinction: internal focalization (which corresponds to Genette’s internal focalization) and external focalization (which corresponds to Genette’s zero and external focalization combined into one). Although it is true that both zero and external focalization view those belonging to the storyworld from the same out-of-character perspective, in terms of

knowledge and information, the distinction between the two is useful since the first provides the reader with unlimited access to all parts of the storyworld, while the latter provides very limited access (Niederhoff 2009, p. 119). For this reason, Genette's model will be applied in this study when referring to the subject of focalization. Although Ryan, in her binary distinction between internal focalization (which she describes as "representing characters as subjects") and external focalization (which she describes as "representing characters as objects"), seems to adopt Bal's terminology, the results obtained from the application of Genette's tripartite model can easily be recoded or reinterpreted to reflect this model and thereby categorize types of focalization in terms of spatio-temporal immersion.

Next in the list of spatio-temporal immersive techniques is the use of dialogue versus stylistically neutral indirect reports of speech. While the latter, termed indirect discourse, paraphrases characters' speech in the narrator's vernacular, the former records the exact words uttered in conversations between characters. As another literary journalism device mentioned by Wolfe, the use of dialogue is also cited by Surmelian as an effective technique that goes hand in hand with scene construction. "The author's voice should be heard as little as possible. In a dialogue scene the reader's attention should be drawn to what the characters are saying, and the words stand out better by themselves, as do the speakers, if the third person does not enter too often (1969, p. 11). This observation is reiterative of the scene versus summary distinction, in which the former – just as the use of dialogue – "shows" what is happening in the storyworld, while the latter – like the use of indirect reports of speech – "tells" what is happening.

Ryan (2001) goes on to cite the use of prospective first-person narration (versus retrospective representation informed by the knowledge of the narrator in the present) as an additional spatio-temporal immersive device. To further distinguish between the types of narration, specifically between the common terms of first-person and third-person narration, two roughly comparable terms suggested by Genette (1980 [1972]) will be used in this study: these are homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration, respectively. Homodiegetic narration refers to a story told by a narrator who is also one of the narrative's acting characters. Heterodiegetic narration refers to a story told by a

narrator who is not present as a character in the story. Jahn (2005) further clarifies that for a text to be considered homodiegetic, at least some of its story-related action sentences contain first-person pronouns, indicating that the narrator was at least a witness to the events described. For a text to be considered heterodiegetic, all of its story-related action sentences are third-person sentences. In other words, for a text to be considered homodiegetic, there must be the presence of an “experiencing I” in the story’s plain action sentences (as opposed to a “narrating I”). There is also a third special case of homodiegetic or first-person narration called autodiegetic narration in which the narrator does not only participate in the action being recounted but is also the main character in the storyworld (Herman 2011).

Finally, Ryan (2001) also asserts that the use of the present tense is “inherently more immersive than the past,” although it should be used in conjunction with the past to create contrast in the text, a sort of peaks and valleys effect (p. 136-137). The expressive power of the present tense lies in its association with the idea of co-occurrence, with the notion that the reader is in the *now* of the story-world, experiencing the action of the story in the very moment that it is being lived out by the characters. Since the distance between the reader, narrator and the time of the events of the storyworld is reduced to zero in this case, spatio-temporal immersion is increased.

#### 2.4.4 *Temporal immersion*

The third dimension of Ryan’s theory of immersion is called temporal immersion, which refers to the “reader’s desire for the knowledge that awaits her at the end of the narrative time,” known technically as “suspense” (2001, p. 140). In a story, the passing of time matters to the reader mainly because the process of disclosure of information continually narrows down the range of possibilities of what will occur. While at the beginning of a story, anything can happen, as the story progresses, the future begins to take shape and the number of possible lines of action is limited. In other words, “suspense increases as the range of possibilities decreases” (2001, p. 142). The visible roads of characters’ destinies take shape before the reader with the use of narrative devices such as “foreshadowing, predictions, flash forward, or Alfred Hitchcock’s strategy of making the reader ‘aware of all the facts involved’” (2001, p. 142). Of course,

this desire to know the outcome of a story is usually correlated to the reader's interest in the fate of the hero. The oft-employed suspense situation usually concerns a main character in danger, in which case the reader hopes for a favorable outcome.

There are three types of suspense cited by Ryan which will be operationalized in this study. These are mentioned in decreasing order of intensity, with temporal immersion being the highest in the first case and the lowest in the third. The first type is referred to as "what suspense" and is regarded as the form of suspense most resorted to in action movies and thrillers. The focus of the reader's attention in this type of suspense is whether good or bad will befall the protagonists of the story. Will the protagonist save the city from destruction? Will the main character marry the girl of his dreams? Will the main character find happiness after he starts a new life in a new country? These are some of the questions that are posed in this kind of story, whose central question is "what will happen next?" and which is favored by a presentation of events that occurs in chronological order. In this type of story, identification with the main character occurs when the reader shares the perspective of the protagonist as his or her fate is played out (2001, p. 143-144).

The second type of suspense is called "how" or "why suspense" and works by adopting the format of the enigma. In this case, the outcome of a story is given in advance and the focus of the reader's attention is on the events that came before this known state. The entirety of a story, for example, may be devoted to revealing how the protagonist, a prisoner jailed for life, found himself in his current circumstances. Since the fate of the protagonist is known from the very beginning, the reader's desire to continue reading stems not from wanting to know if good or bad will befall the main character, but rather knowing how a problem will be solved or why something has occurred (2001, p. 144).

The third type of suspense is "who suspense," which is commonly associated with murder mysteries. It operates not by the reader's interest in the fate of the character nor by any type of emotional attachment to the protagonists, but rather by the "intellectual satisfaction of solving a problem" (2001, p. 144). The past is revealed to the reader piece by piece through the information that is revealed in the investigation

sequence. Since the pieces of this mystery puzzle do not necessarily fall into the chronological order of the murder sequence, temporal immersion occurs more as a result of the gradual disclosure of information than the unfolding of a character's destiny (2001, p. 145).

#### 2.4.5 *Emotional immersion*

The fourth dimension of Ryan's immersion theory is related to the reader's response to the characters of a story and is appropriately termed emotional immersion. She notes that although readers of fictional stories know that they are being presented with information that is unrelated to their own reality, these narratives still have the power to elicit the same spectrum of emotional responses that present themselves in the face of real-life events, from pity, sadness, and fear to laughter, intrigue, and passion (2001, p. 148). This emotional response stems principally from an emotional participation in the fate of imaginary characters. Ryan argues that through narrative devices such as narratorial omniscience and internal focalization, a story can allow a reader to know the emotions and thoughts of characters, thereby creating intimacy between the reader and the protagonist. Although ironic, it is thus easier for a reader to emotionally invest in and identify with a fictional character – whom the reader knows exceedingly well through the use of interior monologue – than it is to connect with a stranger in the real world whose interior life is mostly inaccessible (2001, p. 149).

It follows, then, that emotional immersion occurs when the reader is given sufficient information concerning a character, since he or she is more likely to be moved by the fate of those he or she knows rather than by the fate of strangers. For this to occur, the main characters of a story must be fully developed and believable or, as is referred to in literary studies, they must be three-dimensional, round characters (versus two-dimensional, flat characters). While a flat character embodies a single idea or quality, a round character's personality, background, motives, and other features are fully delineated by the author (Beckson and Ganz 1989). These traits include how they look; how they sound; what they wear; their emotions, desires, and beliefs; where they work; their secrets; their past; their hopes, goals, and plans; their family, friends, and relationships. Whereas a flat character's personality is mostly static in time, a round character evolves over time (Jewell 2011).

According to Jewell (2011), for characters to elicit an emotional response in readers, they must also be the type of person that he or she can identify with. For this to occur, the character must be believable in an immediate and personal way. He or she must see some of his or her own traits, thoughts or beliefs in the character, or the reader must recognize that he or she has experienced others like this character. Since all human beings experience sorrows, joys, hardships, and victories, it is common for readers to identify with characters that have gone through difficult times or who have triumphed in the face of hardship. At the same time, however, a character must be more interesting than the common, ordinary person. "Either the characters must be unusual people, or they must be normal people living unusual lives," writes Jewell (2011). This is echoed by Surmelian (1969, p. 142-143), who notes that a characters must not be so exceptional or abnormal that the reader would have difficulty identifying with them, and at the same time, they must not be too common to the point that the reader would take no interest in them. An additional element which magnifies a character's sympathetic qualities, as well as the reader's ability to identify with him or her, is the use of an antagonist. This is a person, group of people, or a force that opposes the protagonist and creates the conflict. It can also come in the form of a force of nature, an animal, a setting, society or the supernatural. Besides creating the conflict that is essential to the plot of the story, the antagonist highlights the protagonist's virtues by serving as a foil, which is a character whose qualities emphasize another's by providing a sharp contrast (Auger 2010).

#### 2.4.6 *Immersion versus interactivity*

Ryan contends that the marriage of immersion and interactivity – a task which most digital interactive narrative texts assume – is a dubious union at best since one of the two features usually comes at the expense of the other.

Immersion wants fluidity, wholeness, and a space-time continuum that unfolds smoothly as the imaginary body moves around the fictional world. But in purely textual environments, interactivity presupposes a broken-up and "windowed" structure, since every link teletransports the reader to a new island within the textual archipelago (2001, 352).

While immersion requires the continuity and linearity necessary to allow the reader to be “carried away,” so to speak, interactivity gives way to a self-reflexivity and self-referentiality that discourages the reader from entering wholly into the textual storyworld. Indeed, the term hypertext itself was defined as “non-sequential writing” by Nelson, when he first coined it (Jacobsen 2011). Later, Landow identified nonlinear or multiple narrative threads and multi-vocality as the defining characteristics of hypertext (2006). It follows, then, that the hypertextual nature of web-based storytelling would require that narratives – inherently linear in structure – compromise a clear beginning, middle and end in favor of nonlinear structures that give the reader options to choose from and, in doing so, designate him as a sort of co-author of the text.

Despite these theoretical objections to the synthesis of interactivity and immersion, Ryan explores the question of whether interactivity can be a positive factor of immersivity. In terms of temporal immersion, she notes that the broken-up structure of the interactive text is counterproductive to the linear accumulation of information that is required for the build-up of suspense (the more the reader reads and knows about the storyworld, the more he or she can anticipate what comes next). She notes that the only type of temporal immersion that is heightened by interactivity is that which is experienced in the case of the mystery-story structure because each of the reader’s actions (a click on a link to a document or to an audio file, for example) reveals information that heightens the desire to continue reading the story, which is itself usually not chronological (2001, p. 258-259). In terms of spatial immersion, she observes that one consequence of the mosaic structure of hypertext is that the units of reading are usually not long enough to let an atmosphere sink in. She concedes, however, that of the three types of immersion, spatial immersion is the one that has the most to gain from hypermedia effects, such as the inherent spatiality of images. A well-designed interactive story that combines images, audio, text, maps, and historical documents, she contends, is probably one of the most efficient ways to celebrate the spirit of a certain place. With regard to emotional immersion, she asserts that it requires a “sense of the inexorable character of fate, of the finality of every event in the character’s life,” which is incompatible with interactivity, since the multiple paths generated by hypertextuality preclude this desire to emotionally invest in the linear unfolding of a character’s future (2001, p. 263).

## 2.5 State of research

In this study's attempt to chart the evolution of online longform narrative journalism from a transgeneric narratological perspective, it builds on previous research, which is relatively minimal due to the newness of the longform phenomenon, as well as the novelty of the application of transgeneric narratological concepts to the study of journalism. Berning's (2011a) narratological analysis of selected journalistic reportages contributes to the field of transgeneric narratology by demonstrating that the reportage is a hybrid text type and that the genre merges the fields of literature and journalism in its objective of informing, education, and entertaining. Her study also makes clear that narratological categories which originated in structuralist narratology can be employed to describe, analyze, and chart journalistic reportages.

Berning (2011b) also uses two case studies of online literary reportages to demonstrate how the techniques of New Journalists are applied nowadays on the Internet. She finds that the three characteristics of online journalism – hypertextuality, multimediality and interactivity – are used extensively and that, as a consequence, the means of immersion for the reader are increased. Contrary to Ryan's assertion that immersion and interactivity cannot harmoniously coexist, she notes that the use of hypertextuality in one of the case studies enhances the New Journalism technique of scene-by-scene construction and that it facilitates the exploitation of temporality so that devices such as flashbacks and foreshadowing acquire a new dimension. On the other hand, however, she also finds that if multimedia and interactive elements are used inappropriately, they can even contradict what is communicated within the textual part of the story. Hence, the authors of these two case studies argue that while the digital and interactive features of a text make it possible to engage a broader spectrum of readers, they can only enhance a piece, not add to its narrative and literary quality, which should stand on its own. Berning also notes that digital narrative journalism can have several shortcomings which should be taken into account:

First of all, electronic features are part of an affective approach to news media. This approach undermines logical discussion and deadens analytical

and critical thinking skills essential to effective learning and productive living. Secondly, audiovisual elements might distract the reader's attention from the written word and can even change the meaning of a text. Thirdly, hypertextuality enforces a disordered and disjointed reading experience (2011, p. 12).

The last two observations echo Ryan's assertions concerning the incompatibility of interactivity and immersion, while the first seems to contradict Ryan's claim that interactive digital texts encourage reflexive thought rather than inhibit it.

In her posterior analysis of Mark Bowden's digital narrative piece *Blackhawk Down*, Berning (2013) observes, in opposition to Ryan's immersion versus interactivity dualism, that links not only serve to connect narrative description and retrospective reflection, but that they serve as a bridge between temporal and emotional immersion. She notes that while the hypertext creates suspense and heightens temporal immersion, the links to the audio and video clips allow the "readers to explore a plurality of possible worlds and enable their bonding with the characters" (p. 10). She also observes that in the first part of the story, "emotional immersion increases at the expense of temporal immersion" and that as the story unfolds, the amount of links is reduced as temporal immersion increases and emotional immersion decreases (p. 11).

Similarly, Royal (2000) assumes the position that literary journalism is highly compatible with the Web. She contends that the Internet provides many features that have the potential of supporting an immersive environment<sup>2</sup>. Some of these immersive features include: hyperlinking to audio and video files to increase the sensory experience; providing an opportunity for the reader to participate in the creation of the story; encouraging the reader to present his/her opinion; or presenting supporting documentation such as maps, timelines, or diagrams. Although these conclusions are more than a decade old, they are in fact being applied presently to digital storytelling. Confirming Royal's predictions, Ureta (2011) found that special feature reportages made for the Web exploit the hypertextual, multimedia and interactive dimensions of the Internet. As a result, the traditional genre of the feature or in-depth/special report has

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<sup>2</sup> Royal's commonplace use of the term immersion is not the same as Ryan's since the latter refers to a specific type of immersion in a storyworld that acquires the presence of an autonomous, language-independent reality, while the former refers to engagement in any type of absorbing activity.

been reinvented online, resulting in the hypermedia or multimedial hypertext feature, defined as advanced “hypertexts that integrate content in written, visual, audiovisual, sonorous, and graphic formats” (p. 188).

In support of Ryan’s theoretical propositions, Van Laer’s (2013, p. 803) meta-analysis of two decades worth of research on narrative transportation (synonymous with narrative immersion) confirmed the hypothesis that: “the more stories have (a) characters with whom story receivers can identify, (b) a plot that story receivers can imagine, and (c) verisimilitude, the more narrative transportation increases.” The first two story features are roughly compatible with the dimensions of Ryan’s immersion theories. The first corresponds to emotional immersion, which is a response to the characters of the story, while the second corresponds to temporal immersion, which is a response to the plot of the story. While the third feature, verisimilitude (synonymous with believability, but unrelated to nonfictionality), does not correspond to spatial immersion (the response to setting), it does reflect some of Ryan’s assertions that for immersion to occur, the storyworld must exhibit enough believable characteristics to resonate with the reader’s past experiences and conjure up mental images in his or her mind.

With regard to the evolving nature of journalism on the NYTimes.com portal, Jacobsen (2011) evaluated multimedia news packages published on the site from the year 2000 to 2008 and found that the number and sophistication of the packages grew over time. Her findings confirmed the growing “featurization” of hard news (Steensen 2011), with roughly 75% of multimedia packages labelled as feature stories, even when they were linked to hard-news stories. She also found that the number of interactive features – defined as any multimedia package that is not a single video presentation or a still photo slideshow – increased significantly from 2000 to 2008 and that a greater percentage of these featured first-person accounts by journalists or non-journalists rather than third-person accounts (although overall, the multimedia packages used the third-person perspective more often). Video packages and photo slideshows included more hypertextual linking and social media tools over time, while several also borrowed elements from digital games. Most packages were produced as sidebars to stories

published in the newspaper, “suggesting that multimedia was used as an extension of the written word, not a primary storytelling format” (p. 867).

Considering the dearth of studies dedicated to the rapidly changing field of digital narrative journalism, this study aims to contribute preliminary information concerning the evolution of this genre in a digital era. Berning (2011a, p. 118) expresses the need to explore these relevant questions: “To what extent does the convergence of media have an influence on narrative journalism? What new forms of narrative journalism become possible in light of technological advances?” In light of past research, it is evident that new studies are required to assess the ways in which digitalization has affected the content of narrative journalism, and to monitor how text, video, audio, images and graphic elements have changed in the way they interact with each other. Up until this moment, it is clear that online journalism is in some way exploiting the features of the online medium – hypertextuality, interactivity, and multimediality – but it is not clear how this is affecting longform narrative journalism in particular.

Besides contributing with descriptive longitudinal data, this study also aims to fill a methodological gap in the research of online narrative journalism, which has scarcely been evaluated from a transgeneric narratological perspective. While it has been shown that narrative journalistic reportages can be evaluated from a narratological perspective, the systematic application of transgeneric narratological concepts – such as those provided by Ryan’s immersion theories – to the study of online longform narrative journalism has yet to be carried out. Considering that Ryan provides one of the most comprehensive theoretical frameworks for the study of narrative texts across all mediums – identifying the narrative strengths and weaknesses of literary texts, as well as that of new communicative forms such as hypertext, multimedia, and interactive features –, her theories will be empirically tested in this longitudinal study.

### 3. Research Methods

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#### 3.1 The sample

In order to systematically chart the evolution of online longform narrative journalism, a quantitative content analysis will be performed on 100 narrative pieces published from 2009 to 2013 on the NYTimes.com portal. Considering that the *New York Times* continues to be the front-runner in the transition from traditional to digital storytelling and that it has consistently produced high-quality longform journalism throughout the past decades, it has been chosen as the source of material to be analyzed in this investigation. Since longform narrative journalism experienced a notable growth just in recent years – beginning in 2009 with the launching of the longform content curation site Longreads.com, which will serve as the sampling frame –, this longitudinal study will cover a span of five years. Taking into account the rate of innovation and change in a digital era, this period of time is expansive enough for the purposes of this research. Twenty narrative pieces will be chosen per year, giving a total number of 100 to be analyzed and coded. This number is not only representative of the sampling universe (from 2009 to 2013, a total of 381 *New York Times* longform stories were listed on the content curation site Longreads.com; therefore, 100 pieces are 26% of the sampling universe), but is large enough to allow a descriptive statistical analysis of data within each year of evaluation.

The sampling frame of this study, Longreads.com, has partnered with outlets recognized for their quality longform journalism such as PBS, the *Atlantic*, and the *Washington Post* and aims to “help people find and share the best storytelling in the world,” featuring nonfiction and fiction over 1,500 words. The site will serve as a sort of online database of longform journalism for this study. To select the narrative pieces, “New York Times” will be typed in the “search our archive” function, and then the “least recently published” option will be selected to view the results in chronological order,

from least recent to most recent pieces. Twenty pieces will be chosen from each year (from 2009 to 2013, inclusively) according to the following steps:

- 1) The first round of selection consists of identifying those pieces which fulfill the first five conditions of a narrative, as defined in this study (conditions 6 through 8 will not be taken into account, considering that they establish that the narrative must contain a unified causal chain of events that leads to closure, a requirement which is too stringent for the hybrid text type of a narrative journalistic piece):
  - Narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents (characters and objects).
  - This world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations.
  - The transformations must be caused by nonhabitual physical events (happenings or deliberate actions by intelligent agents).
  - Some of the participants in the events must be intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world.
  - Some of the events must be purposeful actions by these agents, motivated by identifiable goals and plans (Ryan 2001, 7-8).
  
- 2) After those pieces which fulfill the preceding conditions have been pre-selected, the next step in narrowing the sample to 20 pieces per year (according to a preview of sample pieces, there are more than 20 pieces per year which fulfill the criteria) is identifying those which have the largest word count, considering that the focus of this study is longform narrative journalism. This information is provided in the results section of the search.

### **3.2 Research design**

Given that the purpose of this study is to chart the evolution of online narrative journalism across a span of five years, a quantitative content analysis was deemed the most appropriate due to its potential for providing a generalizable and numerically

based summary of a message set rather than the detailed and in-depth information that would result from a qualitative analysis (Neuendorf 2002). Defined as a “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (Krippendorff 2004, p. 18) and “a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method” (Neuendorf 2002, p. 10), a content analysis would provide the data necessary to make conclusions that are not only generalizable and summarizing, but also broadly based and objective. Considering also that hypotheses can be derived from the theoretical framework outlined in this study, a quantitative content analysis would be the only appropriate method to deductively test the validity of each of these.

Riffe et al. (2005) points out additional strengths of the quantitative content analysis. He states that this type of analysis is ideal for longitudinal studies, since the content is archived and has a life beyond its production and consumption. Second, quantification permits reduction to numbers of large amounts of information that would be logistically impossible for close qualitative analysis. If the data is properly operationalized, this “process of reduction nonetheless retains meaningful distinctions among data” (p. 38). Meanwhile, Holsti (1969) agrees that the content analysis research design is ideal for describing the characteristics of communication, for comparing messages across time, for investigating trends in communication content, and for analyzing techniques of persuasion and style.

Taking into consideration, however, the novelty of both digital longform journalism and the application of transgeneric narratological concepts to its study, this research also incorporates a qualitative dimension that would allow the researcher to record unexpected and unique observations. The last variable in the coding process is an open-ended category in which general observations concerning the narrative piece are recorded.

### **3.3 Operationalization of variables and hypotheses**

To answer the research questions presented in the Introduction to this thesis, Ryan’s multi-dimensional theories of immersion have been operationalized in this study

for the analysis of both the textual and multimedia content of the online narrative pieces selected. Although this constitutes the bulk of the quantitative analysis, each piece will also be coded for general textual and multimedia characteristics, as well as the degree of visual and conceptual integration between textual and multimedia elements. In total, each piece will be coded for 55 variables, which are specified in the codebook, along with coding rules, category descriptions, definitions, and examples that help to clarify (see appendices, p. 111).

