



## Digital Communicative Media Unionism

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According to a 2022 Gallup poll, union approval ratings in the United States reached 71%, their highest level since 1965.<sup>1</sup> This surge in public support coincided with a significant increase in union elections across various industries between 2016 and 2022. During this period, more workers initiated elections to form or join unions, with success rates of 72% for union formation and 70% for union membership elections. Notably, high-profile online campaigns played a crucial role in these efforts. Workers leveraged digital platforms at companies such as Amazon, Starbucks, Apple, Chipotle, Trader Joe's, as well as across news publishing, broadcasting, video games, and delivery app companies. Organizing committees set up independent Twitter accounts (now X) and websites to share workplace grievances and communicate their demands to management, other workers, and the general public.<sup>2</sup>

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*The author has no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this chapter.*

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G. Canella (ed.), *Raising Class Consciousness*, Dynamics of Virtual  
Work, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-02238-7\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-02238-7_7)

This chapter introduces a conceptual framework—*digital communicative unionism*—to analyze this phenomenon. This framework examines how digital communication and workers’ material conditions interact with newswriters’ online resistance to shape unions’ collective actions and the formation of social class. Integrating critical political economy of media, social movement studies of industrial relations, and rhetorical communication, this chapter theorizes trade unions’ online framing strategies while extending research on newswriters’ unions, class dynamics, and collective action. The analysis highlights how the distribution of rhetorical power, political-economic framing, and occupational discourse shape frames. Ultimately, I argue that unions use resistance framing in their online communication to articulate their collective actions, grievances, and class identity.

To illustrate this framework, this chapter examines digital newswriters’ union organizing efforts in the United States between 2015 and 2022. Between April 2015 and June 2021, more than 7,500 US workers at both internet-only and legacy publishing and broadcasting companies affiliated with the unions the Writers Guild of America, East (WGAE), The NewsGuild (TNG), or the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA).<sup>3</sup> Although overall union representation remains modest, rates increased in publishing from 3.8% in 2014 to 6% in 2022, and in broadcasting, from 7.6% to 11.5% in the same period.<sup>4</sup> A Pew Research Center survey further found that 16% of US journalists were union members in 2022, with an additional 41% willing to join a union, given recent industry changes.<sup>5</sup> In the 2010s, news companies faced significant financial challenges.<sup>6</sup> Declining print revenues and the dominance of Google and Facebook in online advertising contributed to a decrease in the number of US newspapers and newsroom employees between 2008 and 2020. Media industry consolidation, financialization, and stagnant wages compounded these challenges, prompting researchers to conclude that journalism is in crisis.<sup>7</sup> By analyzing digital newswriters’ unionization, this chapter illuminates how unions employ communicative resistance practices, pursue union renewal, and contribute to class formation in Western capitalist society.

The chapter begins by contextualizing historical conceptions of trade union communication and class formation among US newswriters’ unions. It then introduces the digital communicative unionism framework. To illustrate this framework, this chapter presents a case study of digital newswriters’ union resistance by the WGAE and TNG between

2015 and 2022, focusing on the frames used in their online unionization announcements. The conclusion discusses how analyzing online resistance rhetoric can deepen our understanding of how unions articulate communicative resistance, address workers' grievances, and shape class formation.

## HISTORICIZING CONCEPTIONS OF TRADE UNION COMMUNICATION AND CLASS FORMATION

This section examines trade union communication and class formation within newswriters' unions. It adopts a relational and formational perspective on class, highlighting how media workers' lived experiences, shared consciousness, broader social structures, and collective actions come together to shape class identity.<sup>8</sup> Social historian E. P. Thompson describes class as a "historical phenomenon [...] both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness."<sup>9</sup> Scholars like Bonnie Brennen have demonstrated that collective actions, like picketing, walkouts, and strikes, have helped forge a shared "class consciousness" among American Newspaper Guild (ANG; now TNG) members, contributing to class formation.<sup>10</sup> By employing traditional trade union tactics, the ANG advanced newswriters' struggle and generated valuable publicity for their cause. The union's emergence both reflected and reinforced newswriters' experiences of class struggle through their communicative collective actions.

