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# Journalists' authority and its bounded trade

Twitter, Journalists, and Boundary Work in Contemporary France's Music Scene

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Post-Print Version

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## Abstract

Journalists, it is widely admitted, are engaged in new forms of boundary work on social media platforms, seeking to uphold their influence over news dissemination. This study focuses on music festivals as a case study to examine journalists' endeavors in maintaining their authority on social media. We analyze Twitter coverage of music festivals in France during the summer of 2018, systematically collecting data from 16 festivals of varying sizes and musical genres. Through this analysis, we investigate journalists' engagement and evaluate the trading of authority with other stakeholders through mentioning practices. Our findings challenge the prevailing notion of journalists as primary arbiters of authority on social media platforms. Despite their conspicuous presence during music festivals on Twitter, journalists emerge as relatively passive participants compared to other stakeholders in the music scene. Moreover, their ability to assert or receive authority from the broader public sphere is limited. This study sheds light on the bounded nature of journalists' boundary work on social media platforms, emphasizing the evolving dynamics of authority within digital information ecosystems.

Keywords : Journalism, Social Media, Boundary Work, Authority, Music

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## Introduction

A lot of research has been conducted on how the information world is changing as a result of social media platforms. Among them, studies of the changing authority of journalists have been particularly numerous. The generalization of self-publishing practices on the web and on social media, on the one hand, and the algorithmization of information distribution on the same platforms, on the other hand, have contributed to question the jurisdiction of journalists over information. Since anyone can express themselves online and the value of information is measured by its algorithmic impact, what place can journalists claim in the world of information? What authority do they have if, in their world as in many others, “authority is increasingly expressed algorithmically” (Pasquale, 2015)?

This article examines the changing jurisdiction argument using a case study of Twitter coverage of music festivals in France during the summer of 2018. A collection of tweets posted during 16 festivals of varying sizes and musical genres allows us to assess journalists’ and the media’s role in disseminating music information and to measure how authority is traded on this platform through mentioning practices. This quantitative, events-oriented approach to journalists’ authority—as opposed to journalist-oriented approaches, whether qualitative ones focusing on journalists’ use of Twitter based on interviews or quantitative ones based on their tweet collections—helps avoid some limitations of contemporary research on the digital frontiers of journalism. Our main result is that the importance of journalists’ boundary work on platforms such as Twitter should be reduced. Despite their remarkable presence and visibility on Twitter during music festivals, journalists — as we will show — are far from being the most active users. Their participation in the platformized trading of authority is also modest if compared with that of other participants in the music scene. Finally, they do not succeed in either giving or receiving authority to or from the general public involved in the scene.

After reviewing research on authority trading, boundary work, and Twitter use in journalism, this article describes our data and methods as well as the most important results we achieved by using them. We propose that these results be understood as evidence that journalists’ *boundary work* on social media platforms is also a *bounded work* in that their ability to reach a large audience and consolidate their authority is weak. This study concludes with a discussion of the limitations of our empirical findings as well as their implications for future research.

## 1. Literature Review

Since the last decade of the XXth century, news production and distribution has been affected by the emergence of new information platforms. Studies on the new independent or citizen media in the early 2000s have highlighted the challenge imposed by these new players on mainstream media when they began proclaiming the end of the old media world (Gillmor, 2004; Hyde, 2002; Platon and Deuze, 2003). Concurrently—and in sharp contrast with the decentralized logic of such media—legacy media began to use new digital opportunities such as user-generated content in a restrictive way. For example, they usually separated amateur from professional content (Hermida and Thurman, 2008). In some cases, journalists venturing into this new digital landscape aggravated the divide between professionals and their audience by putting more emphasis on professional values such as objectivity and highlighting the singularity of the journalistic method in a narrower sense than what was commonly adopted (Singer and Ashman, 2009). Hence, far from revolutionizing journalism and disrupting the relationships between news producers and consumers, user-generated content has been incorporated into news media within the “long-standing routines of traditional journalism practice” (Williams et al., 2011).

At about the same period, weblogs and the “blogosphere” also attracted much attention. Despite the lack of connection between most blogs and news production, blogs created and animated by journalists or those claiming to be of journalistic nature (“j-blogs”) also flourished (Lowrey, 2006; Matheson, 2004; Singer, 2005). They exposed the “borderland between blogging in general and blogging related to journalism” and produced a “new genre of online publishing” (Domingo and Heinonen, 2008). For this reason, j-blogs, despite their similar adaptation schemes to traditional news production patterns and old journalistic norms, challenged “journalistic authority” more directly (Carlson, 2007).