In the first part of the quantitative analysis, each piece will be coded for overall length, as well as multimedia elements such as the number of images, videos, animations and audio clips. Additionally, hypertextual links, non-interactive graphics such as static illustrations, maps, infographics, and timelines, and interactive graphics such as navigable maps, infographics, and timelines will be counted (the definition for interactive used in this study is based on Deuze's notion of navigational interactivity (2003)). New interactive digital features such as scroll-activated elements, the separation of stories into navigable parts, and audio narration are also tallied. The resulting numbers from this section will be used to answer RQ 1, which asks "how have the textual and multimedia characteristics of online narrative journalism pieces changed over the last five years?"

The next section of the coding process operationalizes the theoretical concepts of spatial, spatio-temporal, temporal, and emotional immersion devised by Ryan (2001). For example, in order to arrive at a relative measure of spatial immersion for each piece (in relation to all other narrative pieces in the sample), three variables are defined with regard to the setting: first, the use of descriptions that establish a sense of atmosphere or ambiance, such as a tense room or a welcoming home; second, the use of descriptive sensory data, such as how a place (and objects in that place) look, smell, sound, feel, and taste; and third, the use of descriptions that taken together give a mental map of the geography of a certain place, such as a tour through a house, from the entrance to the backyard. With regard to spatio-temporal immersion, six variables are defined to establish the degree to which the distance between the narrator, the addressee, and the time and place of the events narrated is reduced to near zero. These include: the voice of the narrator (whether the narrator is present or absent from the story he or she

tells), the narrative focalization (whether the narrator is omniscient, takes on the perspective of a story character, or follows the characters' actions from the outside like a camera lens), whether the narrator's reports of speech and thoughts have the potential of eliciting the feeling of being inside one of the character's mind, and the use of dialogue, scene-by-scene construction, and the present tense. In terms of temporal immersion, five variables are defined: the use of suspense devices such as foreshadowing, predictions, flash forwards, or making the reader aware of all the facts involved, the presence of a chronological order of events, and the use of "what," "why/how," and "who" suspense, as defined by Ryan (2001). With regard to emotional immersion, four more variables are defined: whether or not the story has identifiable characters; an antagonist; characters that are either unusual or living in unusual circumstances; and round characters. The results from this section will be used to answer RQ 2, which asks "has the use of immersive textual narrative devices increased, decreased or remained the same over the last five years?"

The next section of the coding process transfers Ryan's theoretical concepts of immersion to the study of the multimedia elements of each narrative piece. In terms of spatial immersion, for example, six variables are defined (corresponding to the spatial immersivity of 1) images; 2) audio; 3) videos; 4) animations; 5) non-interactive graphics; 6) and interactive graphics) that establish whether or not the specific type of element gives the reader an image of the setting or helps to create the story's atmosphere. With regard to temporal immersion, six variables are also defined (corresponding to each of the six main elements) that establish whether or not the specific type of element gives the reader additional information of an event of the story (since temporal immersion requires the accumulation of information concerning the plot). With respect to emotional immersion, six variables are defined that establish whether or not the specific type of element in question gives the reader greater insight into the personality, behaviors, experiences, and/or attitudes of the characters of the story. Concerning spatio-temporal immersion, there is no multimedia counterpart to the textual measure of this type of immersivity in the operationalization of variables in this study, since Ryan does not explicitly address how this type of immersivity is enhanced by multimedia elements in her theory. Furthermore, from a preview of the sample, it is also presumable that multimedia spatio-temporal immersion would be near zero, given that a majority

of the multimedia elements on the NYTimes.com portal do not implement any type of narration. The results from this section will be used to answer RQ 3, which asks “has the use of immersive multimedia narrative devices increased, decreased or remained the same over the last five years?”

The next section of the coding process – dedicated to charting the relationship between textual and multimedia content – is based on studies conducted by Berning (2011b) and Jacobsen (2011) which suggest that one of the main challenges of reconciling textual and multimedia storytelling formats is integrating the different messages visually and conceptually. Here, three variables are defined which establish: the degree to which the textual and multimedia elements of the story are visually integrated (if they appear as sidebars or are integrated into the text); the degree to which the appearance of textual and multimedia elements creates a seamless flow of events for the reader (if the transition between multimedia and textual elements is seamless, meaning barely noticeable, or if some elements appear as disruptions and are not synchronized with the events of the story as they unfold); and the degree to which the multimedia features are necessary to the overall narrative coherence of the piece (if they are required to understand the story or if they simply provide complementary information). The results from this section will be used to answer RQ 4, which asks “has textual and multimedia content become more integrated over the last five years?”

With regard to the four specific research questions to be investigated in this study, the following hypotheses have been formulated, based partly on previous empirical studies and partly on Ryan’s theoretical framework:

- H 1: Online narrative pieces have grown longer in terms of word count and have incorporated more multimedia elements over the last five years.
- H 2: The use of immersive textual narrative devices has decreased over the last five years.
- H 3: The use of immersive multimedia narrative devices has increased over the last five years.

- H 4: Textual and multimedia content has become more integrated over the last five years.

Hypothesis 1 is based on the findings of Kiuttu (2013), Jacobsen (2011) and Arnold (2014), which indicate that the Web has fostered the reinvention and growing popularity of longform narrative journalism, integrating in-depth reporting with multimedia elements. Hypothesis 2 and 3 is based on Ryan's theories of immersion, which state that textual immersion competes with hypermedia effects and interactivity for the reader's attention so that when one increases, the other usually decreases. Therefore, it is hypothesized that with the digitalization of online narrative journalism, immersive multimedia narrative devices increase while immersive textual narrative devices decrease over time. Hypothesis 4 is based on Kiuttu's (2013) findings, which state that multimedia elements are increasingly embedded in narrative stories, especially where they have a connection with the events detailed in the text.

### **3.4 Method of analysis**

To make the analysis of the results replicable, the software SPSS Statistics 19 will be used to provide a descriptive statistical analysis. The results of the first two sections of the coding process will be analyzed by calculating the total frequencies per year of the usage of the different multimedia and interactive elements defined in the codebook. The results of the sections devoted to the textual and multimedia immersivity analysis will be obtained by calculating partial and general immersivity scores. To do so, the values for each of the variables that are contained within a certain type of immersion (spatial, temporal, emotional) will be recoded so that the presence of an immersive technique is transformed to a value of 1, while the absence of an immersive technique is transformed to a value of 0. By adding all the values and dividing by the number of variables, each of the types of immersion will have a partial immersivity score between 0 and 1. In the case of textual temporal immersion, variables 28 to 30 (which correspond to "what," "why/how," and "who" immersion, in this order) are assigned values in accordance with the decreasing intensity of temporal immersion associated with each type of suspense, so that a "yes" value in variable 28 is recoded as a valued of 1, a "yes"

in variable 29 is recoded as a value of 0.666, and a “yes” in variable 30 is recoded as a value of 0.333. Although these values are not absolute since it is not known whether the distance between them in terms of temporal immersion is equal, the scale is still useful for the purposes of this study, since it is the relative value that is of importance, not the absolute one. General textual and multimedia immersivity scores will also be arrived at by calculating the average of all the partial immersivity scores. With regard to the final section of the coding process, a multimedia-text integrations score will be calculated by reassigning values to variables 53 through 55. For example, for variable 53, the positioning of multimedia elements as sidebars will be assigned a value of 0, while the presence of some sidebars will be assigned a value of 0.5, and the full integration of multimedia features into the text will be assigned a valued of 1. A general multimedia-text integration score will be calculated by obtaining the mean of all three recoded variables.

### **3.5 Validity and reliability**

The most common validity used in content analysis, and the minimum one required, is face validity (Riffe et al. 2005). This type of validity – which is defined by Krippendorff as “obvious” (2004, p. 313) – asks whether a particular measure of a concept makes sense on its face (Riffe et al. 2005). Content analysts rely on face validity more than researchers who use other methods because, according to Krippendorff (2004, p. 314), “content analysis is fundamentally concerned with readings of texts, with what symbols mean, and with how images are seen, all of which are rooted in common sense, in the shared culture in which such interpretations are made, which is difficult to measure but often highly reliable at a particular time.” At the very minimum, the operationalization of concepts in this study has passed a face validity test, since the variables contained within each of the different dimensions of immersion – spatial, temporal, and emotional – are “on the face of it” related to each of these different concepts, which may be rudimentarily understood as the realistic construction of setting, plot, and characters. In terms of the measures related to the presence of multimedia features, the most “common sense” manner to measure the multimediality of a piece is to count the number of multimedia features.

Another type of validity, empirical validity, is the “degree to which available evidence and established theory support various stages of a research process” (Krippendorff 2004, p. 315). In this sense, it has been demonstrated in this thesis how relevant research and theory has informed the creation of each of the different categories of analysis, from the tallying of multimedia features to the measure of textual and multimedial immersivity. Furthermore, the theory of immersion has been established as a relevant analytical tool, given the number of comparable conceptualizations in diverse fields, from cognitive psychology and literary studies to communication and analytic philosophy. Empirically, the theory has also been tested and supported in the form of “narrative transportation.”

With regard to reliability, an intracoder reliability test was carried out by randomly selecting (through a random number generator) 10% of the sample and coding it twice at different intervals, separated by four weeks. For variables 1-6, 8-14, 16, 20-23, 29, 35-44, and 46-53, intracoder agreement was calculated at 100%. For variables 7, 15, 17-19, 24, 26-28, 30-34, 45, and 54-55, it was calculated at 90%. Since variable 25 received an 80% rate of intracoder agreement, it was not taken into account in the final analyses. Although Krippendorff (1980) cautions that intracoder reliability is the weakest form of reliability, it gives some sense of whether the measuring procedure established yields the same results on repeated trials, especially given the constraints of this study which has been conducted by a single researcher.

Other possible limitations of the research methods implemented in this study include the fact that the operationalization of the theoretical concepts elaborated by the researcher has not been empirically tested before, so it is a completely new contribution to the field of transgeneric narratological analysis as applied to online narrative journalism. Furthermore, it is also not known to what extent the study may be replicated by another researcher and produce the same results, since it has been conducted by a single researcher who has coded the entirety of the sample. It is also important to note that while this study attempts to operationalize the “potential” for immersion of a given narrative piece, fully realized immersion requires not only an immersive text, but a reader that is capable of producing the mental images necessary to immerse him or herself in a text. Thus, while it is hoped that all narrative pieces would

be analyzed in the same way by all researchers thanks to a systematic and objective coding process, absent an intercoder reliability test, there is the possibility that the individualities of each coder – given their background, experiences, education, perspective – could have unintended effects on the final results.

## 4. Research Results

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### 4.1 Description of the sample

In total, 100 online narrative pieces published on the NYTimes.com portal from 2009 to 2013 were coded for 55 variables. Twenty pieces were selected per year from a sampling universe of 381 stories. In general, a majority of the stories (83%,  $n = 83$ ) were published on the online version of the *New York Times Magazine*, while the rest were published in other sections such as Projects (5%,  $n = 5$ ), Sports (5%,  $n = 5$ ), US (4%,  $n = 4$ ), Business (1%,  $n=1$ ), World (1%,  $n=1$ ), and Newsgraphics (1%,  $n = 1$ ). As time progresses, the number of longform narrative pieces published in other sections increases, especially with regard to the Projects section, which is devoted to in-depth stories that are usually interactive in nature (see Figure 3).

### 4.2 Results<sup>3</sup>

With regard to H 1, “online narrative pieces have grown longer in terms of word count and have incorporated more multimedia elements over the last five years,” the empirical results support only the second assumption. In terms of word count, the average length of stories has varied throughout the years (see Figure 4), without a clear pattern of decreasing or increasing length. The maximum story length per year (as well as the range of story lengths), however, decreased sharply from 2009 to 2010 and has risen steadily since then.

In terms of multimedia elements (defined as the features which make up a multimedia news package, which uses two or more media formats, such as audio and written text (this is not tallied in this case), music, moving and still images, graphic animations, and interactive elements (Deuze 2003)), the number has clearly increased throughout the years, although there is a slight dip in the year 2010 in comparison with

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<sup>3</sup> Considering the longitudinal nature of this study, the results of the investigation are often presented in the form of graphs within the text in order to facilitate the visualization of the changes over the years.

the previous year. The greatest increase occurs between the years 2012 and 2013 (see Figure 5).

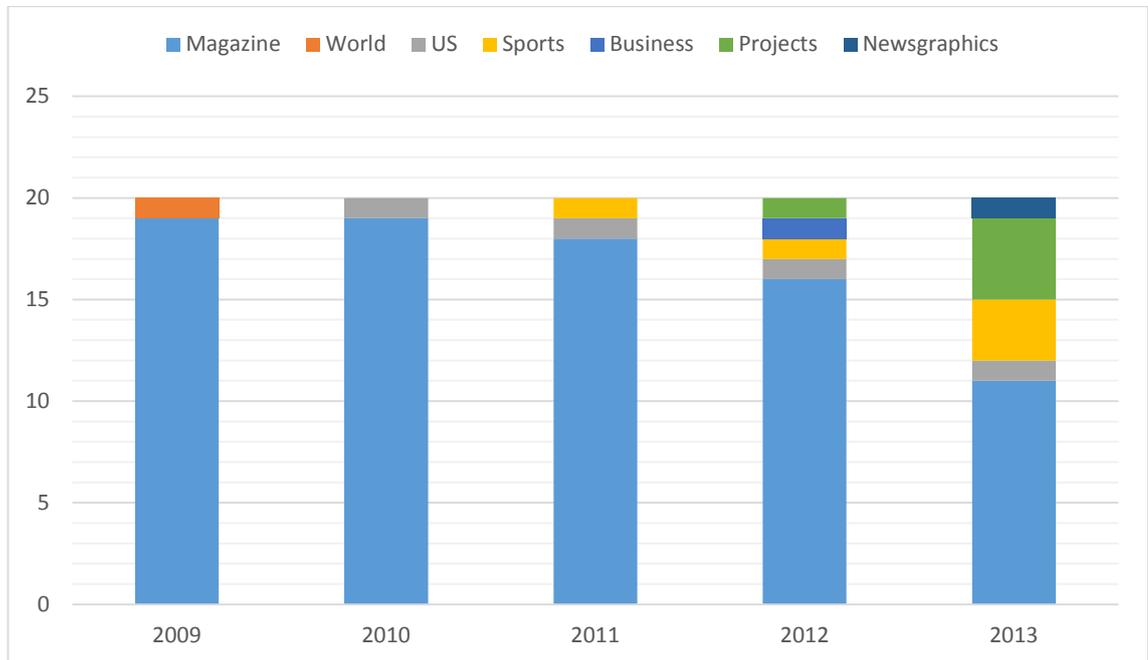


Figure 3: Editorial classification of narrative pieces per year

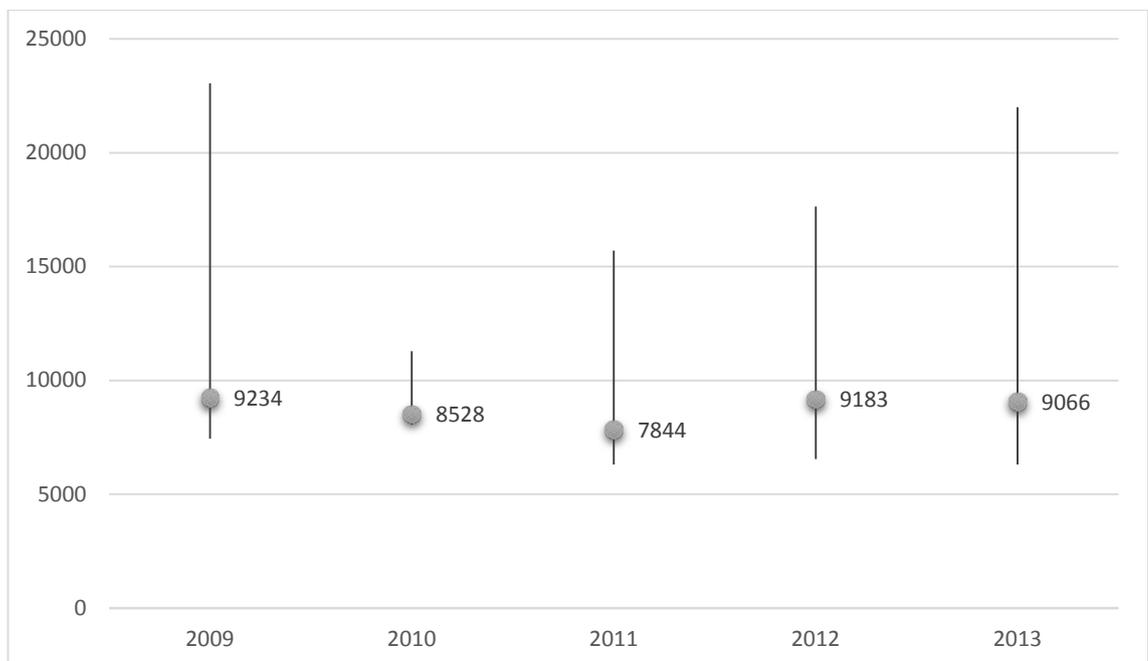


Figure 4: Word count per year (minimum, mean, and maximum)

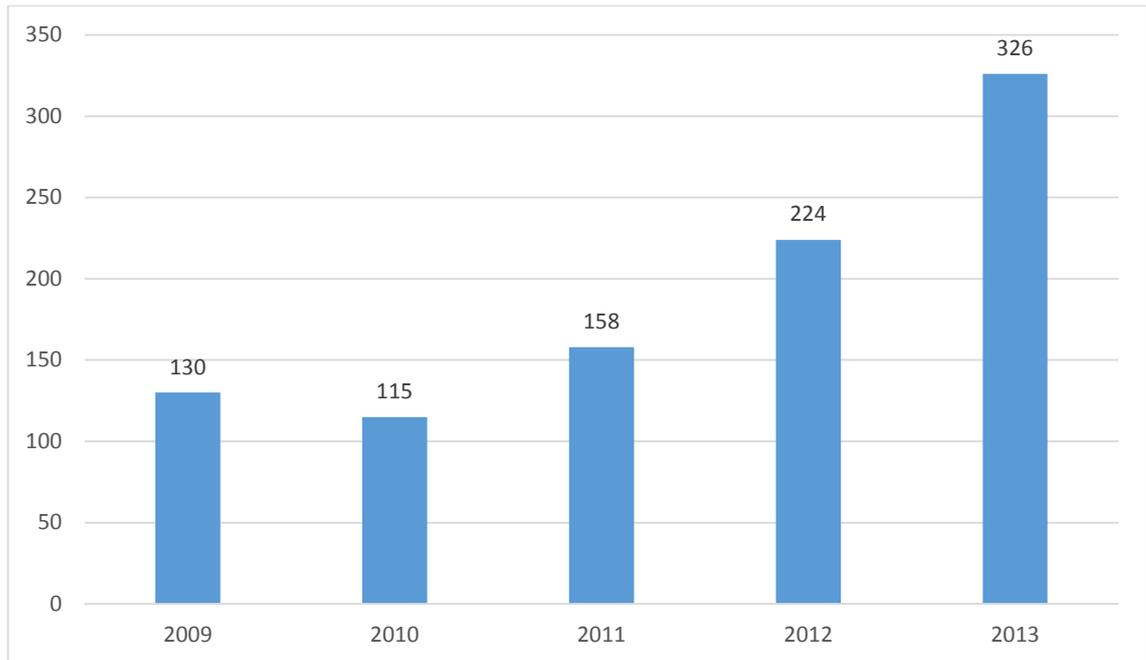


Figure 5: Total number of multimedia features per year

With regard to H 2, “the use of immersive textual narrative devices has decreased over the last five years,” the results indicate that the use of immersive textual narrative devices has actually increased rather than decreased over time. In Figure 6, the plotting of the mean general textual immersivity scores per year shows that although there is a dip in the year 2010, there is a steady increase from that point forward.

With regard to H 3, “the use of immersive multimedia narrative devices has increased over the last five years,” the results partially support the stated assumption. The plotting of mean general multimedia immersivity scores per year indicates that there is a slight decrease in the year 2010 relative to the year 2009, but that from 2010 forward, there is an overall increase (see Figure 6).