Other researchers have examined editorial newswriters' unions within the broader context of white-collar middle-class union activities.<sup>11</sup> Sociologist C. Wright Mills noted that by the early twentieth century, white-collar employees recognized themselves as "dependent workers" caught in a "struggle" between "economic reality" and resistance to unions.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, editorial newswriters gradually organized unions. Historian Daniel J. Leab argues that the ANG emerged to fulfill newswriters' "middle-class aspirations" and to affirm their identity as "middle-class professionals."<sup>13</sup> Expanding on Mills' notion of class, Nicole Cohen and Greig de Peuter contend that young newswriters organizing digital-first newsrooms like VICE since 2015 have developed an intersectional white-collar class consciousness that also reflects generational differences.<sup>14</sup> However, compared to other intellectual white-collar workers, editorial newswriters have had fewer opportunities for autonomy and have not embraced the working class's traditional trade union organizing ideology aimed at inspiring radical social change.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, Harry Braverman's Marxian labor process theory has significantly shaped studies on class and newswriters' union formation by emphasizing the power dynamics between class and the means of production.<sup>16</sup> Scholars have since examined how the evolving organization of newswriters' labor, along with tensions among professionalism, union formation, and class formation, affects union dynamics.<sup>17</sup> Cohen further highlights that the politics of newswriters' resistance play a key role in these processes, as class antagonism influences both workers' resistance and employers' reliance on labor to generate surplus value.<sup>18</sup> In the context of class struggle, capital is faced with two interrelated challenges: it must contend with the active resistance of newswriters and manage its own influence in shaping their independent interests.

Historical institutionalists have criticized labor process theory for its focus on Marxist class and economic determinism.<sup>19</sup> Timothy Marjoribanks emphasizes the importance of unique institutional, political-economic, and social-historical contexts, as well as individual agency in shaping workplace restructuring and technology adoption. Although capitalist owners and managers may introduce computerized technologies to reorganize and control workplaces, newswriters sometimes accept these changes and at other times resist them through union actions. These technological changes and workplace restructuring contribute to the multiskilling, deskilling, and reskilling of newswriters, while also strengthening or weakening the capitalist class's monopoly power. To better understand union resistance in specific workplaces, Salamon proposes a relational view of newswriters' class formation.<sup>20</sup> His approach foregrounds the historically contingent tensions between corporate workplace reorganization and newswriter unions' diverse resistance practices: direct action, legal action, and alternative journalism. Yet, this literature only briefly addresses how digital communication practices shape both union resistance and class formation.

Some researchers have examined how digital communication shapes newswriters' union mobilizing and organizing. For example, Cohen and de Peuter highlight that media unions' online narratives reveal both why they organize and how they frame broader industry restructuring.<sup>21</sup> In 2015, US newswriters initiated a wave of unionization to address issues such as media ownership concentration, pay disparities, inadequate benefits, overwork, limited workforce diversity, and job insecurity. To mobilize, these unions have employed collective action frames (CAFs). For Cohen and de Peuter, such "communication is the stuff of mobilizing."<sup>22</sup>

However, further theoretical development is needed to explain how media unions frame their messages and diverse aims, as well as to identify the unique CAFs that they employ. Advancing our understanding of news-worker unions' communicative practices could shed new light on media industry changes, power dynamics, and class formation in the digital era.

### ORGANIZING CLASS POWER THROUGH UNIONS' DIGITAL COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMES

This section demonstrates how unions' communicative framing practices drive their organizing efforts and contribute to class power. In the digital era, workers use online platforms to balance resistance framing with coping strategies and to negotiate between self-organized initiatives and union-facilitated collective actions. For example, workers have formed private Facebook groups, combining individual members' discourse and collective communication practices to create CAFs.<sup>23</sup> According to sociologists Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, social movement organizations (SMOs), such as unions, establish three "core framing tasks": "diagnostic framing" (identifying and attributing problems); "prognostic framing" (proposing solutions); and "motivational framing" (mobilizing support).<sup>24</sup>

SMOs achieve these framing tasks through four "frame alignment processes": first, "frame bridging" links two or more unique but ideologically resonant CAFs; second, "frame amplification" clarifies and highlights known issues or events through CAFs; third, "frame extension" aligns a SMO's and other groups' values and interests, presenting their CAFs as congruent; and fourth, "frame transformation" introduces new values and interests to revise conventionally accepted CAFs.<sup>25</sup> Unions then convert these framing tasks into discursive power, as they produce, "self-mediate," and circulate their frames through print, broadcast, and/or digital media outlets to reach a wider audience.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, unions frame website content and social media posts, such as tweets, to shape public debates, bolster their political influence, strengthen their collective bargaining power, and effect change within their employer organizations.<sup>27</sup> Davide Però and John Downey refer to this public mobilizing as "communicative unionism," noting that it "combines vibrant industrial action with framing and staging disputes in the public arena so as to appeal to sympathetic bystanders in order to elicit concessions from employers."<sup>28</sup> Through such digital collective action and framing, workers

have formed *virtual unions* that capitalize on the power of online visibility. Salamon explains that unions create websites and social media accounts to build “an organizational identity around digital media organizing campaigns that is distinct from other union activities.”<sup>29</sup> For example, virtual unions are evident in initiatives like the autonomous websites of RadioShack workers, the 2007–2008 WGA screenwriters strike, Twitter profiles supporting the Fight for \$15, Facebook groups affiliated with the Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart), the website and social media campaigns of the Independent Workers’ union of Great Britain and United Voices of the World, and pro-union Facebook pages of telecommunication workers in Israel.<sup>30</sup> These platforms typically host issue-specific campaigns, using *diagnostic framing* to highlight workers’ grievances, including low pay, overtime, unsafe working conditions, and workplace closures.<sup>31</sup> These virtual unions have also employed *prognostic framing*, such as union recognition, and *motivational framing* that mobilizes collective action, such as strikes on legal holidays.

Virtual unions actively employ key frame alignment processes to enhance their collective messaging. For example, OUR Walmart retail workers use Facebook posts for *frame bridging*, linking their concerns with cancer advocacy groups, animal rights groups, and environmental activists.<sup>32</sup> They also practice *frame extension* by connecting retail workers’ grievances with the struggles of family members on active military duty. Additionally, these workers use *frame amplification* to reinforce issues like workplace safety and low wages, and engage in *frame transformation* by broadening their critique about low pay into a wider discussion of economic inequality and worker power after the company announced wage increases.<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, virtual unions discursively adapt their CAFs, responding to rapidly evolving institutional, social, political, and economic conditions, thus revitalizing and boosting their “power resources.”<sup>34</sup>

Unions further facilitate collective action by producing master frames that link political-economic critiques of capitalism and power to their specific CAFs.<sup>35</sup> Snow and Benford describe master frames as broader than CAFs, more “generic” and “flexible” than CAFs.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, political theorist Sidney A. Rothstein notes that workers flexibly craft frames “in a discourse that resonates with their occupational identity.”<sup>37</sup> Unions ground these master frames in normative principles, like justice, democracy, protection, rights, and the public interest.<sup>38</sup> In doing so, the political-economy frame communicates “injustice” in relation to “power.”<sup>39</sup> Refining the master frame concept further, Aslı Vatanserver introduces the

“class-formative frame.”<sup>40</sup> For instance, a nationwide network of precarious academic researchers in Germany used their social media accounts to maintain cohesion by circulating identity-symbols (e.g., logos and posters), launching a hashtag campaign, and organizing an online petition. They adopted “precarity [...] to connect their struggle to a trans-sectoral ‘class-in-the-making’ whose common denominator is downward mobility (or the constant threat of it).”<sup>41</sup> This class-formative frame articulates a broader class identity that unions leverage to link and communicate their struggles over time.

Additionally, unions use rhetorical framing to manage digital-era workplace restructuring, justify their organizing efforts, and shape class formation.<sup>42</sup> Rhetorical framing relies on keywords, metaphors, and symbols that carry meaning over time. As sociologist Marc W. Steinberg describes it, a union’s “discursive repertoire” is “a repertoire of fighting words drawn upon by actors.”<sup>43</sup> A discursive repertoire accounts for “variation in the way discourses in a given formation are drawn upon to construct mobilizing and injustice frames,” expressing “structures of meaning as [...] loosely coupled ensembles internally and in relation to dominant ideologies.”<sup>44</sup> Within this broader repertoire, unions adopt a political-economy master injustice frame. For example, nineteenth-century cotton spinners in England selectively appropriated factory owners’ dominant discourse, rooted in popular political economy, political liberalism, and radical critiques of power in republican politics, to justify their collective action.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, white-collar knowledge workers integrate into their frames “managers’ own discourse to illustrate the potential effectiveness of collective action to save their jobs,” writes Rothstein, “and persuade their coworkers to participate in collective action.”<sup>46</sup>

Unions employ a range of rhetorical strategies and devices—notably metaphors and co-option of business rhetoric—to shape their digital frames. They do so through unique online communication genres, like unionization announcements, which integrate discourse repertoires, resistance rhetoric, and material realities.<sup>47</sup> For example, WGAE members have used crisis metaphors in their diagnostic framing and appropriated their employers’ business language to counter corporate messaging and demonstrate how unionization can help meet workforce diversity quotas.<sup>48</sup> Digital communicative unionism further emphasizes the “social process” of constructing frames within wider contexts, demonstrating “how the distribution of power shapes the construction [...] of these frames” by

frame producers, like unions.<sup>49</sup> The framework developed in this section is summarized in Table 7.1.