Concerning H 4, which states that “textual and multimedia content has become more integrated over the last five years,” the results fully support the assumption. The plotting of mean general multimedia-text integration scores indicates that the degree of integration between text and multimedia elements (measured as visual, conceptual,

and narrative integration) has steadily increased from 2009 to 2013, with the greatest increase occurring between the years 2012 and 2013 (see Figure 7)

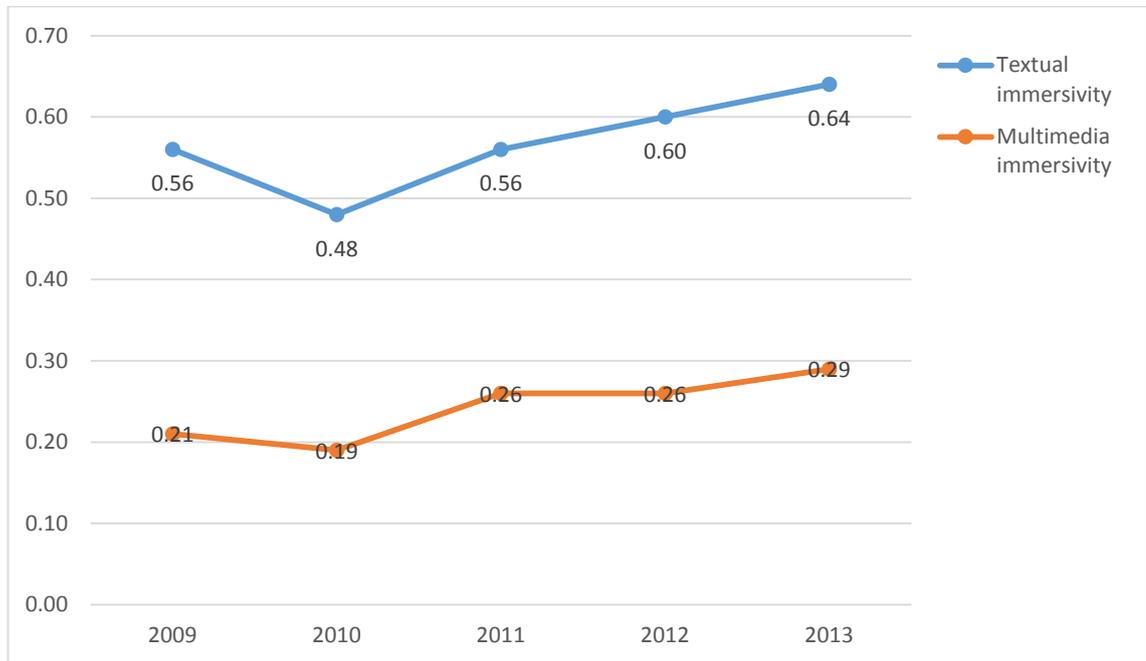


Figure 6: Mean general textual and multimedia immersivity scores per year

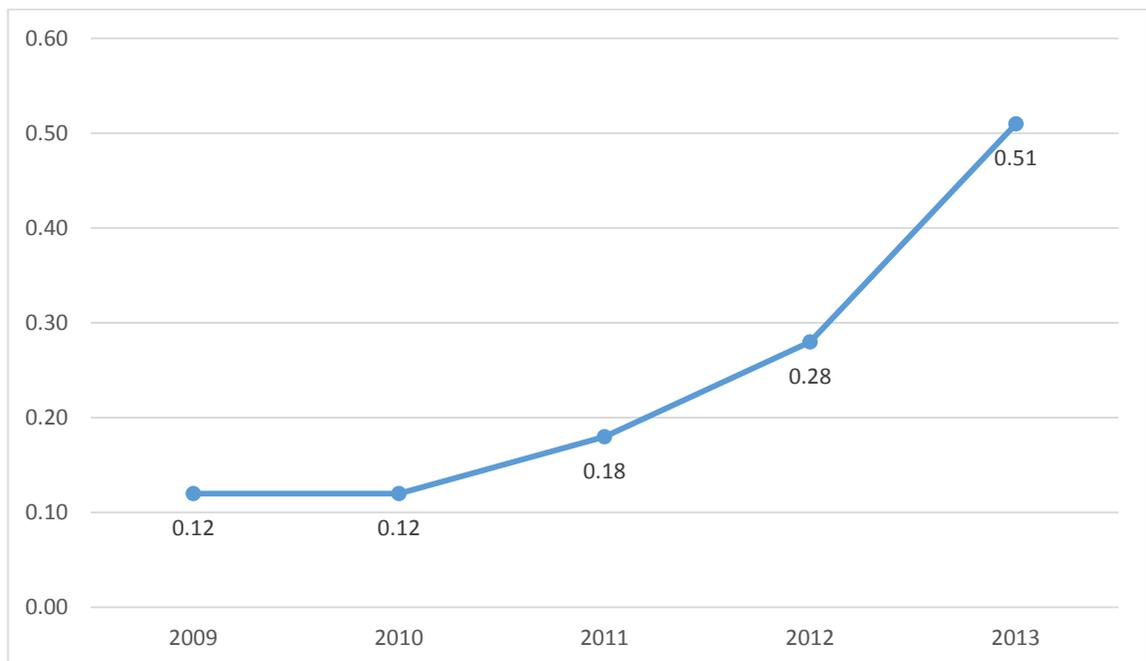


Figure 7: Mean general multimedia-text integration scores per year

## 6. Discussion

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### 5.1 Interpretation of results

An overview of the study sample and the editorial classification of the narrative pieces analyzed (see Figure 3) confirms not only that there is a growing “featurization of the news” (Steensen 2011, p. 49) – since “hard news” topics such as the Benghazi attack, the war in Afghanistan, and the Walmart bribery scandal are now the focus of longform narrative pieces –, but that narrative journalism is no longer being confined solely to the traditional place of magazine writing within the *New York Times Magazine*. The Projects section, which is dedicated to in-depth reports that incorporate multimedia and interactive elements, features increasingly prominently in the years 2012 and 2013, while it was nonexistent in the study sample from 2009 to 2011. As expected, this indicates that digital longform projects grew in importance during the five years studied, to the point that an entire section was created to house these types of in-depth reports, which are mostly stand-alone Web pieces.

With regard to the evolution of textual features mentioned in RQ 1, online longform narrative pieces published on the NYTimes portal do not exhibit an identifiable pattern in terms of the average length. The maximum word count, however, does increase steadily from 2010 to 2013, while the year 2009 is an outlier in all respects, given its wide range of story lengths and high average word count in comparison to 2010. Upon closer examination of the individual word counts of the narrative pieces, however, it is observed that the differences in the range of story lengths and average word counts can mostly be attributed to the presence or absence of multimedia narrative pieces that are made specifically for the Web, as opposed to those that are simply “transcoded” (Jacobsen 2011) copies of the printed version of the story. As in-depth projects that have required more time and resources than the usual story, accordingly, they also usually require much more space for text than the average story. In 2009, for example, the six-part story “Held By the Taliban” incorporates several multimedia elements, such as videos, graphics, and maps, and is clearly an outlier in the

sample in terms of word count, thereby raising the average length of stories for this year. In 2010, however, there is no piece with a high number of multimedia elements, which accounts for the fact that this is the year with the smallest range in terms of word count. In 2011, there is one multimedia longform piece; in 2012, there are three; and in 2013, there are five, which explains why the maximum word count and range increases progressively from one year to the next. The one difference with the latter year, however, is that four of the five multimedia pieces are half as long as those in previous years (below 11,000 words). This indicates that although the number of multimedia longform stories grows from one year to the next overall (with the exception of 2010), these stories vary more in length as time progresses. Considering the amount of time and resources required to produce each of these stories, it is logical to deduce that while increasingly more stories exhibit this format – which may be more attractive to readers –, the actual textual content is reduced due to reporting constraints.

Concerning the evolution of multimedia features mentioned in RQ 1, it is necessary to analyze the apparent trend in the increase of these features over the years, which confirms Jacobsen's (2011) findings. In terms of the usage of full-width images (that extend from one end of the screen to the other), it is seen that these increase from zero in the period 2009-2011 to 6 and 23 in the years 2012 and 2013, respectively (see appendices, Figure 1a). This indicates that the use of these types of eye-catching images, which are usually placed as headers in multimedia stories in order to immediately set the mood and the opening scene of the story, is a recent trend in narrative journalism. As expected, the use of images in general, excluding full-width ones, also increases somewhat steadily in the period analyzed, with once again the year 2009 appearing with slightly higher figures in relation to 2010 and the greatest increase occurring from 2012 to 2013 (see appendices, Figure 2a). Although the number of videos does not increase proportionally throughout the period analyzed – with an abrupt and drastic increase from 2010 to 2011, due to an outlier in the sample which alone contains 30 videos –, there is a relative increase in general, with the latter years exhibiting three to six times the amount of videos present in the years 2009 and 2010 (see appendices, Figure 3a). In terms of the number of audio files, there is no clear pattern, since there are approximately as many in the years 2011 and 2012 as in 2009 (see appendices, Figure 4a). The number of non-interactive features seems to increase somewhat steadily if it

were not for the disproportionate amount of features in 2010, which is much higher in comparison to the amount tallied for the rest of the years (see appendices, Figure 5a). This can be explained by the fact that since this year lacks a story with a large amount of multimedia elements – but instead, has a large amount of transcoded stories that were not designed for the Web –, the stories published online this year compensate visually by combining text with static illustrations and graphics that were part of the original print story. With regard to the number of animations, embedded documents, the usage of scroll-activated elements and audio narration, it is seen that these are relatively new features in online longform stories, since these elements appear and increase in number from the year 2011 onwards (see appendices, Figures 7a, 8a, 10a, and 11a). In accordance with the trend observed in the word count range, the maximum number of story chapters is high in 2009, decreases significantly in 2010, and increases steadily and proportionally from that year onwards (see appendices, Figure 12a). As with word count, this is also explained by the differing presence of multimedia stories in each of these years. The longest multimedia stories usually have the largest number of parts or chapters as well.

In accordance with Ryan’s zero-sum dualism of immersivity versus interactivity and Kiuttu’s (2013, p. 21) empirical observation that multimedia stories made for tablets usually do not give the reader too many options to choose from – giving the sensation of being in a “cognitive container” so that the reader can indulge in a story without distractions –, the results indicate that there is a clear pattern of a steady decrease in the total number of hypertextual links per year (see appendices, Figure 8a). The reduction of hyperlinks from 622 in 2009 to only 67 in 2013 suggests, at the very least, that the linked nature of the Web is in some respect inimical to the objectives of longform storytelling, which, as Ryan puts it, aims for immersion more than interactivity. The number of interactive features per year – which increases steadily from 2009 to 2012, reaching 32, and then drops drastically to 6, its lowest number, in 2013 – seems to partly confirm this assumption (see appendices, Figure 6a). Given that the number of stand-alone longform narrative stories made exclusively for the Web reaches its highest point in 2013, with only one previous to that in 2012, it can be cautiously deduced that part of this extreme drop in the number of interactive features may also be due to the need to create a “cognitive container” for the reader. The five pieces created specifically

for the Web that were published in 2013 exhibit not only a complete absence of hypertextual links (defined in this thesis as “text that links to content in a different location, either outside the web page being viewed or to another location within the piece” (see appendices, pg. 116)), but also incorporate a high number of videos and animations which are automatically activated by scrolling so as to reduce the number of choices, or specifically clicks, that the reader has to make.

Turning now to RQ 2, which asks whether the textual immersivity of the pieces analyzed increases, decreases or remains the same over the years, it seems that the same pattern that emerged in the word count ranges, the total number of multimedia elements, and the maximum number of story chapters repeats itself in the plotting of the mean general textual immersivity scores. As with these elements, the mean score dips in 2010 and steadily increases from that point forward. Contrary to the hypothesis proposed, it appears that NYTimes.com longform narrative pieces on the whole are becoming more immersive, more story-like and incorporating more narrative elements over time. This would, to some extent, corroborate Steensen’s view that news is becoming increasingly “featurized.” To further understand this trend, it is necessary to look at the plotting of the mean partial immersivity scores.

With regard to the plotting of spatial immersivity, the characteristic dip appears in 2010, while there is a more pronounced increase from 2010 to 2011 compared to the previous measure. The mean score continues to increase until 2012 but decreases somewhat in 2013 (see appendices, Figure 13a). Overall, the mean spatial immersivity scores are 50 to 100% higher in the latter years in comparison to the years 2009 and 2010. This seems to indicate that stories were incorporating increasingly more spatial descriptions up until 2013, in which a slight step backwards was taken. Initially, this might seem to be explained by Ryan’s assumption that spatial immersion has the most to gain from hypermedia effects due to the inherent spatiality of images, especially the full-width images that are primarily used in the stories published in 2013. It follows, then, that if spatial immersion is increased by multimedia elements, textual spatial immersion decreases. If, for example, the setting of a story about a trip to the jungle is immediately established in the mind of the reader through a full-width image of the particular location, it is arguable then that the text would not need to include as

extensive of a spatial description as would be necessary if no image were provided. A more detailed look into the individual story scores, however, contradicts this assumption. In 2013, all multimedia stories with full-width images received, on a scale from 0 to 1.0, a textual spatial immersivity score between 0.7 and 1.0, which means that they were highly immersive. Since a trend cannot be established by looking at a single year, it can only be concluded, then, that overall spatial immersivity increased, while unaccounted factors influenced the relative decrease in 2013.

In reference to textual temporal immersivity, the same pattern exhibited in previous measures is present, although there is a more pronounced dip in 2010 and the steady increase thereafter is also more pronounced, with the greatest increment occurring between 2012 and 2013 (see appendices, Figure 15a). The results indicate that as with most of the indicators, the temporal immersivity of the pieces selected was high in 2009 in comparison to the following year, decreased some in 2010, and continued to rise, reaching its highest point in 2013. This suggests that with time, the narrative pieces exhibited more clearly defined plots and suspense devices. The cross-tabulation of the individual temporal immersion variables by year indicates the same. The presence of a chronological plotline, for instance, is high in 2009, decreases in 2010 and increases steadily until 2013, the year with the highest number of stories with a chronological plotline. The same occurs with the usage of suspense devices, the sequential development of the protagonist's fate, and the usage of "how (why)" suspense. The only variable in which this trend does not appear – the presence of the device actually decreases in the latter years – is the usage of "who" suspense, which is the least immersive of all three suspense types and is most commonly used in mystery stories. This finding is in line with Steensen (2009) and Berning's (2011a) assertions that news is increasingly incorporating narrative elements that make stories not only informative but interesting to readers. The higher the temporal immersion of a story, the more likely that it will captivate a reader from beginning to end, leading him or her to constantly ask "what will happen next?" or "how did something come to pass?"

Concerning textual spatio-temporal immersion, the patterns exhibited in most of the previous measurements is replaced by a completely different, and almost opposite, development. Instead of scores that dip in 2010, spatio-temporal immersion

rises almost imperceptibly in 2010, and continues to decrease steadily, although modestly, until 2013. The overall result is a very minimal and gradual decrease in spatio-temporal immersion over time (see appendices, Figure 14a), which means that the imaginative distance between the position of narrator and addressee at the time and place of the narrated events increases over the time period studied. Looking at the cross-tabulations of variable number 20 (the voice of the narrator) by year indicates that over time, there is an increase in the number of pieces with narrators that are not part of the stories that are told. While 100% of the selected narrative pieces published in 2009 were told by a narrator that was also a character in the story (all of these used the pronoun “I”), the usage of a heterodiegetic narrator (not part of the story told) increases exactly two-fold each year from 2010 to 2013, so that in the last year, 40% of the stories have an out-of-story narrator. Similarly, internal focalization (in which events are viewed from the point of view of a character in the story) decreases consistently over time, while the use of zero focalization (an omniscient point-of-view) and external focalization (a camera lens point-of-view) increases over time. The usage of scene-by-scene construction seems to maintain mostly steady over the years, while usage of dialogue seems to decrease somewhat in the last year (see appendices, Tables 2a and 3a).

The overall trend of the decrease in spatio-temporal immersion can be explained by the fact that the stories published in the *New York Times Magazine* usually resort to a homodiegetic narrator, while those published in other sections of the *New York Times* usually use a heterodiegetic narrator. Since the number of longform stories published in sections outside of the magazine increases with time, the number of stories with an out-of-story narrator also increases. This is in line with convention, since of all journalistic genres, magazine (and feature) reporting is the most likely to allow the reporter to make him or herself visible to the readers by using the personal pronoun “I,” as opposed to the third-person perspective (Sims 1995, p. 3). Meanwhile, most “hard news” prefers a greater distance between the narrator (reporter) and the addressee (the reader). Another explanation for the trend can arise from the possibility that different reporting techniques were used for each of the stories, depending on the availability of information and sources, which would in turn influence the type of narration chosen to tell a story. For instance, in story number 39, “Deepwater Horizon’s Final Hours,” which reconstructs the last moments of a burning oil rig based on interviews with surviving

crew members and thousands of documents, the reporter was not personally at the scene of the story, making it difficult for him to use a first-person point-of-view. Thus, he resorts to heterodiegetic narration, which is used in cases where the journalist assumes the role of a historiographer and seeks to reconstruct events from the past (Mattern 2008, cited in Berning 2011a). The fact that a journalist was not present at the unfolding of a specific event may also hinder his or her use of scene-by-scene construction and dialogue.

This study found, however, that in the journalistic reporting conducted by the NYTimes.com, the fact that a reporter was not a direct witness of accounts did not always impede him or her from resorting to homodiegetic narration, especially in the case of stories written for *The New York Times Magazine*. For example, in story number 64, “Obama vs. Boehner: Who Killed the Debt Deal?” the narrator is part of the story told, using on numerous occasions the personal pronouns “I” and “me” to refer to the interactions he held with the different characters (or sources) of the story as they relate to him different versions of events. The bulk of the events narrated, however, are based on the information that is given to him by these other characters of the story. Although the categorization of this narration is technically homodiegetic since the reporter is an “experiencing I” who takes part in some of the actual events of the story, the majority of the action narrated is carried out by other characters and the third-person is also widely, if not predominantly, used. In this way, a story within a story is constructed at what Genette calls the metadiegetic level, which is a narrative embedded within the intradiegetic level (the narrative level of the characters) (Genette 1972, cited in Coste and Pier 2011). In terms of focalization, although this type of story – which constitutes a majority of the sample studied – technically resorts to internal focalization since the events at an interdiegetic level are seen through the point-of-view of a character of the story, the bulk of the story is actually externally focalized since it is constituted by events that were seen and experienced by someone other than the narrator-character. It would seem, then, that this narrative device is used to purposefully heighten spatio-temporal immersion – to transport the reader closer to the time and place of the storyworld –, even in cases where the reporter is not an eye-witness to all the events recounted.

With regard to textual emotional immersivity, mean scores slightly decrease until the year 2011 and then increase thereafter, with the largest increment occurring between 2012 and 2013 (see appendices, Figure 16a). To further understand this trend, it is necessary to look at the individual variables. Looking at the cross-tabulation of the presence of round characters by year, for example, it is seen that the greatest number of stories that incorporate this narrative element are found in the first two years, while the number decreases in the following two years and then rises again in the last (see appendices, Table 5a). Considering that the first years are dominated by stories written for *The New York Times Magazine*, of which a large part are colorful profile pieces, and that the latter years feature more longform narrative stories for other sections of the *New York Times*, it is conceivable that emotional immersion – which is a reaction to the characters of a story – is high in 2009 and 2010. To explain the pronounced increment in the latter years, it can be seen in the cross-tabulation of the presence of identifiable characters by year that the number of stories with this narrative element increases steadily throughout the years, with three times as many stories with this element in 2013 than in 2009. This increase not only explains why emotional immersivity scores rise noticeably in the latter years, creating a sort of valley-shaped graph of the period, but is also consistent with the qualitative observations made in this study. These indicate that while the first years are dominated by profile stories of famous, powerful or influential figures in American society, mostly political figures, the latter years incorporate more stories concerning common, run-of-the-mill folk who find themselves in a dire or unusual circumstance, such as poverty or lack of opportunities. This may be simply a result of a shift in editorial decision-making that arose as a reaction to the broader socioeconomic reality of America in this time period. Since the transition from a Republican to a Democratic administration came in 2009 with the election of Barack Obama, it is conceivable that much of the longform stories published in 2009 and 2010 were profiles of political figures. In tune with the main concerns of the American population, the latter years were accordingly centered on issues that were of greater interest to a broad spectrum of the population. The fact that a greater percentage of the latter stories were published for the online version of the newspaper rather than the magazine also may be a factor to take into account, since newspaper reports are designed to reach a broader audience, while magazine writing is more specialized and targeted towards a specific audience.

As a concluding observation to the analysis of the results for RQ 2, the overall increase in mean general scores of textual immersivity indicates that longform narrative pieces published on the NYTimes.com portal exhibit a growing tendency over time to incorporate narrative elements that make stories more immersive, and as a consequence, more engaging, entertaining and interesting for a broader spectrum of readers.

Turning now to the results for RQ 3, which asks if multimedia immersivity increases, decreases or remains the same over the past five years, the plotting of scores indicates that as with textual immersivity, there is a slight dip in 2010 and a gradual increment from then on, although the rate of increase is not as constant and as pronounced as with the previous measure of immersivity. In order to better understand this trend, it is necessary to analyze the partial immersivity scores. With regard to multimedia spatial immersivity, it can be seen that there is a constant and gradual, although modest, increase in the mean scores from 2009 to 2013. This is explained by the fact that over time, more stories incorporate visual elements such as videos, graphics and animations that give the reader a clearer image of the setting of the story. It can be inferred that the increment is modest, however, because of the way in which this variable was operationalized. Since the mere presence of elements such as videos or images that give the reader additional information concerning the setting was tallied, while an analysis of the size, quality or nature of these images was ignored, it can be assumed that the lack of attention to the degree of impact of the visual content is a factor that may cause the final scores to underestimate the degree of increase in spatial immersivity.

From the qualitative observations made in this study, however, it can be concluded that spatial immersivity increased significantly in the latter years, especially with the usage of full-width headers that placed readers directly in the setting of the storyworld. For instance, a piece published in 2009, such as story number 11, "The Deadly Choices at Memorial," at the outset is clearly less spatially immersive in comparison to story number 96, "A Game of Shark and Minnow," published in 2013 (see next page, Figures 8 and 9). Not only does the latter incorporate a full-width header, it

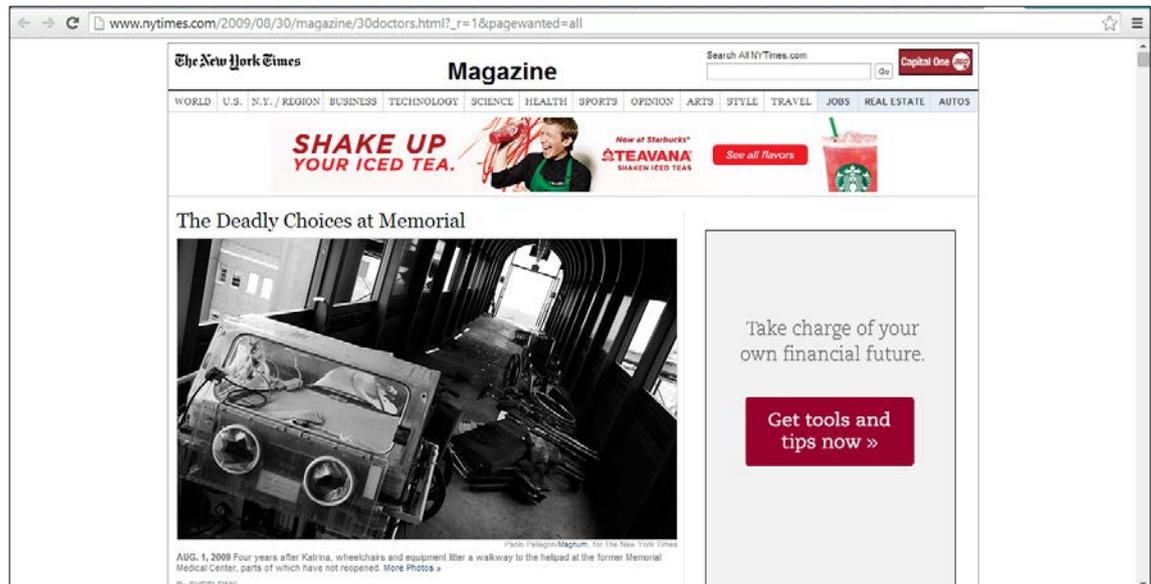


Figure 8: Story number 11, published in 2009

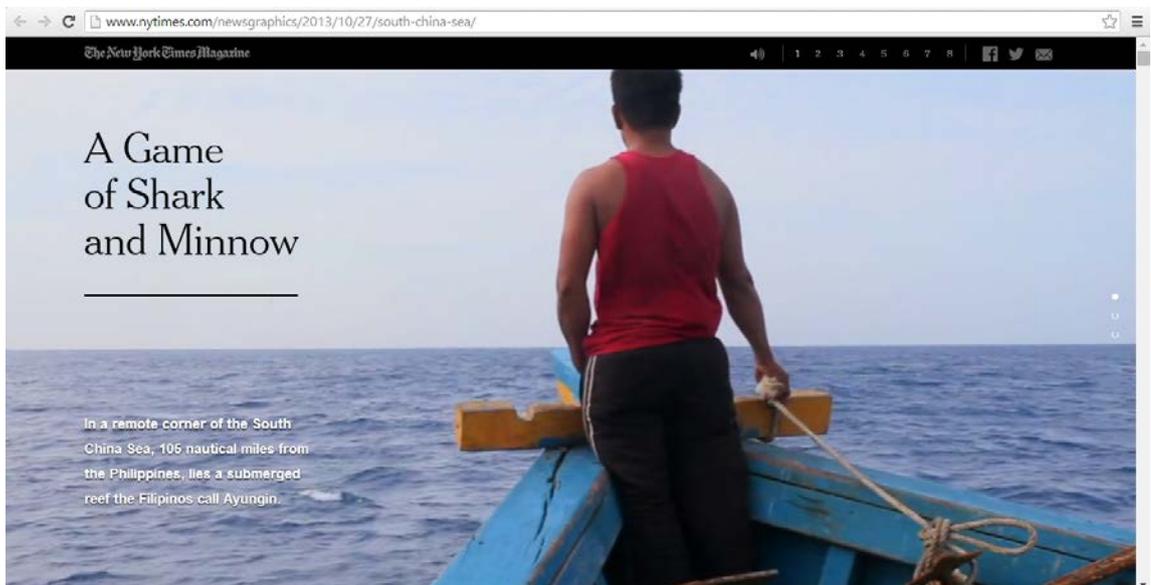


Figure 9: Story number 96, published in 2013

utilizes a video with sound to open the story, which helps recreate the setting, along with its mood and atmosphere.

Regarding multimedia temporal immersivity, there is an overall trend of increase over the years, although the plotting of mean scores from one year to the next moves in a zig-zag fashion (see appendices, Figure 15a). In general, however, it was expected that multimedia features would play an increasingly important role in the information they provided concerning plotlines, since the amount and variety of these features was also expected to increase over the years. Looking at the cross-tabulations of the

individual variables that comprise the partial multimedia temporal immersivity score, it is seen that in the case of images, videos and animations, the presence of elements that give additional plot information to that given in the text increases over the years. In the case of interactive features that give additional plot information, however, there is a higher number of these in 2011 than in the rest of the years, which accounts for the spike in mean scores for this year. A large part of these cases, however, involves photo slideshows, which are less sophisticated interactive elements in comparison to infographics, maps or timelines.

Concerning multimedia emotional immersivity, the plotting of mean scores maintains relatively steady throughout the years, with the exception of a slight dip in 2010, which by almost all previous measures, is somewhat of an irregular year. The unchanging nature of the scores is due to an evening out of values that occurs when the different individual variables are combined. While the presence of videos that give greater insight into the personality, behaviors, experiences and/or attitudes of the characters of the story increases throughout the years, reaching a maximum in 2013, the presence of audio files that do the same is highest in 2009, and the presence of interactive graphics that do likewise is highest in the middle years (see appendices, Tables 6a - 8a). The result is a relatively flat plotline that connects the different years.

In general, multimedia immersivity scores correlate somewhat with the presence of multimedia features throughout the years. This is due mostly to the way in which the individual variables were operationalized. Since individual multimedia elements were not analyzed for their relative impact, but rather were tallied in regard to a simple requirement – whether or not they provided additional information that was not contained in the text –, it is certain that final multimedia immersivity scores do not reflect more nuanced differences between features. For example, the number of images that provided information concerning either the setting, plot or characters was not taken into account, but simply whether the images present provided additional information or not. In this way, a story with one small image of a story's protagonist would receive the same immersivity score as a story with many large, captivating images of its characters. Similarly, temporal immersivity scores do not analyze how effectively different multimedia elements contribute to the creation of suspense in a story.

Based on qualitative observations, however, it can be concluded that of the three types of immersivity, spatial and emotional immersivity are the ones most heightened by the used of multimedia elements. Videos, audio files and images of settings and characters significantly enhance a story by giving the reader an abundance of additional information of how a certain setting looks like or how a character speaks and behaves. Temporal immersivity is the most difficult to heighten with multimedia elements – and also the most difficult to gauge – since this would require a much more precise and methodical synchronization of multimedia and text content, to the extent that all multimedia elements would be necessary to the overall narrative coherence of the story and that none of their content would overlap with information already given in the text. These would also have to be purposefully placed in specific locations of the story so that the sequential accumulation of details necessary for the creation of suspense would be achieved. Based on qualitative observations, this was accomplished to its greatest extent in 2012 with “Snow Fall” and in the latter part of 2013, with the stories “The Jockey,” “A Game of Shark and Minnow,” and “A Deadly Mix in Benghazi.”

In conclusion, it is seen then that although multimedia immersivity increases over the time period studied, as demonstrated by final average scores, the simplified way in which variables were operationalized in this portion of the study might have led to an underestimation of the degree to which they in effect heightened the immersivity of certain pieces.

With regard to RQ 4 – which asks “has textual and multimedia content become more integrated over the last five years?” –, the results fully support the hypothesis that integration increases. The cross-tabulation of variable 53 (the position of multimedia features in relation to the text) by year indicates that there is a constant increase over the years in the number of stories that visually integrate multimedia features fully into the main text, with the highest increase occurring between 2012 and 2013. Those stories that have multimedia elements that are somewhat integrated into the text, with some sidebars, also increases over time until 2012, in which the transition is made to full visual integration. Accordingly, those stories with multimedia elements that are positioned mostly as sidebars decreases consistently over the years, with 95% of stories presenting

this format in 2009, while only 40% do so in 2013 (see appendices, Table 9a). The same trend is evidenced in the cross-tabulation of variable 54 (description of narrative flow) by year, in which the number of stories with a seamless integration between multimedia elements and the text in the story flow increases over time, with the highest number appearing in 2013. The number of stories with multimedia elements and text that are clearly demarcated but that are conveniently placed and constitute an easy to follow storyline also increases over the years, while the number of pieces with multimedia elements that are not synchronized with the events of the story decreases over the years, with 100% of the sampled stories presenting this format in 2009, while only 50% do so in 2013 (see appendices, Table 10a). The cross-tabulation by year for the third indicator in this composite measure, variable 55 (function of multimedia elements in relation to text), indicates that while 63% of the entire sample incorporate multimedia elements that either fit in or complement the main storyline but are not necessary to the story, there is a growing trend, especially in 2013, to incorporate multimedia elements that are either necessary to the overall narrative coherence of the story or that contribute significantly to the story (see appendices, Table 11a). This indicates that with time, multimedia elements play a more important role in the overall story, with a clearer contribution to the piece that goes beyond complementing what is already stated in the text.

These results are in line with Kiuttu's (2013) findings, which state that in ideal cases, multimedia elements are essential to the core story and should be embedded in the text in the locations where they have a natural connection to the story, not at the end of the article. The final scores also confirm the qualitative observations made throughout the coding process, which state that stories published in 2013, such as "Two Gunshots on a Summer Night" (story number 98) and "A Game of Shark and Minnow" (story number 96), rely heavily on multimedia elements that are conveniently placed within the story and are indispensable to the narrative coherence of the story. Meanwhile, the observations concerning stories published in 2009 and 2010, such as "What's a Bailed-Out Banker Really Worth" (story number 20) and "The Teachers' Unions' Last Stand" (story number 27), mention that they lack immersivity not only due to an inconvenient positioning of multimedia features, but an absence of elements that contribute significantly to the story.

Regarding the relative presence of each type of immersivity in the sample studied, which is not a measurement needed in response to any of the research questions posed, but does, however, give additional insight into the importance of certain types of narrative devices in relation to each other, it is seen that textual immersivity far outweighs multimedia immersivity (see next page, Tables 1 and 2). Although the two are increasingly dependent on each other, the results show that multimedia immersivity scores are between 0.233 and 0.255, while textual immersivity scores are between 0.365 and 0.764. In terms of types of immersivity, it is not only seen that the textual type is predominant, but that spatio-temporal immersivity is the most present of the four. This indicates that of the four types of immersivity, the type that locates the reader in the time and place of the events is the most utilized. This confirms qualitative observations, which indicate that scene-by-scene construction and dialogue are used in almost all of the pieces in the sample. Second in predominance is emotional immersivity, which indicates that characterization is one of the key narrative elements exploited by reporters of the NYTimes.com. This is also in accordance with qualitative observations, since a large portion of the pieces revolved around a main figure, especially, as would be expected, in the case of profile stories. Next in line is spatial immersivity, which suggests that reporters also utilize, to a large extent, descriptions of setting and atmosphere, albeit with some inconsistency and only in certain types of stories, considering the high standard deviation calculation. While reportages of conflicts and wars in the Middle East, for example, received high measures of spatial immersivity due to the detailed descriptions of a faraway setting, others that centered on the personality and achievements of public personas, for instance, received low measures of spatial immersivity. Lastly, temporal immersivity was also present in the sample, although to a much lesser degree in comparison with spatio-temporal immersivity. The low overall mean score for this type of immersivity, coupled with the fact that the standard deviation for this type of measure is the highest of all four textual measures, indicates that temporal immersion is the narrative device that is least and most inconsistently used by reporters of the NYTimes.com. This is confirmed by qualitative observations, since it was seen that most narrative reportages do not follow a sequential chain of events that leads to closure, as is common in purely narrative

stories, but are actually hybrid types that intersperse plot events with some summary and explanatory comments that are characteristic of journalistic reporting.

	Textual spatial immersivity score	Textual emotional immersivity score	Textual temporal immersivity score	Textual spatio-temporal immersivity score
Mean	.537	.608	.365	.764
N	100	100	100	100
Std. Deviation	.4261	.2892	.4360	.1829

Table 1: Mean textual immersivity scores by type

	Multimedia spatial immersivity score	Multimedia emotional immersivity score	Multimedia temporal immersivity score
Mean	.235	.255	.233
N	100	100	100
Std. Deviation	.1997	.1748	.2184

Table 2: Mean multimedia immersivity scores by type

## 5.2 Limitations of data

The quantitative and qualitative results of this study must be analyzed for their inherent limitations and the possible influence of unaccounted external factors. With regard to the study sample, for example, it may be argued that the use of the content curation site Longreads.com may have resulted in the selection of atypical longform stories or stories that were chosen in accordance with some unknown criteria. The site, however, states that content curators select the “best storytelling” on the Web and that users are also free to share their own stories, which must be approved by the site before they are listed. Considering that the main aim of the site is to promote high-quality, informative and interesting longform journalism that appeals to a broad audience, the possibility that stories chosen in accordance with criteria outside of the objectives of this study is not likely. Furthermore, it cannot be argued that the site’s content curation efforts were slow to catch momentum in 2009 or 2010 (when few were talking about longform journalism, thereby possibly affecting the sample universe), since the total

number of NYTimes.com stories listed on the site was actually higher in the period 2009-2011 than in the latter two years. In terms of the final selection of stories, it is also improbable that researcher bias affected the study sample, since the highest word count was eventually the determining factor, after semi-narrative pieces were culled from the sample. With regard to unusual cases or outliers, the year 2010 almost consistently registers lower scores for all variables in comparison with the rest of the years. This also seems unlikely to be attributable to human error or bias since word count measures, which are totally objective indicators, also exhibited this same pattern.

Concerning the validity of the data, the fact that quantitative measures and qualitative observations yielded similar results is self-validating and confirms, to some extent, the accuracy of the instrument devised in this study. With regard to multimedia immersivity measures, however, a clear limitation is the lack of detailed and subjective data on the different elements incorporated into the stories. Part of this shortcoming is due to the treatment of individual stories as single units of information, which in many cases are over 10,000 words. Since longform stories exhibit complex structures and varying narrative characteristics – narrative focalization, for example, can change throughout a text –, it might be advisable to analyze these pieces by chapters or even paragraphs, in the case of a qualitative study.

### **5.3 Conclusions on the general research question**

Taking into consideration the previous analysis and discussion on the results for the specific research questions and hypotheses defined in this study, it is now necessary to turn to providing concluding statements on the general research question, which asks, “how have the storytelling techniques of online narrative journalism published on NYTimes.com evolved in the last five years?”

Overall, the results indicate that over time, longform narrative journalism on the NYTimes.com portal has incorporated more multimedia elements and more stand-alone narrative pieces made specifically for the Web. With increasing frequency, the latter have story-like elements, such as an immersive setting, a gripping plot, and identifiable characters in order to captivate readers from beginning to end. Not only do these stories

exploit traditional narrative and literary devices to engage their readers, but they also, with increasing frequency, exploit immersive multimedia elements, such as full-width images, videos and animations, to artfully tell a story through the multiple mediums of text, moving images, and sound. There is also a growing tendency to visually, conceptually, and narratively combine multimedia and text so that the two have become more integrated and dependent on each other over time. Instead of complementary sidebars, multimedia elements now appear as an integral part of longform stories so that the transition between text and multimedia is more natural and less noticeable. To do so, highly interactive elements, such as sophisticated infographics that require a high degree of user interaction, have been set apart from longform stories into individual interactive multimedia pieces that are not classified as longform, while hypertextual links have been replaced by scroll-activated features and animations that diminish interruptions and facilitate absorption into the storyworld. As such, digital longform narrative journalism on the NYTimes.com strives to become an actual “experience” for the reader, entertaining while informing, rather than simply providing information.

Contrary to expectations, the use of traditional narrative devices has not been replaced or inhibited by the use of immersive multimedia elements, but rather enhanced by it, opening up a new world of possibilities for longform narrative journalism. The results indicate that the more immersive narrative qualities a piece has, the more easily it lends itself to incorporating multimedia elements that only augment the story’s immersive quality, but only if executed in the proper fashion, since multimedia elements can easily become a distraction rather than an integral part of a story. A piece about the life of a would-be immigrant who risks his life crossing several countries to arrive in the U.S., which has all the essential elements of a story, for example, can be made many times more immersive with the use of full-width images of the perilous borderlands between the U.S. and Mexico, as well as videos of key experiences along the way to contribute to the plot, and perhaps audio files with excerpts from interviews and pages of his personal diary to give insight into the character’s thoughts. The increase in the number of stand-alone longform Web pieces on the NYTimes.com portal, then, reflects the shift from traditional magazine writing to a type of narrative journalism that has more story-like elements, such as a plot with scene-by-scene construction, and less explanatory and commentary paragraphs that are

common in traditional interpretative journalism. Since the latter does not lend itself as easily to the incorporation of immersive multimedia elements – given that there are less tangible elements, such as an immersive setting, identifiable characters, and a well-defined plot, and more abstract elements such as arguments and ideas –, it follows that the textual component of narrative journalism has become more – not less, as expected – story-like.

## 7. Conclusions

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### 6.1 Overall significance of findings

By locating these results within the context of extant research and theoretical propositions, the unique contribution of this study to the fields of transgeneric narratology and digital narrative journalism become clear. First of all, with regard to Ryan's interactivity versus immersivity paradigm, it can be concluded that the empirical evidence of this investigation has supported her assumptions. Whether theoretically driven or through intuitive logic, the layout of stand-alone Web stories, at least on the NYTimes.com portal, have increasingly conformed to the notion that highly interactive features such as hyperlinks undermine rather than enhance the digital longform experience. For this reason, Web design of these pieces has been focused on providing a seamless "journey" for the reader, where multimedia and text blend together to the point that the reader visualizes the storyworld beyond the individual mediums and forms that convey the information. In the ideal case, the storyworld and its characters and events become more real and tangible for the reader, while the actual words and moving images on a screen seem to recede from focus, facilitating immersion by minimizing the distraction caused by the transition from one medium to another. So, while multimedia interactivity decreased, multimedia immersivity increased, as proposed by Ryan. In accordance with her propositions that spatial immersivity has the most to gain from hypermedia effects, this study found that the use of full-width images and videos, especially headers, greatly contributed to the spatial immersivity of a narrative piece.

Concerning Ryan's immersion theories, this study found them to be applicable to the transgeneric study of online longform narrative journalism. Considering the self-validating nature of the qualitative observations made throughout the study, which confirmed much of the quantitative findings, it can be asserted that the operationalization of Ryan's theories contained in the unique instrument devised for this study is useful for the systematic analysis of the immersive potential of journalistic texts.

The researcher, for example, found that those stories that received higher textual immersivity scores were consistently the ones that were more captivating and remained memorable even after several months of having read them. Although this may seem to be a subjective indicator, it sheds some light on the usefulness of this instrument for gauging the potential immersivity of journalistic texts versus the actual level of immersion experienced by a reader. Despite the fact that this simple gauge of reader immersion is not the same as testing for the potential immersivity of a journalistic text – since one is wholly dependent on a reader’s individual experience of a specific story, while the other is the result of an intersubjectively verifiable coding process –, there should be a degree of correlation between the two. Taking into account that two decades worth of research confirms Ryan’s assertion that there are certain narrative features that are inherently more immersive than others (Van Laer 2013), it is safe to say that one measure is a reflection of the other.

Besides contributing with one of the few, if not the only, empirical tests of Ryan’s transgeneric theories, this study advances the previous transdisciplinary research on the application of narratological analysis to journalistic reportages conducted by Berning, which was limited to a text-based analysis. This study takes her findings a step further, by applying transgeneric narratological concepts to the study of the evolution of both the textual and multimedia features of online journalism. While it confirms Berning’s proposition that digital narrative journalism seems to enhance rather than inhibit storytelling, it also finds that the most recently published longform narrative pieces do not fully exploit hypertextuality and interactivity, contrary to what Berning and Ureta found with journalistic pieces published just a few years ago. Thus, this study provides fresh insight into online narrative journalism, which is rapidly and constantly evolving. Jacobsen’s (2011) findings on the evolution of multimedia journalism published on the NYTimes.com portal, for example, also seem to no longer reflect the current layout of this site. Her conclusion that multimedia elements only served as an extension of the written word but not as a primary storytelling format does not completely apply today, since this study found that the site is increasingly integrating – visually, conceptually and narratively – multimedia elements into the main body of stories.

Considering that the NYTimes.com has been the frontrunner in digital longform innovations, with many other internationally recognized sites following in its footsteps, such as the *Guardian* and the *Washington Post*, the results of this study may be indicative of trends that are not limited solely to this outlet. However, while this may be true for some of the multimedia features being incorporated into digital longform, this may not hold for the textual analysis of longform narrative stories, since each outlet has its own particular writing style. At best, the results of this study shed light on emerging trends in American narrative journalism, both in terms of textual and multimedia content, and at the very least, the results give a systematic overview of the evolution of longform on the NYTimes.com portal that are generalizable to the entire site, given the high percentage of pieces chosen from the sample universe (26%). But to further understand the evolution of transgeneric narratological phenomena within longform narrative journalism, it would be necessary to execute similar longitudinal studies with samples taken from other American and international news sites.

## 6.2 Implications

For scholars who have studied the effects of digitalization on journalism in general, the results of this study indicate that the specific properties of the Web – hypertextuality, multimediality, and interactivity – are not fully (and arguably should not be fully) exploited in the case of digital longform narrative journalism. They suggest that digital longform is a unique form that by its very nature, rooted in literary journalism, may not profit as much from high levels of interactivity and hypertextuality as other types of journalism might, such as data and analytical journalism. The results do indicate, however, that by exploiting the property of multimediality, the Web is facilitating the emergence of the narrative reportage, not only in the fact that fictionality and non-fictionality are successfully merged through the use of literary techniques that sit alongside multimedia elements that add credibility to a story –such as embedded documents, videos and audio files –, but also in the notion that a variety of mediums – text, audio, video, graphics, and images – are seamlessly combined to give birth to a truly hybrid type, both in content and form, that can be more immersive than the traditional mono-media story.

For transgeneric narratologists, the results of this study indicate that the application of narratological concepts to the analysis of digital longform narrative journalism is not only possible, but is useful for analyzing and charting the evolution of the genre. Given its apparent utility, the instrument devised in this study needs to be further tested and revised, while a measure of actual reader immersion may also need to be devised to compare the results of the latter. This instrument for the systematic analysis of longform narrative pieces fills a methodological gap in the research of online narrative journalism, which up until the present time has been limited to strictly qualitative analyses of textual and multimedia content.

For those in the industry of online feature news and longform Web startups, the results of this study can point the way towards future trends. As a comprehensive overview of the evolution of online longform narrative pieces published on one of the most innovative sites for this type of journalism, the results of this study may allow industry leaders to have a broader perspective on emerging trends within the field, which can in turn inform future decisions concerning the way stories are produced and designed. Encouraged by the finding that textual and multimedia immersivity are enhanced by each other, industry leaders might be able, in the future, to use an immersivity metric to decide which news stories should be designed as stand-alone immersive Web experiences and which should be designed as heavily interactive, hyperlinked pieces. Considering that not all stories have the potential to be – in industry jargon – “snow-falled” and that outside of the NYTimes.com there is plenty of bad storytelling due to an unskilled overuse or misuse of multimedia elements, the notion of an immersivity score would facilitate the task of deciding how to produce, design and present a story. At the very least, this study serves as a descriptive overview of past, current and emerging online narrative journalism trends, which will be useful to editors and journalists at NYTimes.com who are currently planning to launch a new digital magazine that will exhibit many of the features found in “Snow Fall.”

For literary and longform journalists, the results of this study seem to give credence to reports stating that digital longform stories are on the rise and that the unique characteristics of the Internet have facilitated rather than obstructed the resurgence of the genre. The results also indicate that the use of multimedia elements

enhance rather than inhibit literary storytelling. This means that literary and narrative journalists have become an asset rather than a relic in the context of the longform renaissance. The fact that their storytelling skills are increasingly combined with audio-visual storytelling is also indicative of the growing tendency of recruiting a team of individuals to produce digital longform stories that include not only journalists and researchers, but programmers, Web designers, photographers and videographers. The results also indicate that literary journalism, whether of the “New Journalism” or “New New Journalism” variety, is far from extinct. While most stories in the sample made use of Tom Wolfe’s literary journalism techniques – such as scene-by-scene construction of events and the use of dialogue –, some also resorted to the omniscient third-person point-of-view mentioned by Wolfe and the innovative immersion techniques mentioned by Boynton to lengthen and deepen the involvement with a story’s protagonist (see, for example, story number 99, “Invisible Child: Dasani’s Homeless Life”). Characterization, in particular, is a narrative device that was widely used in the sample, a fact that attests to the notion that appealing to the reader’s emotions is an effective technique for captivating his or her attention, even in the case of a respected legacy newspaper such as the *New York Times* that strives to steer clear of sensationalism.