### FRAMING CLASS FORMATION ONLINE: THE CASE OF DIGITAL NEWSWORKERS' UNIONS

To test the digital communicative unionism framework, this section outlines the frames used by organizing committees in online unionization announcements posted on autonomous websites and Twitter accounts. These announcements articulate newswriters' grievances and contribute to class formation. The analysis is based on a rhetorical frame analysis of 141 unionization announcements from the WGAE and TNG organizing committees (2015–2022) and supplemented by 32 semi-structured interviews with union bargaining unit members and a union staff representative conducted between October and December 2021. Data were archived and coded using ATLAS.ti and NVivo computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, resulting in 74 first-order descriptive codes that were organized into two class-formative diagnostic master frames and five CAFs. These frames are categorized by their focus on the social context of (a) news media industry changes and (b) news workforce restructuring (Table 7.2).

First, I examine how unionization announcements depict industry changes. This analysis employs a political-economy diagnostic master frame and specific media union CAFs (media financing, media ownership, and the COVID-19 pandemic) within the context of a business-oriented

**Table 7.1** Levels of framing digital communicative unionism

<b>Frame sponsors' social process and context of frame construction</b>	Trade unions' mobilizing actions in response to context-specific issues
<b>Class-formative master frames</b>	Political economy and occupational identity injustices
<b>Class-formative collective action frames</b>	Context-specific injustices
<b>Core framing tasks</b>	Diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational
<b>Frame alignment processes</b>	Bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation
<b>Communicative mediation</b>	Virtual unions (website and social media platform affordances and content)
<b>Rhetorical framing devices</b>	Keywords, metaphors, symbols, and co-option of business rhetoric

**Table 7.2** Media unions' online communicative framing strategy

<b>Frame sponsors' social process and context of frame construction</b>	Mobilizing responses of WGAE and TNG to news media industry changes and workforce restructuring shaped by occupational identity and democratic principles
<b>Class-formative master frames</b>	Political economy and occupational identity injustices
<b>Class-formative collective action frames</b>	Political economy (media financing, media ownership, and COVID-19 pandemic) and occupational (job loss and job security)
<b>Core framing tasks</b>	Diagnostic
<b>Frame alignment processes</b>	Extension and transformation
<b>Communicative mediation</b>	Virtual media unions' websites and Twitter accounts
<b>Rhetorical framing devices</b>	Metaphor (business-oriented journalism crisis)

journalism crisis metaphor. Next, I explore how the announcements address workforce reorganization by using an occupational-identity diagnostic master frame and media union CAFs (job loss and job security). Finally, I consider how the master frames were shaped, emphasizing the technological mediation of virtual unionism, the occupational-identity frame, and the influence of democratic principles on collective organizing. Together, these frames illuminate how unions use online discourse to articulate newworkers' class formation.

The class-formative political-economy master frame is central to the diagnostic framing used in unions' online announcements. These announcements acknowledge the structural forces shaping the digital media landscape and emphasize the industry's instability—driven by economic factors like media financing and rapidly changing global economic conditions. This instability has led to profound challenges, including a significant decline in key revenue streams, like advertising and subscriptions. As Susan Matthews of WGAE-represented Slate notes, their employer has been “in a much more financially precarious position” in recent years.

Another facet of the class-formative political-economy framing is media ownership, a concern that became particularly salient during the COVID-19 pandemic. Newworkers are increasingly worried about media consolidation through mergers and corporate chain ownership. In interviews, newworkers express apprehension about potential management changes and cost-cutting measures, such as layoffs and a growing reliance

on video content. One TNG-represented Quartz Union member explains, “Whenever there’s a sale within media, it makes people uncomfortable. Because you could have a new boss who doesn’t like the way you’ve been doing stuff.” The unions have further criticized big media chains, such as Lee Enterprises and Ogden Newspapers, for acquiring publications, arguing that these corporate entities limit local autonomy and allocate reduced budgets for city and state political news coverage.