In reference to consumers of longform journalism, the results indicate that stories are catering more and more to the specific needs of readers, especially those who are particularly attracted by the immersivity offered by innovative multimedia features. The fact that the *New York Times* is working on a digital magazine that will provide the reader with an “immersive lean back” reading experience is also indicative of this (Owen 2013).

### **6.3 Recommendations for future research**

Considering that the number of studies conducted on the resurgence of longform narrative journalism are very few, the findings of this research also help to point the way towards new avenues of investigation. First of all, this study reveals the need for audience research that can answer questions such as:

- To what extent, if at all, do longform narrative journalism pieces with high levels of immersivity elicit actual reader immersion?
- To what extent, if at all, do individual characteristics, such as age, education, gender, race, and personal preferences have an impact on the level of immersion experienced by a certain reader? Are multimedia longform narrative stories preferred by individuals with certain characteristics? What about longform narrative stories with little to no multimedia features?
- To what extent, if at all, do multimedia features account for the overall immersion experienced by a reader?
- In what manner do consumers of digital longform journalism read lengthy stories? Do they read it all at once, a chapter at a time, or do they only read sections without ever finishing the entire story?
- Do hyperlinks and highly interactive features within digital longform narrative pieces distract readers from the main story? Or do certain readers prefer them?
- What type of cognitive processes occur in the mind of the reader as he or she “experiences” an immersive multimedia longform narrative story? How do mental constructions of sights, sounds, scents, flavors, and textures elicited by textual information interact in the mind with images, movements, and sounds that are instantaneously and externally (of the mind) provided by multimedia features?

Research into these questions would complement theoretical and text-based analyses of immersivity and narratological phenomena with bottom-up empirical data of how readers actually process these types of stories. With regard to open questions directly related with the findings of this study, the following would help clarify and amplify the results obtained:

- How have the storytelling techniques of longform narrative stories published on international sites (such as [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com) or [elpais.com](http://elpais.com)) evolved in the last 10 years?
- How have longform narrative stories evolved over the years in terms of journalistic standards of quality, such as accuracy, depth of reporting, sourcing, objectivity, contextualization, and revelation of new information that is of public interest?
- To what extent, if any, have multimedia longform narrative stories ignited public debates about relevant social, political, or economic issues? What level of audience engagement is evidenced by the comments sections of these stories?
- What is the process of ideation, production and design of multimedia longform narrative stories? How is this process evolving over time with the increasing digitalization of longform?

Further research on digital longform trends would provide greater insight into a genre which, although far from upending the novel as Tom Wolfe once presaged, is certainly making waves across the Web. Considering that in the eyes of some scholars, practically everything can be perceived or interpreted as narrative (Bal 1999), the study of stories, especially digital stories that have an extended lifespan, is of the utmost significance to shared cultural meaning making-processes that are intimately related to identity formation. Furthermore, since digitization is profoundly and rapidly changing the way that information is displayed by blurring lines between once distinguishable mediums and genres, such research would likely contribute to a greater understanding of what future communication mediums might look like and the way the human mind is processing these new hybridized forms. These results would be of interest not only to journalists and those in the industry, but to transgeneric and digital narratologists, audience researchers, cognitive psychologists, communication specialists, and literary scholars alike.

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## 9. Appendices

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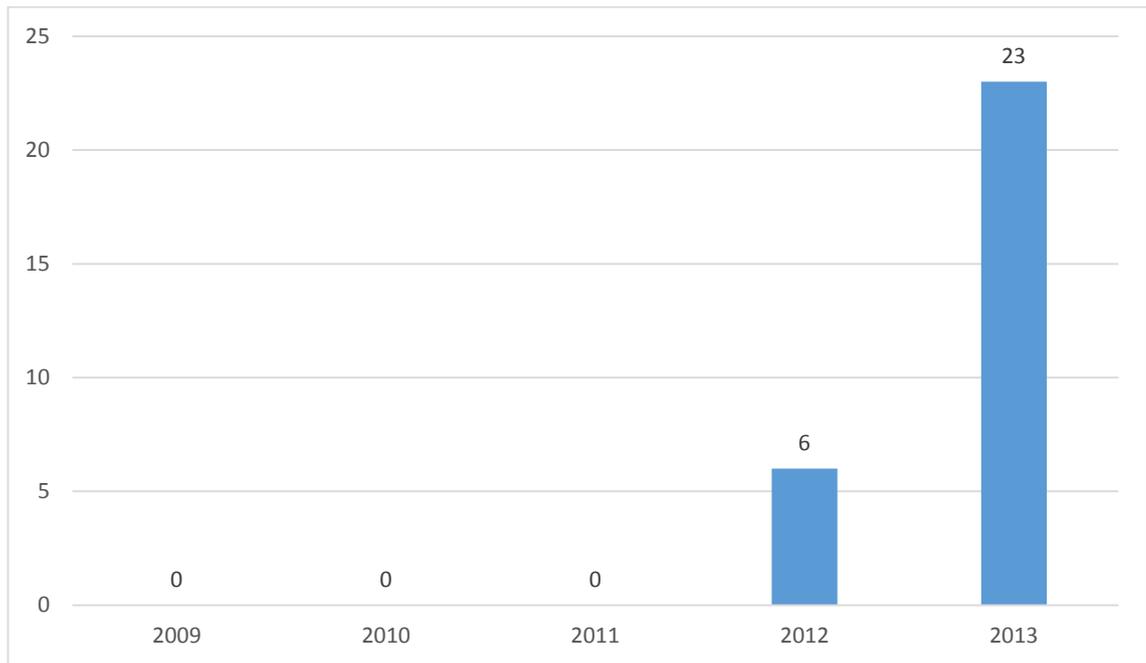


Figure 1a: Total number of full-width headers

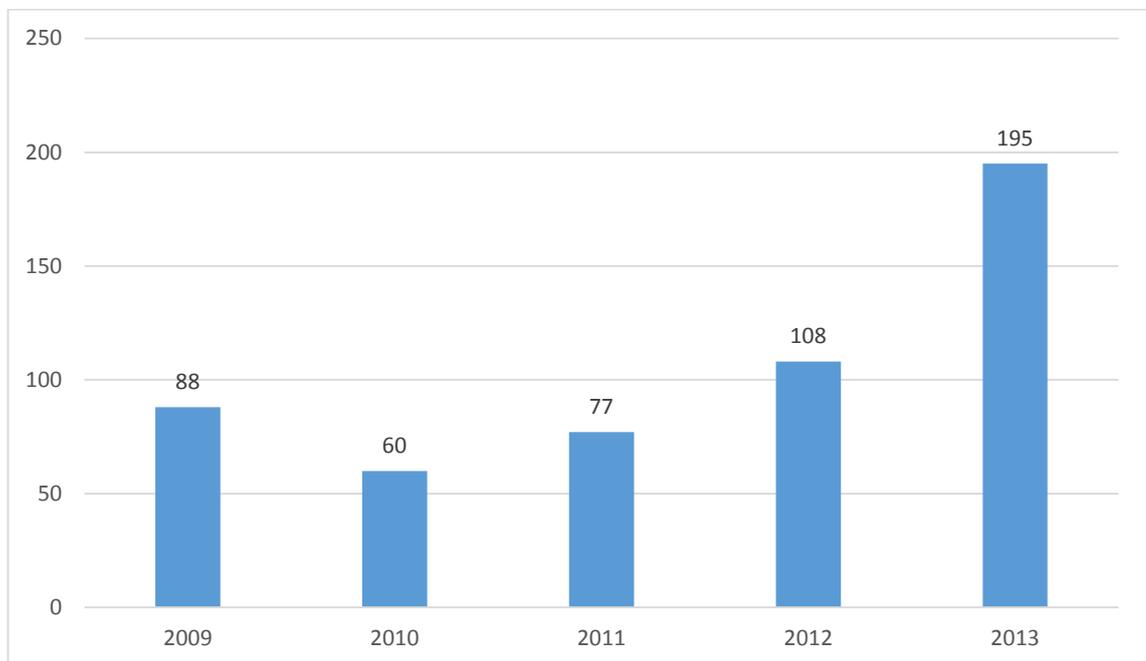


Figure 2a: Total number of images

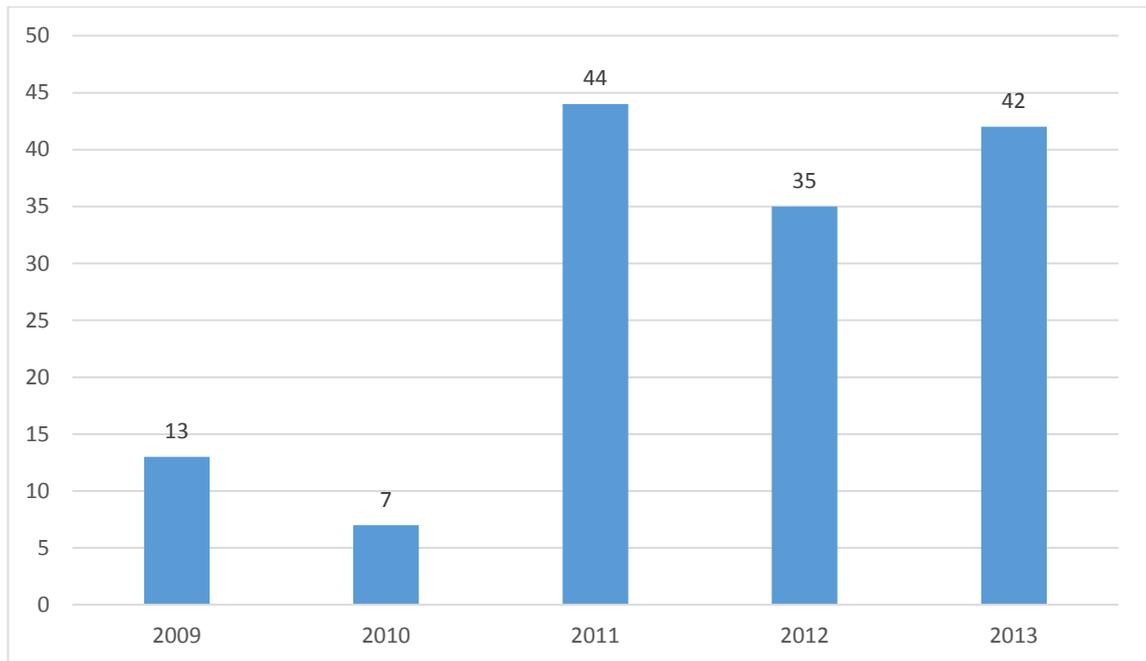


Figure 3a: Total number of videos

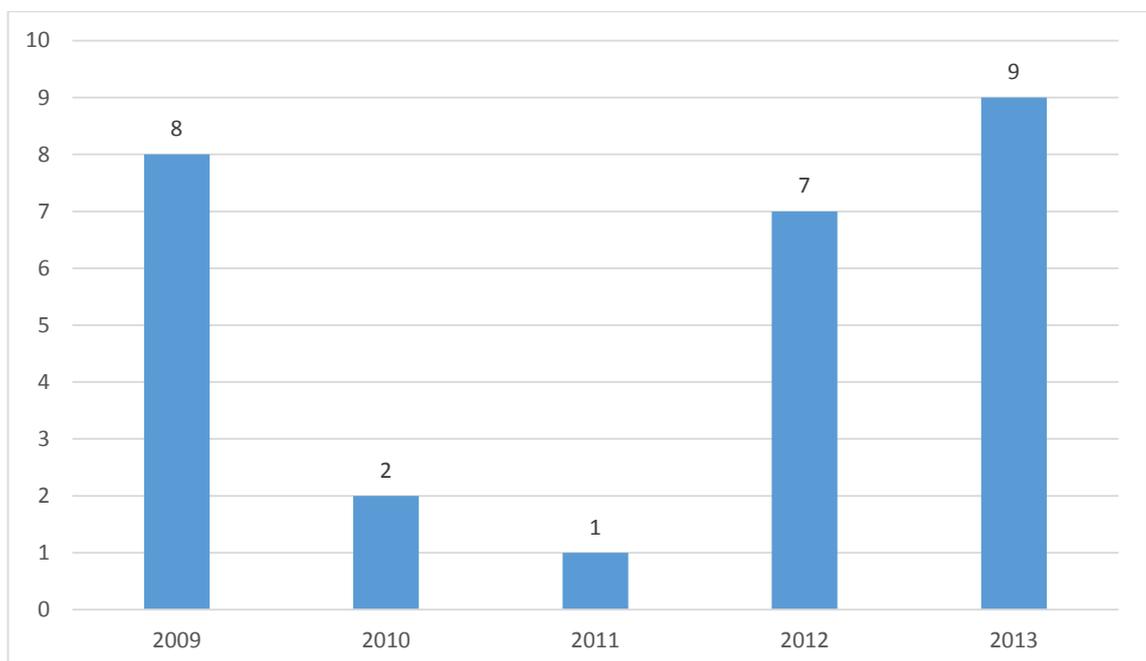


Figure 4a: Total number of audio clips

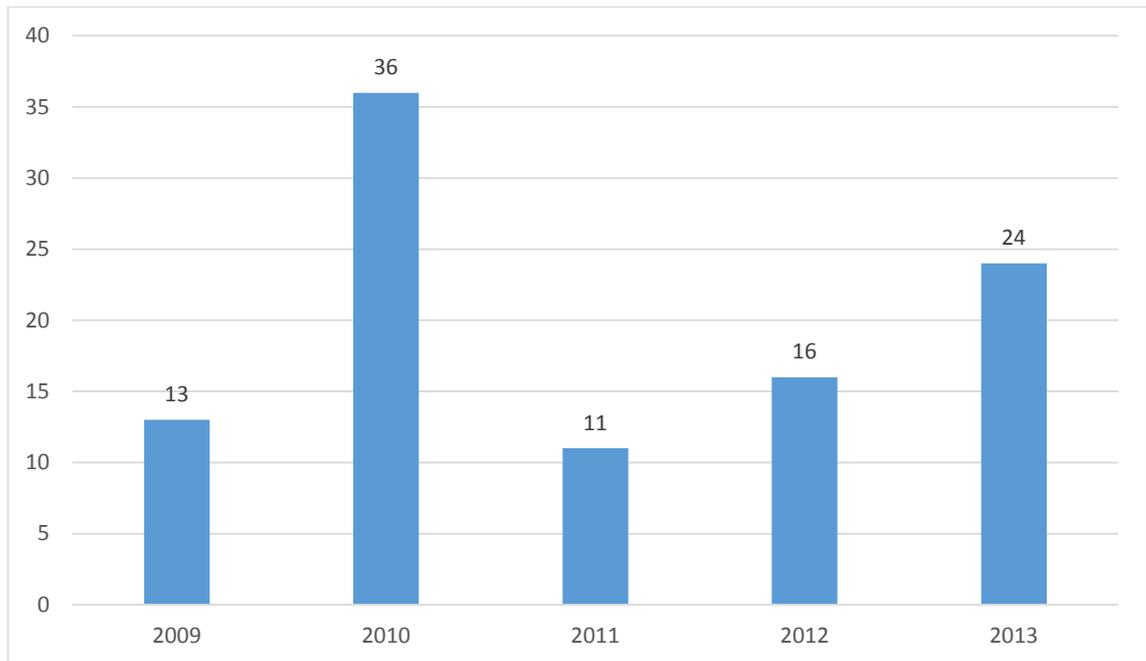


Figure 5a: Total number of non-interactive features

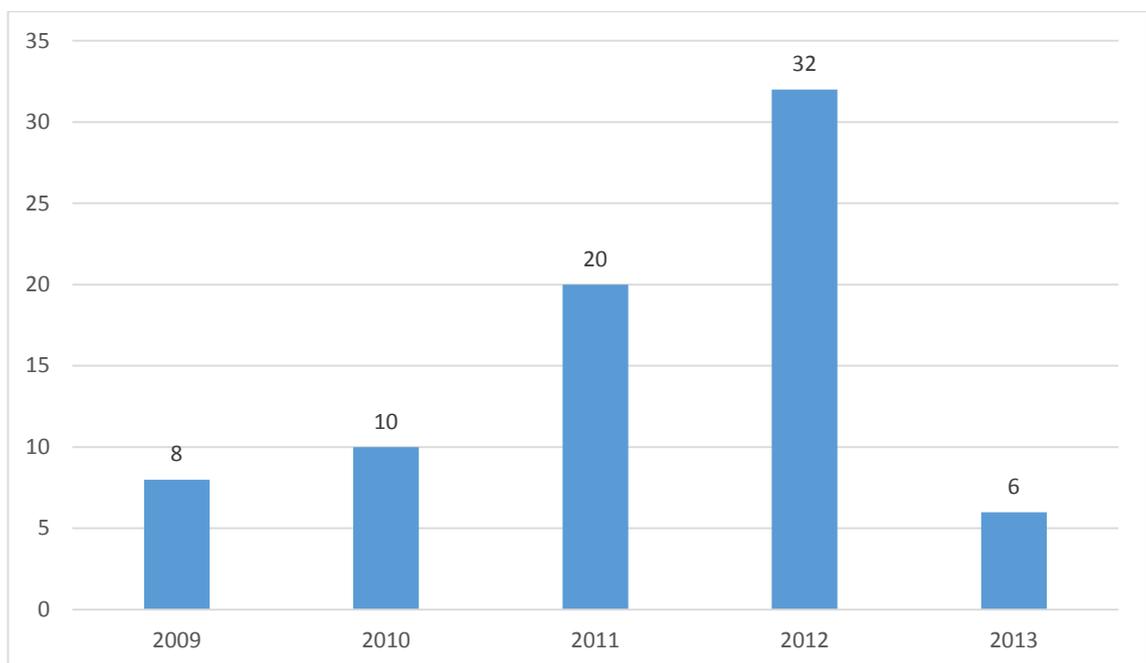


Figure 6a: Total number of interactive features

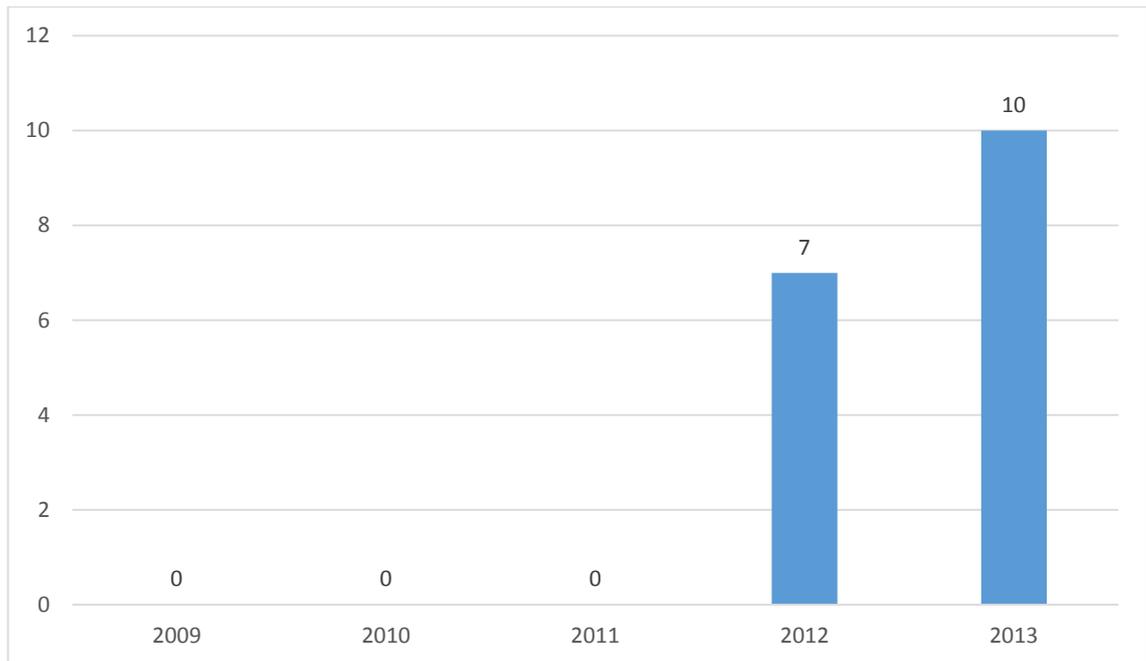


Figure 7a: Total number of animations

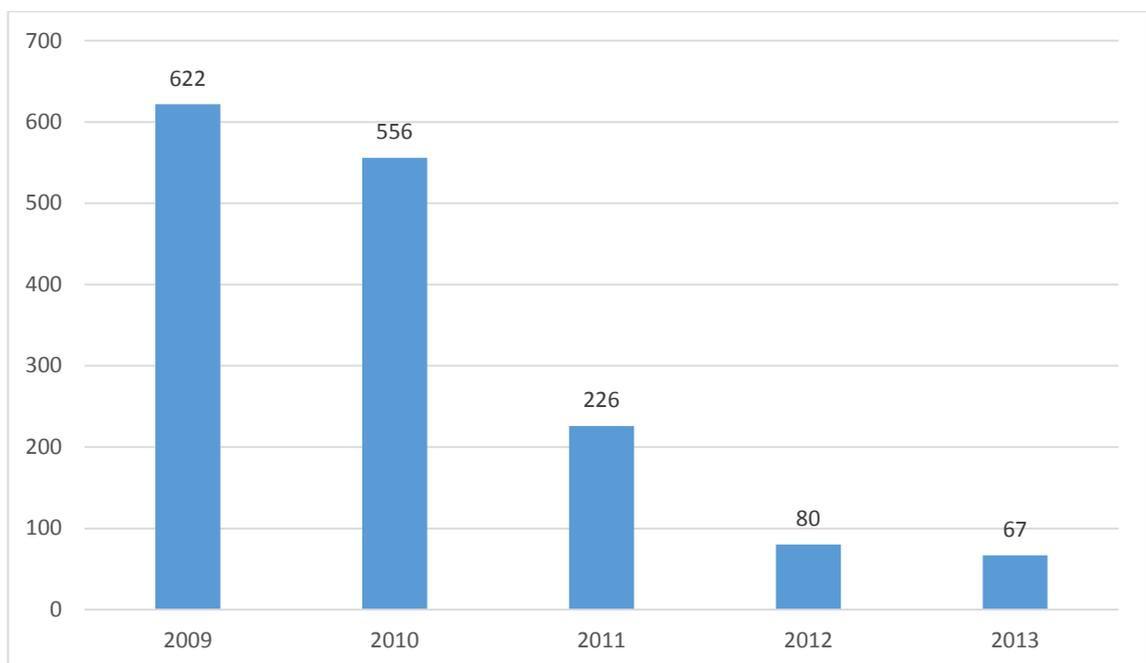


Figure 8a: Total number of hypertextual links

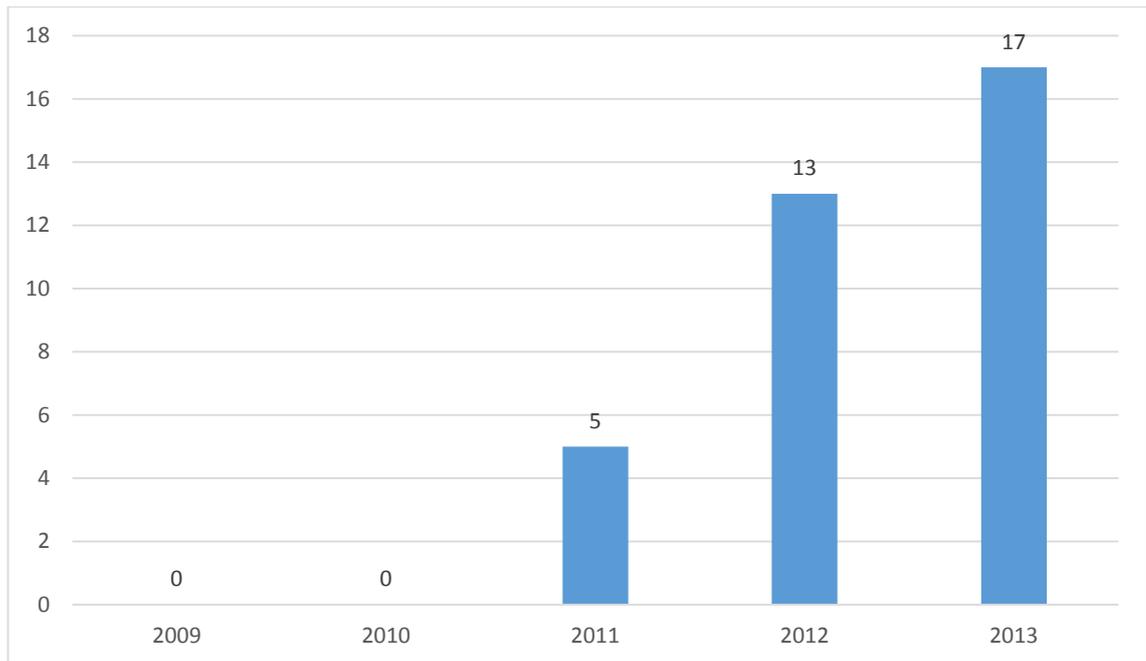


Figure 9a: Total number of embedded documents

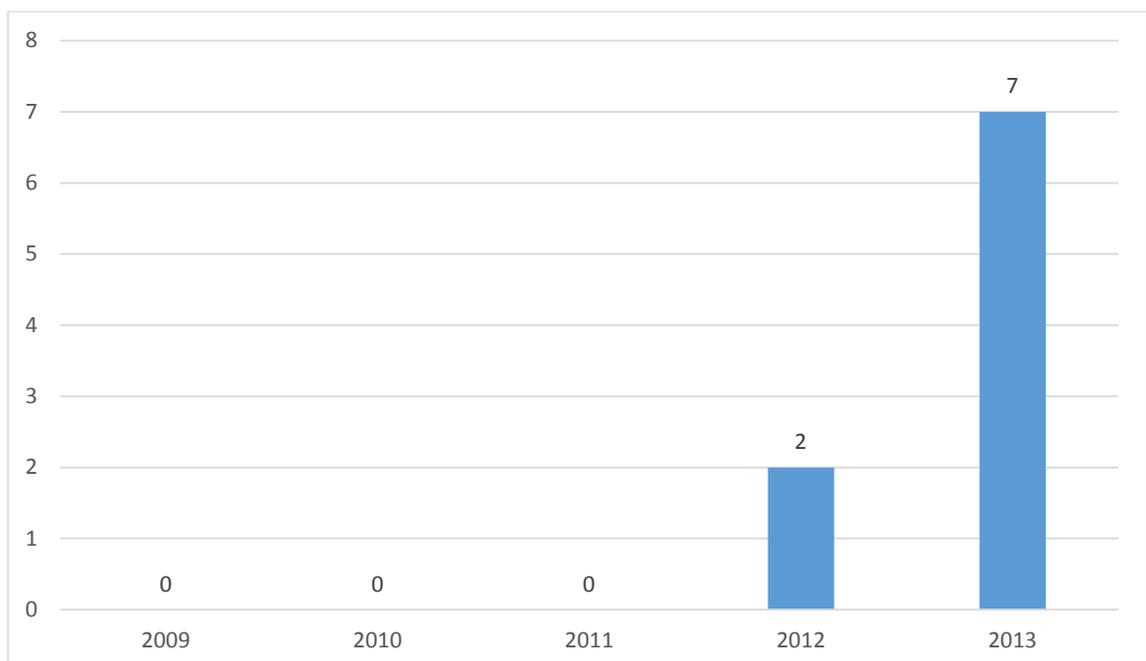


Figure 10a: Total number of stories with scroll-activated elements

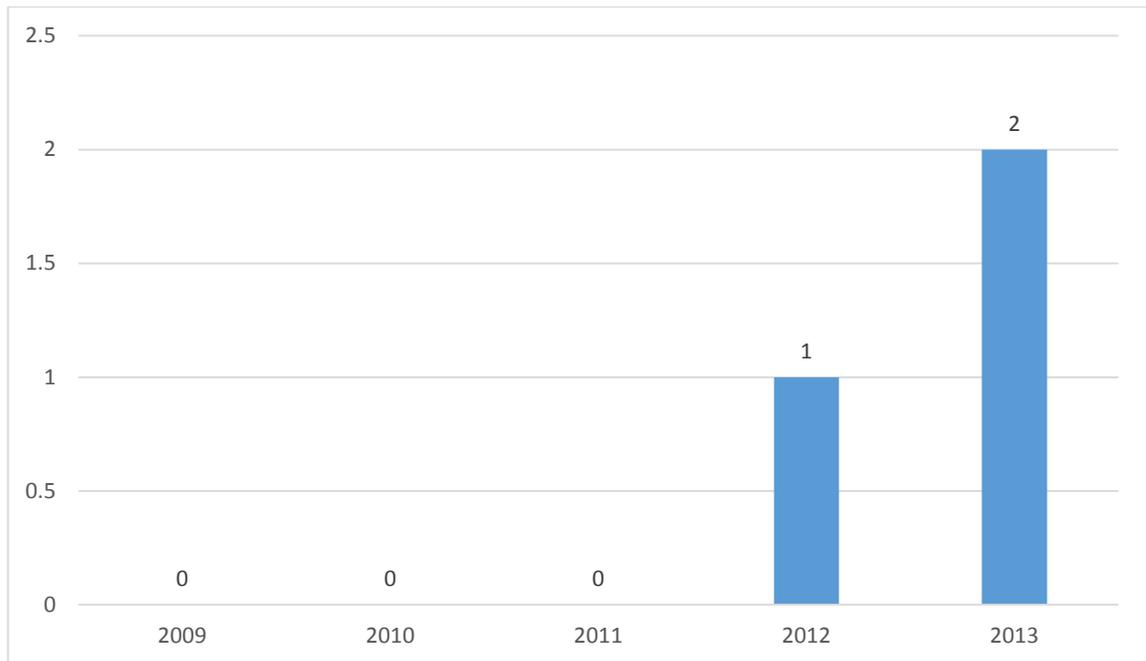


Figure 11a: Total number of stories with audio narration

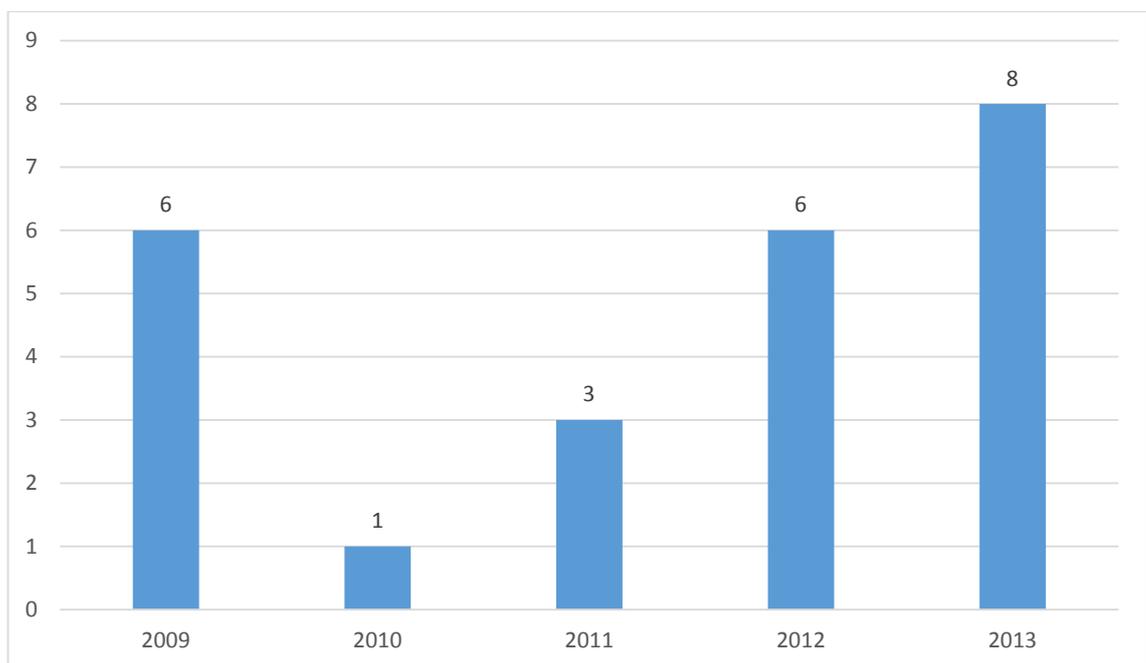


Figure 12a: Maximum number of story chapters

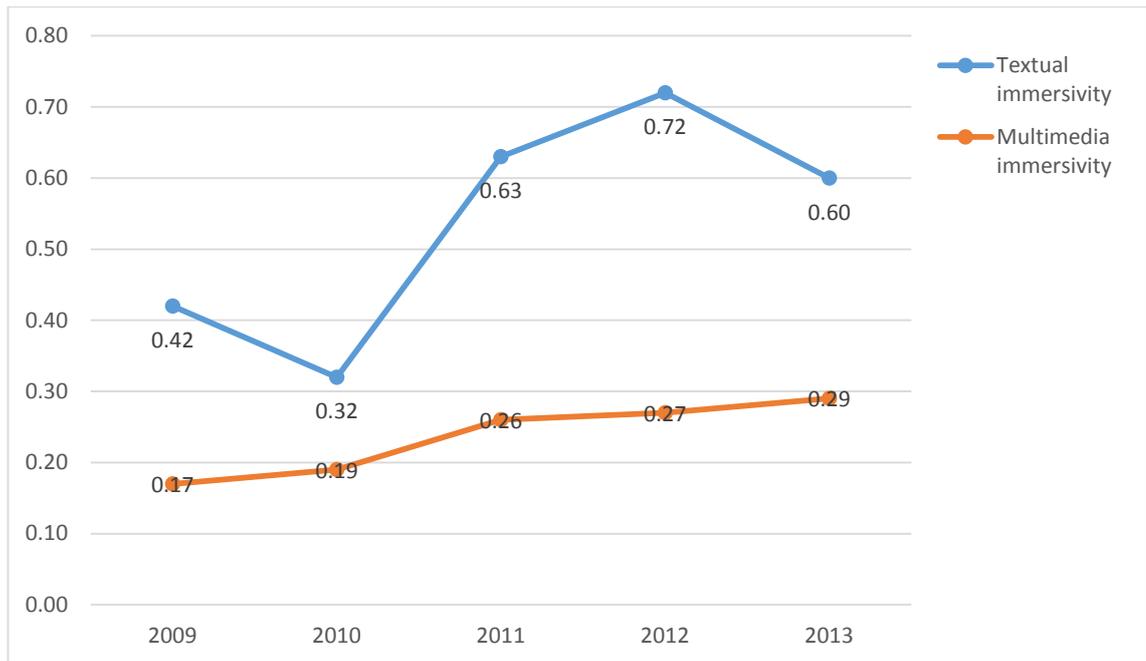


Figure 13a: Mean textual and multimedia spatial immersivity scores

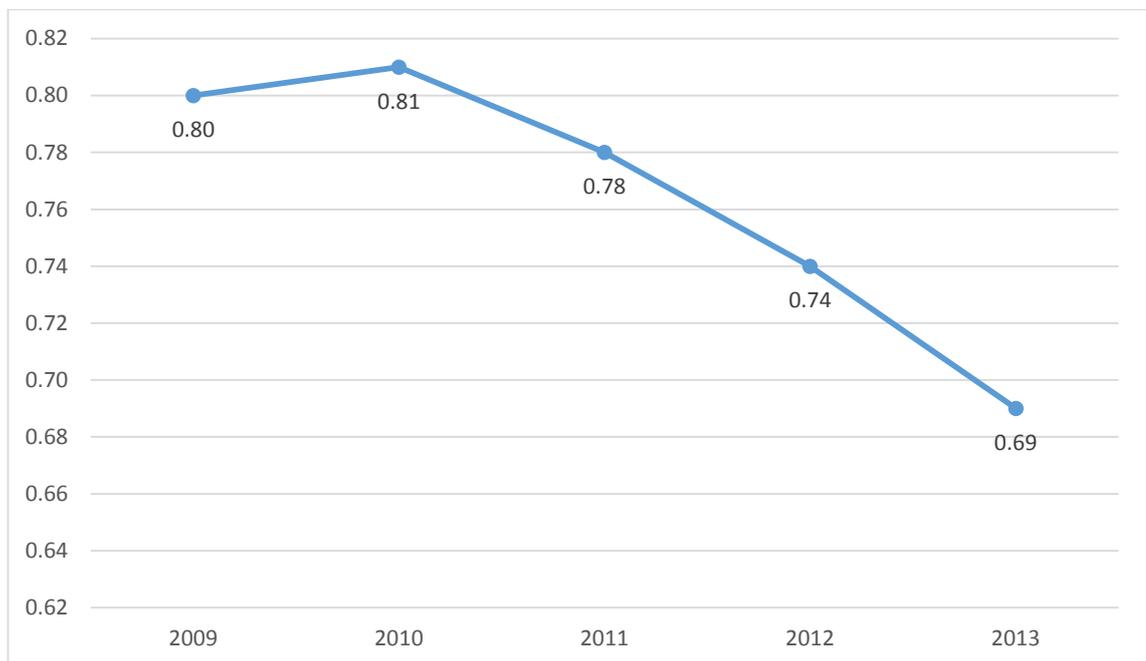


Figure 14a: Mean textual spatio-temporal immersivity score

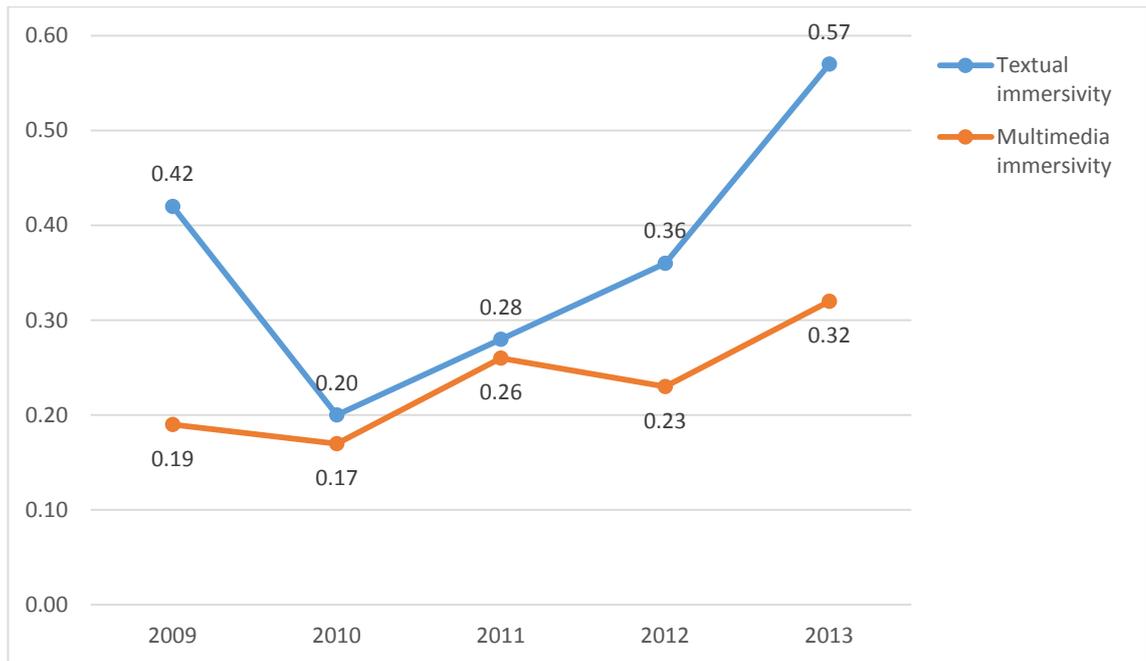


Figure 15a: Mean textual and multimedia temporal immersivity score

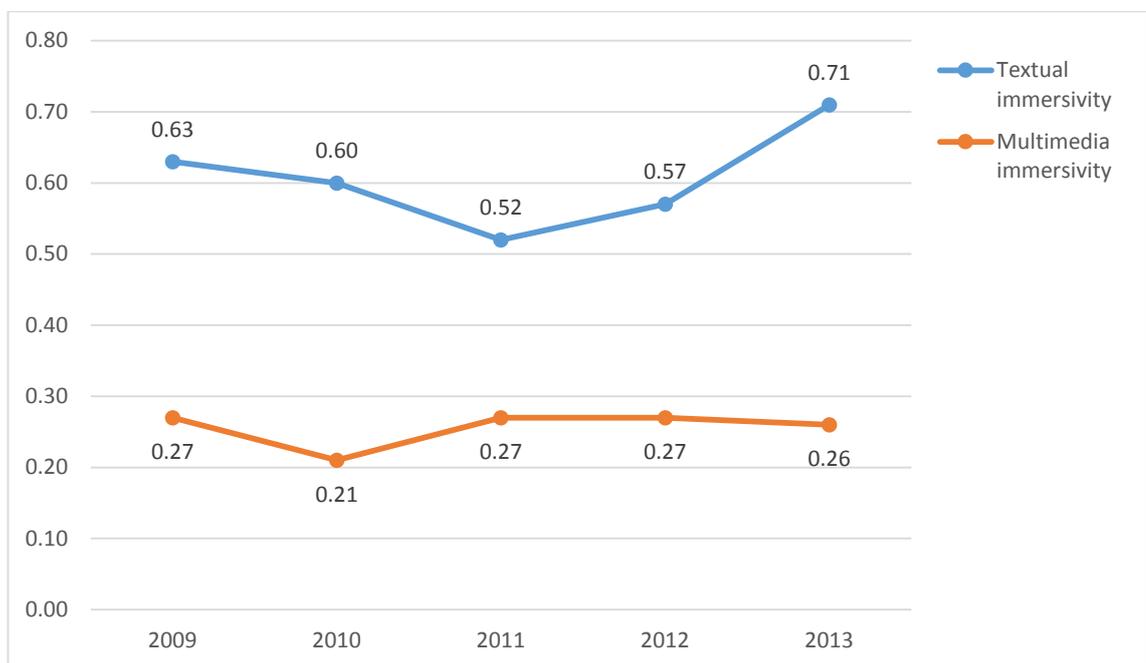


Figure 16a: Mean textual and multimedia emotional immersivity score

		Presence of sensory data		Total
		Yes	No	
Year of publication	2009	10	10	20
	2010	9	11	20
	2011	15	5	20
	2012	15	5	20
	2013	13	7	20
Total		62	38	100

Table1a: Cross-tabulation of variable 18 by year

		Narrator voice			Total
		Homodiegetic	Heterodiegetic	Autodiegetic	
Year of publication	2009	17	0	3	20
	2010	17	1	2	20
	2011	16	2	2	20
	2012	14	4	2	20
	2013	10	8	2	20
Total		74	15	11	100

Table 2a: Cross-tabulation of variable 20 by year

		Narrative focalization			Total
		Zero focalization	Internal focalization	External focalization	
Year of publication	2009	0	20	0	20
	2010	3	17	0	20
	2011	2	18	0	20
	2012	3	15	2	20
	2013	5	12	3	20
Total		13	82	5	100

Table 3a: Cross-tabulation of variable 21 by year

		Presence of chronological plotline		Total
		Yes	No	
Year of publication	2009	8	12	20
	2010	3	17	20
	2011	5	15	20
	2012	7	13	20
	2013	10	10	20
Total		33	67	100

Table 4a: Cross-tabulation of variable 27 by year

		Presence of round characters		Total
		Yes	No	
Year of publication	2009	16	4	20
	2010	15	5	20
	2011	11	9	20
	2012	9	11	20
	2013	13	7	20
Total		64	36	100

Table 5a: Cross-tabulation of variable 34 by year

		Multimedia emotional immersion (audio)			Total
		Yes	No	Not applicable	
Year of publication	2009	4	0	16	20
	2010	1	0	19	20
	2011	1	0	19	20
	2012	3	0	17	20
	2013	2	1	17	20
Total		11	1	88	100

Table 6a: Cross tabulation of variable 48 by year

		Multimedia emotional immersion (video)			Total
		Yes	No	Not applicable	
Year of publication	2009	6	1	13	20
	2010	3	0	17	20
	2011	6	1	13	20
	2012	7	0	13	20
	2013	10	1	9	20
Total		32	3	65	100

Table 7a: Cross tabulation of variable 49 by year

		Multimedia emotional immersion (interactive graphics)			Total
		Yes	No	Not applicable	
Year of publication	2009	4	2	14	20
	2010	6	2	12	20
	2011	10	3	7	20
	2012	7	2	11	20
	2013	3	0	17	20
Total		30	9	61	100

Table 8a: Cross tabulation of variable 52 by year

		Position of multimedia features in relation to text			Total
		They appear integrated into the main text	They appear somewhat integrated into the main text, with some sidebars	They are positioned as sidebars to the text	
Year of publication	2009	0	1	19	20
	2010	0	1	19	20
	2011	0	4	16	20
	2012	1	8	11	20
	2013	8	4	8	20
Total		9	18	73	100

Table 9a: Cross tabulation of variable 53 by year

		Description of narrative flow			Total
		Near seamless integration between multimedia and text	Multimedia and text are demarcated but story is easy to follow	Multimedia elements are not synchronized with the events of the story	
Year of publication	2009	0	0	20	20
	2010	0	0	20	20
	2011	0	2	18	20
	2012	1	2	17	20
	2013	5	5	10	20
Total		6	9	85	100

Table 10a: Cross tabulation of variable 54 by year

		Function of multimedia elements in relation to text				Total
		Multimedia features are necessary to the story	Multimedia features contribute significantly to the story but are not necessary	Multimedia features fit in the storyline but are not necessary	Multimedia features complement the text but do not fit in the storyline and are not necessary	
Year of publication	2009	0	5	12	3	20
	2010	0	8	9	3	20
	2011	0	7	9	4	20
	2012	0	4	13	3	20
	2013	3	10	5	2	20
Total		3	34	48	15	100

Table 11a: Cross tabulation of variable 55 by year

# CODEBOOK FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

## The evolution of online narrative journalism: A content analysis of longform narrative pieces published on nytimes.com

### UNITS OF ANALYSIS

A sample of 100 longform narrative pieces published on nytimes.com from 2009 to 2013 will each be coded for 55 variables in this study. For parts I, II, IV and V of the coding process, the context unit is the entire piece, including all text, images, hyperlinks, interactive and multimedia elements that belong to the piece (even if they are positioned in the margins) and excluding all elements that do not belong to the piece. The latter refers to items such as the “related articles” and “readers’ comments” sections, as well as social media sharing tools. In the following piece, for example, the context unit is outlined in red:

HOME PAGE | TODAY'S PAPER | VIDEO | MOST POPULAR | TIMES TOPICS

Get Top Stories | SUBSCRIBE | My Account | nytimes... | Help

The New York Times Magazine

WORLD | U.S. | N.Y. / REGION | BUSINESS | TECHNOLOGY | SCIENCE | HEALTH | SPORTS | OPINION | ARTS | STYLE | TRAVEL | JOBS | REAL ESTATE

AUDIOS | THE TIMES MAGAZINE | T MAGAZINE | KEY | PLAY

### I Was a Baby Bulimic

By FRANK BRUNI  
Published July 13, 2009

I have neither a therapist's diagnosis nor any scientific literature to support the following claim, and I can't back it up with more than a cursory level of detail. So you're just going to have to go with me on this: I was a baby bulimic.