Between 2020 and 2022, unionization announcements increasingly expressed concerns regarding austerity measures linked to potential takeovers by hedge fund chain owners, such as Chatham Asset Management and Alden Global Capital. Unions viewed these takeovers as detrimental to local communities and the future of individual publications, raising fears of mass layoffs and unsustainable, profit-driven corporate practices. As the Sentinel Guild notes, “Alden has been called the ‘grim reaper’ and ‘Darth Vader’ of the newspaper industry because it harvests its properties for short-term profit and leaves the carcasses to rot.”<sup>50</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these economic and social threats, intensifying industry instability and deepening uncertainty over employee compensation and organization viability. These announcements ultimately frame the crisis using a class-formative political-economy master frame that highlights the precarious state of the news media industry. Unionization announcements underscored economic uncertainty, concerns about compensation, and industry fragility. The pandemic intensified the existing industry instability framed through the lens of a business-oriented crisis and articulated using the class-formative political-economy master frame.

In the context of the class-formative occupational-identity master frame, unionization announcements underscore how industry instability and austerity measures have driven significant newsroom workforce downsizing. Unions highlight layoffs, buyouts, job consolidation, unpaid furloughs, and technological changes, such as the adoption of algorithmic technology, as key factors behind the decline in newsroom employment. They also express concerns that these cost-cutting measures disproportionately affect women and people of color, further diminishing workforce diversity. A TNG-represented *People Magazine* union steward explains that over the past 22 years, the publication’s labor process has become increasingly “electronic [...] especially in the last two years when no one is actually in the same room anymore,” they say. “It gives you the ability to do greater things, but it also means you use less people to do it. I’ve seen the workforce shrink dramatically since I started in the company.”

Similar sentiments from other interviewees and unionization announcements indicate that technological changes have contributed to workforce dispersion, job displacement, and an overall shrinking journalism workforce. This chapter characterizes these job losses as *normative precariousness*—a condition that not only affects immediate staffing levels but also hampers publications’ ability to effectively cover local news and serve their communities. As The Record Guild’s online mission statement laments, management expects staff to “accomplish more with less” while “struggling to effectively report on the news that matters.”<sup>51</sup> Ultimately, these job cuts make it increasingly difficult for newswriters to fulfill their critical mission of informing their local communities.

Unionization announcements also highlight growing concerns over job security among newsroom workers. These concerns stem from increasing workloads, stagnant wages, and the looming possibility of more furloughs or pay cuts. Newswriters are further faced with the constant pressure to produce online content at a rapid pace—a pattern that one former WGAE-represented Gothamist union member describes as “churn” within a “work, work, work” newsroom culture. Unions claim that inadequate compensation—especially in light of high living and healthcare costs—impedes their ability to consistently produce quality journalism. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic intensified fears by exposing gaps in workplace protections and the increasing threat of additional layoffs, all of which undermine newswriters’ ability to produce quality local news coverage. Collectively, these unionization announcements reveal deep power imbalances and inconsistent business practices in the news media industry, ultimately jeopardizing journalism’s essential democratic mission.

Finally, I examine *how* union organizing committees construct class-formative master frames. The collective process is shaped by power dynamics among committee members, a union’s wider membership, and interactions with parent union representatives during employer negotiations. Interviews reveal that committees adeptly integrate communicative practices from a wider discursive repertoire, particularly those aligned with the class-formative occupational-identity frame. Committees often draw on model unionization announcements and templates outlining key points as valuable resources in developing these frames.

WGAE’s and TNG’s public communication strategies are mediated by digital platforms, including websites and Twitter, constituting virtual unions while shaping the framing of unionization announcements. Former WGAE staff organizer Megan McRobert notes that newswriter

organizing surged online after Gawker Media workers conducted “very public” organizing actions in 2015. This boost in online organizing made additional resources more accessible; for example, the WGAE’s “Online Media Shops” section of its website helped other union committees adopt similar communicative practices. Another interviewee observes that Gawker workers produced more public “ready-made explanations” about the language to include in unionization announcements, which “made it easy to explain why in a concise way.” Given that union announcements are publicly available online, interviewees emphasize the importance of carefully choosing words and tone. For example, a WGAE-represented Parcast content writer explains that they prioritized communication that was “direct,” “honest,” “clear,” and “civil [...] to help garner a good public image.” Similarly, Ryan Houlihan, a WGAE-represented editor at Bustle Digital Group (BDG), stresses that they maintained a “firm voice that was fair [...] level-headed and knowledgeable, but clear.” These examples reflect a broader awareness of the public nature of union messaging and underscore the influence of successful union elections and growing public support.<sup>52</sup>

Union organizing committees craft their unionization announcements through a dynamic, democratic process guided by the class-formative occupational-identity frame. Committee members draw on their journalistic occupational skills to create compelling announcements. According to Haley Mlotek, formerly of WGAE-represented MTV News, “We liked to draw on our skills that we use in our everyday work to make sure that it was a powerful [unionization] statement.” While collective input is crucial, some committee members find the process challenging, given their background as meticulous news writers and editors. Ultimately, the finalized announcements emerge through collaborative input and editing, reflecting members’ ongoing discussions. This approach—grounded in a rich discursive repertoire and embracing rhetorical framing—empowers white-collar newswriters, fosters union renewal, and (re)shapes class relations. One Quartz union member summarizes the value of such rhetorical framing: journalists “care about [...] the power that [words] can have.”

## CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced a novel conceptual framework for examining digital communicative unionism, addressing the under theorization and lack of empirical research on digital union communication and class formation

in media and journalism studies. It argued that unions use online resistance rhetorical framing in their public organizing efforts to communicate about their collective organizing practices, worker grievances, and class formation. My framework analyzes both the specific content of these frames and their wider discursive contexts, including the class-formative political-economy injustice master frame and occupation-specific CAFs, to understand how union messages are constructed in the digital era.

This conceptual framework illuminates the social processes and contexts that shape how frames are constructed. Its utility is demonstrated through the case study of digital newswriters' union organizing efforts with the WGAE and TNG between 2015 and 2022. My findings reveal that power dynamics, class-formative political-economic and occupational-identity framing, and the technological mediation of virtual unions all play key roles in shaping the unionization announcements on websites and Twitter. Interviews further deepen our understanding of how newswriters and union representatives actively construct frames. Ultimately, this framework offers valuable insights into how frames emerge and evolve in practice.

The digital communicative unionism framework both extends and challenges existing research in media and journalism studies by integrating historical-materialist and discursive approaches into class analysis for the digital era. It adopts a relational and formational conception of class, arguing that class emerges from the ways that newswriters organize over time—shaped by both their material labor experiences and shared consciousness.<sup>53</sup> This technical composition of class considers various factors, including newswriters' time management, output, working conditions, skillsets, and mediating influences of corporate-managerial and technological practices.<sup>54</sup> By framing a business-oriented journalism crisis, digital newswriters' unionization announcements reveal how shifts in corporate practices reshape labor conditions. These announcements highlight issues like industry instability, financial challenges, ownership changes driven by chain and hedge fund takeovers, job loss, and the disruptive effects of algorithmic technology and the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, these factors underscore the pressures that hinder newswriters' ability to serve their communities and uphold journalism's democratic mission.

Moreover, newswriters form classes by organizing to strengthen their political power over the means of production through collective labor organizations, such as the WGAE and TNG.<sup>55</sup> These unions shape class formation through collective actions, including alternative

communication resistance practices and public online unionization announcements on websites and Twitter.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, class is shaped by the distinct professional and occupational identities of worker groups, such as white-collar, middle-class editorial newswriters, intersecting with demographic factors like age.<sup>57</sup> In digital newswriters' unionization announcements, digital communicative unionism reveals both continuities and changes in workers' historical grievances, online resistance practices, and class formation through processes like frame extension and the transformation of a business-oriented journalism crisis. It also demonstrates how newswriters collectively experience precarious employment, adapt shared communicative resistance practices, and articulate both industry and normative precariousness as part of their class-formative frames.<sup>58</sup>

In negotiating control over their professional norms and workplace rights, newswriters' union framing reflects the relational and formative view of class. On the one hand, framing precarity suggests a unified and broad worker class within the industry; on the other hand, the emphasis on journalistic professionalism delineates distinct worker classes.<sup>59</sup> This tension highlights newswriters' middle-class commitment to their craft through unionization while also revealing their limited ability to leverage precarity for working class-based unionism. It also hinders newswriters' potential to inspire radical social change and build solidarity with other precarious workers who share their grievances but not their middle-class occupational identity.

Finally, the digital communicative unionism framework has implications for future research on workers' communication and class. Researchers could build on and refine this framework by examining digital communication and class formation across various worker groups, industries, and organization types. For example, the 2023 WGA screenwriters strike was partially sparked by publishers' use of generative artificial intelligence to produce content, deskill, and displace labor.<sup>60</sup> It underscores the need to explore how unions and media workers negotiate emerging challenges. Further research could deepen our understanding of how workers communicate their collective actions, shape class relations and identities, and organize in Western capitalist society. Additionally, future studies could examine other digital communicative union practices beyond unionization announcements and explore alternative rhetorical forms and devices beyond crisis metaphors.

## NOTES

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