Maybe not baby — toddler bulimic is more like it, though I didn't so much toddle as wobble, given the roundness of my expanding form. I was a plump infant and was on my way to becoming an even plumper child, a ravenous machine determined to devour anything in its sights. My parents would later tell me, my friends and anyone else willing to listen that they'd never seen a kid eat the way I ate or react the way I reacted whenever I was denied more food. What I did in those circumstances was throw up.

I have no independent memory of this. But according to my mother, it began when I was about 18 months old. It went on for no more than a year. And I'd congratulate myself here for stopping such an evidently compulsive behavior without the benefit of an intervention or the ability to read a self-help book except

peasuring, but I'm getting ahead of the story.

A hamburger dinner sounded the first alarm. My mother had cooked and served me one big burger, which would be enough for most carnivores still in diapers. I polished it off and pleaded for a second. So she cooked and served me another big burger, confident that I'd never get through it. It was the last time she underestimated my appetite.

The way Mom told the tale, I plowed through that second burger as quickly as I had the first. Then I

Photo illustration by Tom Scheritz for The New York Times. Shop Stylist: Amy Henry. Food Stylist: Brian Preston-Campbell. Frank Bruni at Grandma Bruni's house in the Little Hill section of White Plains.

Multimedia

Audio Slide Show  
Dinner, Family-Style

Related

Letters: I Was a Baby Bulimic (August 2, 2009)

Times Topics: Frank Bruni

Books of The Times Review: Tom Bruni (August 24, 2009)

The Sunday Book Review: Tom Bruni (August 23, 2009)

When Overeating Starts Early  
Are you an overeater or coping with an eating disorder? Do you have childhood memories of your struggle with food?

Post a Comment

MEMORIAL DAY 9/8c HISTORY  
CLICK TO EXPAND

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1. Op-Ed Contributions: A Cancer Treatment in Your Medicine Cabinet

2. The Four Seasons: The 11th on: 20 11th on: for \$30

3. Always Hungry? MindC's Why

4. Well: Remembering as an Extreme Sport

5. THOMAS: FRIEDMAN: Four Words Going Bye-Bye

6. Bryan College's Tom: Can Darwin and Eden Coexist?

7. The Story: A Life Beyond 'Do What You Love'

8. What Are You Drinking?

9. Who Gets to Graduate?

10. DAVID BROOKS: The Big Debate

Go to Complete List: All

In part III of the coding process, the context unit is only the textual part of the unit defined above. Thus, all multimedia elements are not taken into account in this section of the coding process, as shown below:

HOME PAGE | TODAY'S PAPER | VIDEO | MOST POPULAR | TIMES TOPICS | Get Top Stories | SUBSCRIBE | My Account | nhbars... | Help

**The New York Times** Magazine

Search All NYTimes.com [Go] Capital One

WORLD | U.S. | N.Y. / REGION | BUSINESS | TECHNOLOGY | SCIENCE | HEALTH | SPORTS | OPINION | ARTS | STYLE | TRAVEL | JOBS | REAL ESTATE

AUGUS THE TIMES MAGAZINE | T MAGAZINE | KEY | PLAY

## I Was a Baby Bulimic

By FRANK BRUNI  
Published: July 15, 2009

I have neither a therapist's diagnosis nor any scientific literature to support the following claim, and I can't back it up with more than a cursory level of detail. So you're just going to have to go with me on this: I was a baby bulimic.

TWITTER  
LINKEDIN  
E-MAIL  
PRINT  
SHARE

Enlarge This Image



Photo illustration by Tom Schieritz for The New York Times. Pro Stylist: Amy Henry. Food Stylist: Brian Preston-Campbell. Frank Bruni at Grandma Bruni's house in the Saddle Hill section of White Plains.

Multimedia



Audio Slide Show  
Dinner, Family-Style

Related

Letters: I Was a Baby Bulimic (August 6, 2009)

Times Topics: Frank Bruni

Books of The Times: Reviews of 'Born Round' (August 24, 2009)

The Sunday Book Review: 'Born Round' (August 23, 2009)

When Overeating Starts Early  
Are you an overeater or coping with an eating disorder? Do you have childhood memories of your struggle with food?

Post a Comment

Maybe not baby — toddler bulimic is more like it, though I didn't so much toddle as wobble, given the roundness of my expanding form. I was a plump infant and was on my way to becoming an even plumper child, a ravenous machine determined to devour anything in its sights. My parents would later tell me, my friends and anyone else willing to listen that they'd never seen a kid eat the way I ate or react the way I reacted whenever I was denied more food. What I did in those circumstances was throw up.

I have no independent memory of this. But according to my mother, it began when I was about 18 months old. It went on for no more than a year. And I'd congratulate myself here for stopping such an evidently compulsive behavior without the benefit of an intervention or the ability to read a self-help book except that I wasn't so much stopping as pausing. But I'm getting ahead of the story.

A hamburger dinner sounded the first alarm. My mother had cooked and served me one big burger, which would be enough for most carnivores still in diapers. I polished it off and pleaded for a second. So she cooked and served me another big burger, confident that I'd never get through it. It was the last time she underestimated my appetite.

The way Mom told the tale, I plowed through that second burger as quickly as I had the first. Then I



MOST POPULAR

EMAILED | SEARCHED | VIEWED

- Op-Ed Contributor: A Cancer Treatment in Your Medicine Cabinet?
- The Four Seasons' 11th Anniversary: 20 Wins for \$20
- Always Hungry? Here's Why
- Well: Remembering as an Extreme Sport
- THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN: Four Words Going Bye-Bye
- Boyan College Is Tom: Can Darwin and Eden Coexist?
- The Show: A Life Beyond 'Do What You Love'
- What Are You Drinking?
- Who Gets to Graduate?
- DAVID BROOKS: The Big Debate

Go to Complete List As

**I. BASIC INFORMATION**

V1 ID (Assign a number, from 1 to 100. The first piece to be coded is 1, the second 2, and so on.)

\_\_\_\_\_

V2 Year of publication (YYYY)

\_\_\_\_\_

V3 Length of piece (word count including title)

\_\_\_\_\_

V4 Title of piece

\_\_\_\_\_

**II. MULTIMEDIA FEATURES**

V5 Number of full-width images and videos

DEFINITION: Images or videos that extend from one end of the screen to the other

\_\_\_\_\_

V6 Number of images, excluding full-width images

\_\_\_\_\_

V7 Number of videos (includes “audio slideshows”)

\_\_\_\_\_

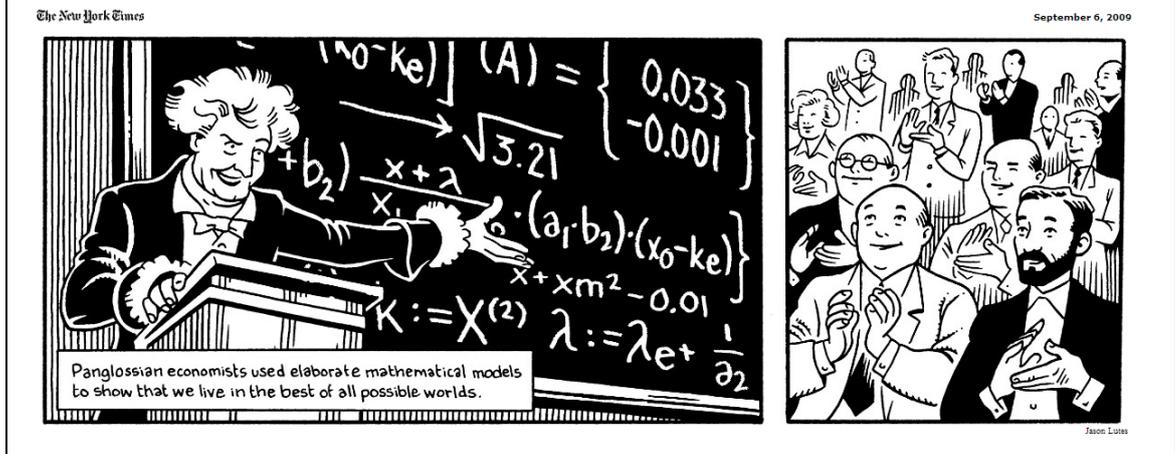
V8 Number of audio clips

\_\_\_\_\_

V9 Number of non-interactive features

**DEFINITION:** Illustrations, maps, infographics, and timelines that do not allow the reader to manipulate, browse or navigate the information by clicking, dragging or scrolling (clicking once to maximize an object or scrolling to view an object in its entirety do not fit this description).

**EXAMPLE:** The following illustration is non-interactive since it is static and does not allow the reader to interact with it via clicking, dragging or scrolling.



## V10 Number of interactive features

**DEFINITION:** Illustrations, maps, images, infographics, slideshows, timelines that allow the reader to manipulate, browse or navigate the information by clicking, dragging or scrolling (clicking once to maximize an object or scrolling to view an object in its entirety do not fit this description).

**EXAMPLE:** The following timeline is interactive since it is not static. It allows the reader to browse the information by clicking on the arrows or on any point on the timeline, and also allows the reader to zoom in and out of the timeline.

### The Alabama Jihadist

How did a popular kid from a small town in Alabama wind up connected to Al Qaeda? [Related Article »](#)

Omar Hammami's journey has taken him from a Bible Belt town in America to the terrorist training camps of Somalia. To his fellow jihadists, he is a charismatic leader. To his friends in Alabama, he is a tragedy. To counterterrorism specialists, he may shed important new light on how an American becomes radicalized.

Previous: 1976 | Next: March 8, 1990



**May 6, 1984**

#### Omar Is Born

Omar grew up in Daphne, a sleepy town of 19,000 situated on the sweeping Mobile Bay, in southern Alabama. The first years of his life followed the cues of his mother's upbringing. Answering to Omie, he spent weekends on his grandparents' farm in Perdido, shelling peas and eating watermelon on the porch.



Debra Hammami presents Omar with his first birthday cake in 1985.

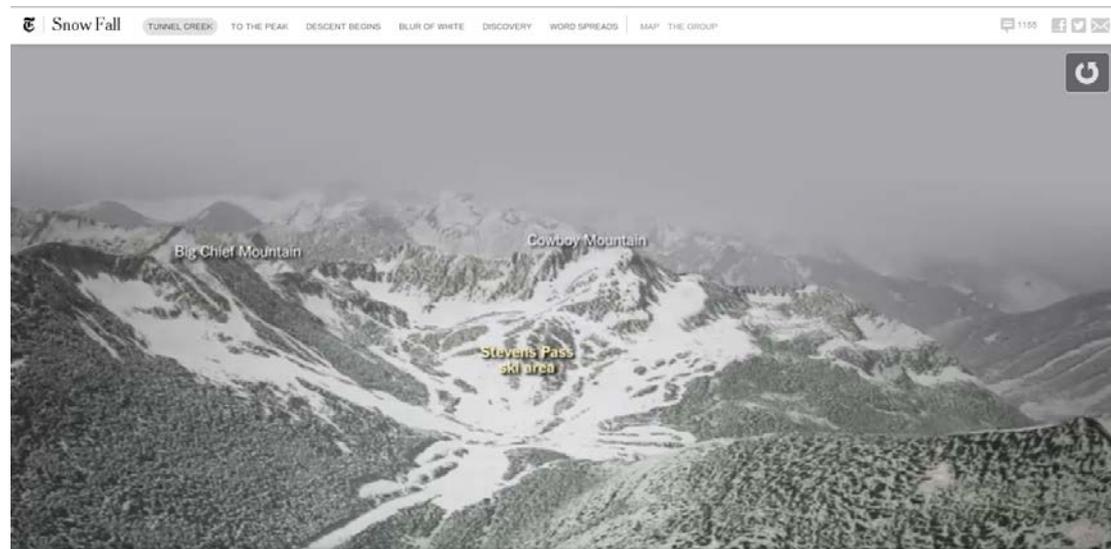
## V11 Number of parts (in the case that the story consists of a series of parts)

DEFINITION: Chapters of the story that are clearly separated as Part 1, Part 2, etc.

## V12 Number of animations

DEFINITION: A series of drawings, computer graphics or photos that are placed in quick succession and give the appearance of movement.

EXAMPLE: A 3D animation which recreates the experience of flying over a particular location:



## V13 Usage of scroll-activated elements

DEFINITION: Videos, audio, graphics or images that automatically begin to play or move as the reader scrolls down the story

1. Yes
2. No

## V14 Usage of audio narration

DEFINITION: An audio recording of a part or the entirety of the written text

1. Yes
2. No

## V15 Number of hypertextual links

**DEFINITION:** Text that links to content in a different location, either outside the web page being viewed or within the piece (do not include internal links to elements already quantified in this codebook, such as videos, audio files, interactive and non-interactive graphics).

---

#### V16 Number of embedded documents

**DEFINITION:** Documents that are visible within the story (includes images of documents) and do not take the reader to an external web page.

**EXAMPLES:** Copies of e-mails, letters, certificates, transcripts or any other official documents.

---

### III. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

#### A. SPATIAL IMMERSION

V17 The author uses descriptions of a particular setting or location that have the potential of creating an ambiance and/or atmosphere.

DEFINITION: Used interchangeably with the term *ambiance*, the atmosphere of a literary work refers to the pervading mood of a particular setting or location.

EXAMPLES: A tense room; an isolated and depressed town; a warm and welcoming home; a chaotic and unsettling hospital ward

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V18 The author uses descriptive sensory data that has the potential of eliciting a detailed mental image of the setting.

DEFINITION: Sensory data refers to descriptions that appeal to the visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or gustatory senses.

EXAMPLES: The white sand (sight). The smell of caught fish from the fishing boat (smell). The faint taste of salt on the breeze (taste). The screeching herring gulls (sound). The slippery rocks (touch).

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V19 The author uses descriptions of the setting that have the potential of eliciting a mental map of the geography of the narrative space.

DEFINITION: The author creates a map of the fictional world by taking the reader on a narrative trail, from one viewpoint to another. The narrative space is the particular location in which the story unfolds, which can be as small as a room or as large as a country.

EXAMPLES: The narrator describes a house by approaching it from the street; then, examining the garden and façade; next, entering through the main door; finally, walking from room to room.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

#### B. SPATIO-TEMPORAL IMMERSION

## V20 The voice of the narrator

1. Homodiegetic (the narrator is present in the story he tells)
2. Heterodiegetic (the narrator is absent from the story he tells)
3. Autodiegetic (the narrator is the protagonist of the story he tells)

## V21 The narrative focalization

DEFINITION: The perspective through which a narrative is presented

1. The narrator is omniscient (he knows more than the characters, including facts about all the protagonists, as well as their thoughts and past actions).
2. The narrator takes on the perspective of a story character and relates the story from that person's perspective (he cannot report the thoughts of other characters).
3. The narrator knows less than the characters (he acts like a camera lens, following the protagonists' actions from the outside, unable to know their thoughts).

V22 The narrator's reports of speech and thoughts have the potential of eliciting the feeling of being inside one of the character's mind and experiencing the emotional reality of the events as he/she experiences it.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V23 To reveal how events unfold, the author relies on scene-by-scene construction on more than one occasion.

DEFINITION: In scene-by-scene construction, the author describes events as they were witnessed first-hand and recreates them for the reader.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V24 To reveal how interactions between characters unfold, the author relies on reporting dialogue on more than one occasion.

DEFINITION: In reporting dialogue, the author records conversations as fully as possible, reporting the words that were uttered by each character.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V25 The narrator describes the unfolding of at least one of the events of the story in present tense.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

C. TEMPORAL IMMERSION

V26 The author creates suspense by using at least one of the following devices: foreshadowing, predictions, flash forwards or making the reader aware of all the facts involved.

DEFINITIONS: Foreshadowing – A plot device which gives indications of developments that may come later in the story | Predictions – A statement about the way things will happen in the future | Flash forwards – A scene that takes the narrative forward in time from the current point of the story to represent events that are expected, projected or imagined to occur in the future | Making the reader aware of all the facts involved – the audience is aware of important details that characters are not aware of

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V27 The author divulges information about events as they unfold chronologically.

EXAMPLE: The author tells the story of the demise of a once successful company. He/she gives information about events as they occur in time, starting with its prosperous beginnings, continuing with its financial troubles and ending with its bankruptcy and closure.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V28 As the story progresses, the fate of the character(s) is sequentially played out.

EXAMPLE: The author tells the story of an immigrant who risks his life to seek prosperity in a foreign country. He/she gives information about the events in a person's life as they occur in time, making the story a progressive revelation of a character's destiny. It starts by telling of the immigrant's high hopes, continues with his difficulties in the new country and ends with the character's decision to return to his homeland.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V29 The author gives the outcome of a story in advance and goes backwards in time to reveal why or how something occurred.

EXAMPLE: The story begins with the aftermath surrounding the mysterious death of a local police officer and then goes back in time to tell about his life, his work and the possible conflicts that led to his present death. Towards the end of the story, the reasons for his death become more and more apparent.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V30 The author reveals past events, piece by piece, to allow the reader to logically sort through facts so that he/she can come to a conclusion regarding a certain mystery.

EXAMPLE: The author tells the story of an investigation to find the true identity of a now deceased musician whose life and background were relatively unknown. He/she reveals bits and pieces of information as they are discovered, such as some of the musician's correspondence,

her diary entries, pictures of her house, and descriptions given by family and relatives. By the time the story ends, the mystery of the musician's identity has become clearer, as if the pieces of a puzzle have been put together.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

D. EMOTIONAL IMMERSION

V31 The story has a main character that can be identified or sympathized with due to his/her flaws, weaknesses, and/or life experiences.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V32 The story has an antagonist.

DEFINITION: A person, group of people, or a force that opposes the protagonist and creates the conflict. In the latter case, it can be a force of nature, an animal, a setting, society, the supernatural, or technology.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V33 The story has a main character that either has an uncommon characteristic or is living in uncommon circumstances (by U.S. American standards).

EXAMPLES: A person who lives on less than a dollar a day; a U.S. war veteran who has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder; a man who became the sole survivor of a plane crash.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

V34 The main character(s) of the story are three-dimensional figures.

DEFINITION: Believable figures who are well-described. The reader learns about at least some of the following traits: how they look; how they sound; what they wear; their emotions, desires, and beliefs; where they work; their hobbies; their secrets; their past; hopes and goals; their family, friends and relationships.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

**IV. MULTIMEDIA ANALYSIS****A. SPATIAL IMMERSION**

V35 The full-width headers and/or pictures give the reader an image of the setting.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V36 The background audio and/or audio clips aid in the creation of the story's atmosphere.

EXAMPLES: The sound of birds chirping aids in the creation of the atmosphere of a forest. | The sound of gun shots and police sirens aids in the creation of the atmosphere of a crime scene. | The sound of strong wind gusts aids in the creation of the atmosphere of a snowstorm.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V37 The videos use footage that give the reader images of the setting.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V38 The digital animations give the reader images of the setting.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V39 The non-interactive graphics give the reader images of the setting.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V40 The interactive graphics give the reader images of the setting.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

**B. TEMPORAL IMMERSION**

V41 The images give the reader additional information of an event of the story.

DEFINITION: An “event of the story” refers to a happening which is revealed within the piece. This excludes external events such as happenings that are related to the upbringing or past life of a certain character or the past history of a certain place.

EXAMPLES: An image of a bomb blast.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V42 The audio clips give the reader additional information of an event of the story.

EXAMPLES: The audio of a 911 phone call made by the victim of a certain crime.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V43 The videos give the reader additional information of an event of the story.

EXAMPLES: A video taken by an eyewitness of a natural disaster.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V44 The digital animations give the reader additional information of an event of the story.

EXAMPLES: An animation which recreates the eruption of a volcano.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V45 The non-interactive graphics give the reader additional information of an event of the story.

EXAMPLES: An illustration which recreates the events of a crime scene.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V46 The interactive graphics give the reader additional information of an event of the story.

EXAMPLES: A slideshow which shows various images of the aftermath of an earthquake.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear

4. Not applicable

C. EMOTIONAL IMMERSION

V47 The images have the potential of giving the reader greater insight into the personality, behaviors, experiences and/or attitudes of the characters of the story.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V48 The audio files have the potential of giving the reader greater insight into the personality, behaviors, experiences and/or attitudes of the characters of the story.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V49 The videos have the potential of giving the reader greater insight into the personality, behaviors, experiences and/or attitudes of the characters of the story.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V50 The animations have the potential of giving the reader greater insight into the personality, behaviors, experiences and/or attitudes of the characters of the story.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V51 The non-interactive graphics have the potential of giving the reader greater insight into the personality, behaviors, experiences and/or attitudes of the characters of the story.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

V52 The interactive graphics have the potential of giving the reader greater insight into the personality, behaviors, experiences and/or attitudes of the characters of the story.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

**V. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEXT AND MULTIMEDIA**

V53 How are the multimedia features positioned in relation to the main text?

1. They appear integrated into the main text.
2. They appear somewhat integrated into the main text, with some sidebars.
3. They are positioned as sidebars to the text.
4. Not clear
5. Not applicable

V54 Description of the narrative flow

1. The story (text and multimedia) is structured in such a way that the reader is guided from one point to the next in an unobstructed and natural flow of events. The integration between multimedia and text appears seamless and the transition between the two is not noticeable.
2. The story is structured in such a way that the reader moves from one point to the next with no disruptions or distractions. While the transition between multimedia and text is clearly demarcated and not seamless, the text and multimedia elements are conveniently placed so that the reader does not have difficulty following the storyline.
3. The story is structured in such a way that one or more multimedia elements appear as disruptions due to their inconvenient positioning and/or the elements do not appear synchronized with the events that unfold in the text.
4. Not clear
5. Not applicable

V55 Function of multimedia features in relation to main text

1. The multimedia features mostly provide information that is necessary to the overall narrative coherence of the piece.
2. The multimedia features mostly provide information that contributes significantly to the main story line but is not essential to its overall narrative coherence.
3. The multimedia features mostly provide information that fits in the main story line but is not essential to its overall narrative coherence.
4. The multimedia features mostly provide information that complements the main text but does not fit in the story line and is not essential to its overall narrative coherence.
5. Not clear
6. Not applicable

OBSERVATIONS

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## Raw Coding Data

V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7
1	2009	7914	Growing Up Buckley	0	6	1
2	2009	8114	The Mellowing of William Jefferson Clinton	0	1	0
3	2009	8208	Taking the Hill	0	5	0
4	2009	8294	Ripped. (Or Torn Up?)	0	2	0
5	2009	8051	GM, Detroit and the Fall of the Black Middle Class	0	3	0
6	2009	8334	Who Can Possibly Govern California?	0	5	0
7	2009	7447	I was a Baby Bulimic	0	4	1
8	2009	8141	The Ultimate Obama Insider	0	4	0
9	2009	9667	Karzai in His Labyrinth	0	4	1
10	2009	8269	While My Guitar Gently Beeps	0	7	2
11	2009	12801	The Deadly Choices at Memorial	0	11	0
12	2009	7482	Bringing Where the Wild Things Are to the Screen	0	5	1
13	2009	7695	Are Your Friends Making You Fat	0	0	0
14	2009	7921	The Holy Grail of the Unconscious	0	3	0
15	2009	7566	Understanding the Anxious Mind	0	0	0
16	2009	10208	Stanley McChrystal's Long War	0	6	1
17	2009	23060	Held By the Taliban	0	6	6
18	2009	8433	The Obamas' Marriage	0	6	0
19	2009	8636	Making Health Care Better	0	5	0
20	2009	8436	What's a Bailed-Out Banker Really Worth	0	5	0
21	2010	8888	Obama's War Over Terror	0	4	0
22	2010	8877	The Jihadist Next Door	0	2	0
23	2010	8384	Building a Better Teacher	0	1	5
24	2010	8838	Can Animals Be Gay?	0	3	0
25	2010	8121	Politico's Mike Allen, the Man the White House Wakes Up To	0	4	0
26	2010	11290	What Makes Marion Jones Run?	0	4	0
27	2010	8095	The Teachers' Unions' Last Stand	0	2	0
28	2010	8135	M.I.A.'s Agitprop Pop	0	11	0
29	2010	8206	Is Yemen the Next Afghanistan?	0	1	0
30	2010	9192	My Life in Therapy	0	0	0
31	2010	8389	Rex Ryan: Bringing It Big	0	6	0
32	2010	8053	Kafka's Last Trial	0	3	0
33	2010	8072	Being Glenn Beck	0	5	1
34	2010	8285	The Education of President Obama	0	3	0
35	2010	8343	Mikhail Prokhorov, the Playboy and His Power Games	0	5	0
36	2010	8117	The Great Cyberheist	0	0	0
37	2010	8074	The Palin Network	0	2	0
38	2010	8094	Jamie Dimon: America's Least-Hated Banker	0	1	0
39	2010	8590	Deepwater Horizon's Final Hours	0	1	1
40	2010	8514	How Four Women (and One Man) Conspired to Make Two Babies	0	2	0
41	2011	8020	Dealing with Julian Assange and the Secrets He Spilled	0	0	1
42	2011	8175	Shaken-Baby Syndrome Faces New Questions in Court	0	4	0
43	2011	8601	The Liberation of Lori Berenson: Life After 15 Years in a Peruvian Prison	0	4	1
44	2011	6801	Is it Dunk and Done for Perry Jones?	0	4	0
45	2011	8615	Why Yasir Qadhi Wants to Talk About Jihad	0	4	1
46	2011	6572	On Libya's Revolutionary Road	0	1	0
47	2011	9401	The Fragile Success of School Reform in the Bronx	0	2	0
48	2011	7615	What Happened to Air France Flight 447	0	5	0
49	2011	7108	Could Conjoined Twins Share a Mind	0	0	1
50	2011	6878	You Blow My Mind. Hey, Mickey!	0	2	0

Coding results for variables 1-7 (stories 1-50)

51	2011	6727	Life on the Line Between El Paso and Juarez	0	4	0
52	2011	6952	What if the Secret to Success is Failure	0	3	1
53	2011	7524	Autistic and Seeking a Place in an Adult World	0	11	9
54	2011	7392	The Surreal Ruins of Qaddafi's Never-Never Land	0	4	0
55	2011	7542	Taken By Pirates	0	0	0
56	2011	6429	Bad Guys vs. Worse Guys in Afghanistan	0	0	0
57	2011	8150	Gilad Shalit and the Rising Price of an Israeli Life	0	4	0
58	2011	6376	Teaching Good Sex	0	4	0
59	2011	6301	Can the Bulldog Be Saved	0	1	0
60	2011	15707	Punched Out: The Life and Death of a Hockey Enforcer	0	20	30
61	2012	7693	Will Israel Attack Iran?	0	1	0
62	2012	6835	How Companies Learn Your Secrets	0	1	2
63	2012	7584	What Happened to the Girls in Le Roy	0	4	0
64	2012	10023	Obama vs. Boehner: Who Killed the Debt Deal?	0	0	2
65	2012	8006	In Libya, the Captors Have Become the Captive	0	4	0
66	2012	8591	Pacifists in the Cross-Fire: the Kabul Hospital That Treats All Sides	0	6	0
67	2012	6560	Caballo Blanco's Last Run: The Micah True Story	0	3	0
68	2012	9177	Prep-School Predators	0	0	0
69	2012	7815	Cocaine Incorporated	0	0	0
70	2012	7460	When My Crazy Father Actually Lost His Mind	0	4	0
71	2012	7688	A Snitch's Dilemma	0	3	0
72	2012	8035	Greg Ousley is Sorry for Killing His Parents. Is That Enough?	0	6	0
73	2012	7329	Obama vs. Poverty	0	0	0
74	2012	6539	Venus and Serena Against the World	0	2	1
75	2012	9758	Where is Cuba Going?	0	4	0
76	2012	13560	This Land: Elyria, Ohio	0	26	12
77	2012	8366	The Scariest Little Corner of the World	0	6	0
78	2012	9521	The Hard Life of an NFL Longshot	0	10	7
79	2012	15486	The Bribery Aisle: How Wal-Mart Used Payoffs to Get Its Way in Mexico	0	17	2
80	2012	17639	Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek	6	11	9
81	2013	7752	Here Is What Happens When You Cast Lindsay Lohan in Your Movie	0	7	1
82	2013	7400	Two Men, One Sky: A Flight to the Finish	0	6	0
83	2013	7952	The Price of a Stolen Childhood	0	2	0
84	2013	9693	The Extraordinary Science of Addictive Junk Food	0	4	0
85	2013	6720	After the Mile	0	10	1
86	2013	8383	Anthony Weiner and Huma Abedin's Post-Scandal Playbook	0	3	0
87	2013	6304	A Drug War Informer in No Man's Land	0	12	1
88	2013	8010	Who Would Kill a Monk Seal?	0	5	1
89	2013	7440	The Death and Life of Chicago	0	0	0
90	2013	7557	A Life-or-Death Situation	0	3	1
91	2013	11726	The Lady Jaguars	0	23	2
92	2013	6381	Should Reddit Be Blamed for the Spreading of a Smear?	0	2	0
93	2013	10213	The Jockey	5	16	5
94	2013	9169	12 Minutes of Freedom in 460 Days of Captivity	0	4	0
95	2013	8067	We Like You So Much and Want to Know You Better	0	0	0
96	2013	7450	A Game of Shark and Minnow	8	8	11
97	2013	10160	The Dream Boat	4	8	1
98	2013	10933	Two Gunshots on a Summer Night	0	12	8
99	2013	22000	Invisible Child: Dasani's Homeless Life	5	68	10
100	2013	8004	A Deadly Mix in Benghazi	1	2	0

Coding results for variables 1-7 (stories 51 to 100)

V8	V9	V10	V11	V12	V13	V14	V15	V16	V17	V18	V19	V20	V21	V22	V23	V24	V25	V26	V27	V28	V29	V30	V31
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	27	0	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
0	0	2	1	0	2	2	57	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	40	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	16	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	14	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	34	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	7	0	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	54	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
1	0	0	1	0	2	2	34	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
1	0	2	1	0	2	2	32	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	14	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2
0	1	0	1	0	2	2	40	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	2
0	5	0	1	0	2	2	11	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2
0	1	0	1	0	2	2	20	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2
0	5	0	1	0	2	2	33	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2
1	0	1	1	0	2	2	31	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	6	0	2	2	50	0	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1
5	0	1	1	0	2	2	25	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	1	0	1	0	2	2	49	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	34	0	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	68	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	7	0	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
0	7	0	1	0	2	2	27	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	15	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	19	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	19	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
0	5	0	1	0	2	2	29	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
2	0	1	1	0	2	2	34	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	4	0	1	0	2	2	15	0	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	32	0	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
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0	0	0	1	0	2	2	37	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	55	0	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	18	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	10	0	1	0	2	2	30	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
0	1	1	1	0	2	2	68	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	5	0	1	0	2	2	54	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	3	1	0	2	2	2	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	19	0	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
1	4	2	1	0	2	2	51	0	1	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	52	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
0	1	0	1	0	2	2	16	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	25	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	15	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	4	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	1	0	1	0	2	2	8	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	4	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1

Coding results for variables 8-31 (stories 1-50)

0	0	1	1	0	2	2	3	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	7	0	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	13	0	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2
0	0	3	1	0	2	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
0	2	1	1	0	2	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2
0	0	2	1	0	2	2	3	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	8	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	7	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	2	1	1	0	2	2	1	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	1	4	3	0	2	2	1	5	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2
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0	0	0	1	0	2	2	3	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	3	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	1
0	5	0	1	0	2	2	20	0	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2
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0	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	1
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0	0	0	1	0	2	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
0	0	2	1	0	2	2	3	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	4	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2
0	1	0	5	0	1	2	2	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
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0	4	2	2	0	2	2	9	13	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1
5	2	22	6	7	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
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0	0	3	1	0	2	2	20	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	5	0	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	1
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2
0	0	0	5	0	2	2	16	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2
0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	0	1	1	0	2	2	12	4	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
0	1	0	1	0	2	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2
0	0	2	1	0	2	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
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1	9	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1
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5	2	0	1	1	1	2	0	6	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
0	4	0	5	1	1	2	0	4	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1
0	5	0	6	5	1	2	0	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2

Coding results for variables 8-31 (stories 51-100)

V32	V33	V34	V35	V36	V37	V38	V39	V40	V41	V42	V43	V44	V45	V46	V47	V48	V49	V50	V51	V52	V53	V54	V55
1	1	1	1	4	1	4	4	4	2	4	2	4	4	4	1	4	1	4	4	4	3	3	3
2	1	1	1	4	4	4	4	1	2	4	4	4	4	1	1	4	4	4	4	1	3	3	2
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1	1	2	1	4	4	4	4	1	1	4	4	4	4	1	1	4	4	4	4	1	3	3	3
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1	1	1	4	4	1	4	4	1	4	4	1	4	4	1	4	4	1	4	4	1	2	3	2
2	2	1	1	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4

Coding results for variables 32-55 (stories 1-50)

2	1	2	1	4	4	4	4	1	2	4	4	4	4	2	1	4	4	4	1	3	3	3		
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1	1	1	1	4	1	4	4	1	1	4	1	4	4	1	1	4	1	4	4	1	2	2	2	
1	1	2	1	4	4	4	4	1	1	4	4	4	4	1	1	4	4	4	4	1	3	3	2	
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1	1	2	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	1	2	3	3	
2	1	2	4	4	4	4	1	1	4	4	4	4	1	2	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	3	3	
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2	1	2	1	4	4	4	1	4	1	4	4	4	2	4	1	4	4	4	2	4	3	3	3	
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1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	
2	1	1	1	4	1	4	4	4	1	4	1	4	4	4	1	4	1	4	4	4	3	3	2	
2	1	1	1	4	4	4	4	1	1	4	4	4	4	1	1	4	4	4	4	1	3	3	2	
1	1	1	2	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	
2	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	
2	1	2	2	4	2	4	4	4	1	4	1	4	4	4	1	4	1	4	4	4	1	2	3	
2	1	1	1	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	
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1	1	2	1	4	1	4	4	4	1	4	1	4	4	1	4	1	4	4	2	4	3	3	2	
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2	1	1	1	4	1	4	4	4	1	4	1	4	4	4	1	4	1	4	4	4	1	1	2	
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1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	4	1	4	1	1	1	4	1	4	1	2	2	4	2	2	2	
1	1	2	1	4	4	1	1	4	1	4	4	1	1	4	1	4	4	2	2	4	1	1	1	

Coding results for variables 32-55 (stories 51-100)

## OBSERVATIONS

The story is well-written and is heavily guided by the narrator. It is a first-person account of his uncommon childhood.

Despite the fact that the story is written in first person, it has a third person feel to it, since the reporter attempts to tell the story from an objective perspective.

The story is centered on the health care debate and the struggles between the White House and Congress. Most characters are well-developed.

A well-written profile that mostly engages due to the abundance of details of an interesting and great persona.

The story centers on the struggles of a typical middle-class black family in Detroit. It is immersive due to the abundance of details.

Focused on politicians running for governor of California. Immersivity arises from rich descriptions of scenes and characters.

An engaging story that owes much of its immersive potential to an abundance of well-described scenes, as well as a clear plot line.

A profile of the President's senior advisor. Its immersivity is due mostly to details of the relationship between her and the President.

A profile of Karzai which has immersive potential due to the abundance of detail concerning a public figure and his actions.

The multimedia elements play an essential role in this piece. However, it is one of the least immersive pieces up to this point.

The story has an immersive quality due to the desire to know what exactly happened and the intentions of those involved.

The story uses immersive techniques but might only be interesting to those who are knowledgeable on the subject.

The story has an immersive quality due to the desire to know the details of this theory and if in fact it is true.

The story is immersive due to the breadth of detail regarding the characters and setting. It also entices the reader with a clear plot line.

The story is interesting, if not immersive, due to the desire to know the results of these studies. It is made more interesting by the use of multimedia.

The story is immersive due to the extensive descriptions of specific scenes and the setting.

The story is completely immersive due to the use of rich descriptions of setting, characters and a clear plot line. The multimedia elements add to the immersive quality.

The story provides details concerning the presidential marriage. Its low immersive quality is due mostly to the lack of multimedia elements.

The story is immersive only due to the description of specific scenes and some character description.

The story lacks immersive quality. Only descriptions of specific scenes and character description add an immersive quality.

The story has immersive quality only due to the description of specific scenes and some character description.

The story is completely immersive due to the use of a clear plot line, in-depth descriptions of characters and detailed settings.

The immersive quality of the story is due mostly to the detailed descriptions of specific scenes. The multimedia elements add to the immersive quality.

The story has a low immersive quality. There are some descriptions of scenes, however.

The story is immersive only due to the description of specific scenes and in-depth character description.

The story is immersive only due to the description of specific scenes and in-depth character description. In the opinion of the reviewer, it is one of the least immersive stories thus far, both in terms of the text and multimedia features.

The narrator assures the reader that the story is true. The story is immersive due to the in-depth descriptions of scenes and the main character. The multimedia elements add to the immersive quality.

The story is immersive due to rich descriptions of setting and specific scenes. The multimedia elements aid in revealing the story's immersive quality.

The story is immersive due to the abundant description of specific scenes, the feeling of being inside the character's perspective.

The story's immersivity is due to descriptions of specific scenes and in-depth characterization.

The story has an immersive quality only due to the description of specific scenes and in-depth characterization.

The story is immersive due to the description of specific scenes and in-depth characterization. The multimedia features add to the immersive quality.

The story is not very immersive, if not for its descriptions of scenes and characterization of Obama.

The story is immersive due to descriptions of specific scenes and in-depth characterization.

The immersive quality of the story is due to in-depth descriptions of scenes and characters.

The story is immersive due to in-depth characterization. The multimedia elements contribute significantly.

The story has a low immersive quality. There is an in-depth description of the main character, however.

The story is immersive due to the description of specific scenes and the chronological order of events. There is no multimedia.

The story is immersive due to the fact that the narrator is also the protagonist of the story. There is a constant sense of being inside the character's perspective.

The story is immersive due to the revelation of details concerning the leak of confidential information. It is interesting due to the mystery.

The story is immersive mostly due to the fact that the reader wants to know what in fact happened in these mysterious events.

The story is immersive due to the in-depth descriptions of scenes and the main character. The multimedia elements add to the immersive quality.

The story is immersive due to in-depth descriptions of scenes and the main character.

The story is immersive due to the in-depth description of the main character, an enigmatic figure in a seemingly ordinary setting.

The story is immersive due to the rich descriptions of the setting and specific scenes. The characters are also well-developed.

The story is immersive due to the rich descriptions of characters and specific scenes.

The immersive quality of the story is due to the desire to know exactly what happened with this aircraft, to solve the mystery.

The story is immersive due to the description of specific scenes and, especially, the description of the main character.

The text is immersive due to the humorous and detailed descriptions of characters, setting and specific scenes. The multimedia elements add to the immersive quality.

Observations (stories 1-50; due to space considerations, not all text is displayed here)

The story is immersive due to the detailed description of the setting and specific scenes. The reader is immersed

The story is immersive due to the description of scenes. The reader keeps reading, though, only if the topic of dis

The story is immersive due to the abundance of detail regarding specific scenes and conversations. The narrator s

The immersive quality of the story is due to the detailed description of the setting and some characterization. Alt

The story has a high immersive quality due to the detailed descriptions of the setting, characters and the tempor

The story is immersive due to detailed descriptions of scenes and the setting. The multimedia features show how

The story is lacking in immersivity. There is little description of specific scenes, as well as little dialogue. The auth

The story is immersive due to the detailed description of specific scenes, especially dialogue, and in-depth chara

The story is immersive due to the detailed description of specific scenes and settings. The multimedia features c

The story is very immersive due to the chronological storyline, the in-depth description of the main character, th

The story is immersive only due to the description of some scenes and some dialogue. The multimedia features c

The story is captivating and interesting because of what it reveals, but it is not very immersive in terms of descrip

The story is immersive due to the descriptions of scenes, setting and characters. What motivates the reader to ke

The story is immersive only due to the chronological storyline, but it has few descriptions of actual scenes and di

The story is immersive due to the description of setting, specific scenes, the use of dialogue, and three-dimensio

The story is immersive due to the description of setting, scenes, the use of dialogue and some characterization. T

The story is immersive due to the description of scenes, characters, dialogue, and the chronological plot line. The

The story is immersive due to the description of the setting, scenes and characters. The multimedia features do n

The story is low in immersivity due to the lack of character and scene description, as well as the lack of a plotline.

The story is immersive due to the fact that the narrator is the protagonist and the description of characters and sc

The story is immersive due to the description of characters, scenes, and setting. The audio file does not contribut

The story is immersive due to the description of characters, scenes, and setting. The images contribute little addi

The story is immersive due to the description of specific scenes, characters and the setting. The paragraphs dedic

The story is immersive due to the descriptions of scenes, character and setting. The video contributes little to the

The story is immersive due to the rich descriptions of scenes, setting and dialogue. The multimedia features do n

The story is immersive due to the rich descriptions of setting, scenes and characters. The story lacks a plotline, ho

The story is immersive due to the description of specific scenes and the setting. The images contribute little to th

The story is immersive due to the description of specific scenes, the identification with the character and the plo

The story is lacking in immersivity. There is little to no description of scenes, characters and setting. The multime

The story is immersive for its description of scenes, setting and characters, as well as the chronological plotline. T

The story is immersive due to the description of specific scenes and the characters. The multimedia elements cor

The story is immersive due to the description of specific scenes, the characters, and the setting. The multimedia f

The story is immersive mostly due to the identification with the characters and their fate. The images do not cont

The story is low in immersivity due to the lack of character and scene description, as well as the lack of a plotline.

The story is immersive due to the desire to know how a promising athlete could commit a heinous crime. It lacks

The story is immersive due to the description of dialogue and main characters. The images add little to the text.

The story is immersive due to mostly to the identification with the main character and the desire to know how he

The story is immersive due to the description of scenes and dailogue. The multimedia features contribute somew

The story is immersive due to the description of setting, scenes, and characters. The slideshows contribute to the

The story is immersive due to the descriptions of scenes, dialogue, and the characters. The multimedia features a

The story is immersive due to the description of specific scenes, characters and setting. The multimedia features

The story is immersive for its chronological plotline, the description of scenes and dialogue. The multimedia feat

The story is immersive only due to the description of the setting and the main character. The multimedia feature:

The story is very immersive due to the chronological storyline, the autodiegetic narration, the description of scer

The story is immersive due to the descriptions of setting, character, scenes and dialogue. The multimedia feature

The story is immersive due to the description of specific scenes and the setting. The multimedia features are indi

The story is immersive due to the autodiegetic narration, the description of setting, scenes and characters. The m

The story is immersive only due to the desire to solve the mystery. The multimedia elements are essential to the

The story is completely immersive as far as text goes. It has in-depth descriptions of character, setting, scenes, ar

The story is immersive only due to the chronological timeline, the desire to know what happened, and the descri

Observations (stories 51-100; due to space considerations, not all text is displayed here)

I hereby declare on oath, that I authored this thesis independently and that I did not use any sources other than the ones cited in the list of references – especially not any other Internet sources that have not been mentioned.

The thesis has not been submitted to any other board of examiners before and has not been published yet.

The printed hard copy is consistent with the electronic version.

Direct or indirect quotes from other works are clearly marked, indicating the source.

I hereby agree that my thesis is made available for later inspection in the library.

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Place & Date

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Signature