More recently, the literature on the new landscape of news production and journalism authority has addressed the emergence of microblogging platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Since the creation of the latter in 2006, journalists have used it “as a form of engaging with audiences and sources, tracking the latest buzz on their beats, and promoting their work,” thus producing what began to be described as “ambient journalism” (Burns, 2010; Hermida, 2010). Currently, the “produsage” of news typical of such platforms (Bruns et al., 2012) is often claimed to possess a more disruptive potential for mainstream media as well as for the establishment of news standards in contemporary society (Newman, 2011). Much research has documented the rise of these platforms, particularly Twitter, in countries such as France, where journalists began using microblogging as a tool for social contact (Jouët & Rieffel, 2015), rapidly expanding its use for accessing information (Hernández-Fuentes & Monnier, 2022), and more generally as a means of making their work visible to the public (Rieder and Smyrmaios, 2012).

### **1.1. *The boundary turn in journalism studies***

Technological innovation and changes in audiences’ digital practices cannot be held responsible for the crisis in journalistic jurisdiction. In many countries, the new digital landscape emerged at about the same time when legacy media suffered a decline in their audience, resources, ability to inspire trust, and public recognition. These times were also characterized by the harsh criticism of journalists as a social and professional group. Key evidence for this crisis can be found in the diminished number of journalists, the rise of unstable employment in the media, the deskilling of journalists, and the diminution of the representativeness of professional organizations and journalist unions (Örnebring, 2009).

Hence, it is not surprising that attention shifted from a political and quite normative description of new journalistic forms at the age of digital media as being more “democratic” or “varied” forms of communication (Domingo and Heinonen, 2008) to more pessimistic issues of professional boundaries, jurisdictional work, and endangered journalistic identity. Such a shift is exemplified by the emergence of the concept of “boundary work” in journalism studies. Drawing on Gieryn’s seminal definition of “epistemic authority” as “the legitimate power to define, describe, and explain bounded domains of reality” (Gieryn, 1983), studies have highlighted journalists’ experimentation with the processes of “expansion,” “expulsion,” and “protection,” which Gieryn considers as characteristics of the boundary work that social groups perform when threatened by others.

Through this perspective, scholars have examined the case of soft news. Travel (Pirolli, 2017), lifestyle (Maares and Hanusch, 2020), and health journalism (Molyneux and Holton, 2015) are relevant cases of professional beats with significant exposure to the competition between journalists, amateurs and “cultural critics” (Kristensen and From, 2015). It is often in these specialties that new professional practices and norms emerge. Thus, professional journalists in more central segments of the journalism world often view them as experimentation fields as well as protective mechanisms for traditional

journalism (Sjøvaag, 2015). The boundary work perspective has also, at the same time, fueled research on how journalists use different aspects of their work to distinguish themselves from other professional groups such as social science practitioners (Anderson, 2015; Author, YYYY).

The case of music journalism, which we examine in this paper, is a good case study of an exposed journalistic specialty. Besides being typical of soft news, music journalism is practiced during events such as concerts and festivals, where journalists participate in the same “music scene” as producers, musicians, and fans (Peterson and Bennett, 2004). All contribute to the “scene-supporting industry” that is based on small-size collectives, fans-turned-entrepreneurs, and unpaid work (Smith and Maughan, 1997). Research on these events—especially festivals that unite participants, weaken boundaries between insiders and outsiders, and promote a feeling of impact on music itself (Dowd, 2014; Dowd et al., 2004)—has highlighted the role of the “music community” (Kibby, 2000) in encouraging audience participation in the music experience and its sharing with others regardless of their relative level of authority.

Until now, research on boundary work in journalism has focused on the discursive aspects of boundary-making processes. Scholars have emphasized that in such fuzzy boundaries of journalism, “core values” (Maares and Hanusch, 2020), “narratives” (Domingo et al., 2015), “role-perception” (O’Sullivan and Heinonen, 2008), professionalism as “ideology” (Lewis, 2012) or “identity” (Deuze, 2005) are being challenged. The underlying argument of this stream of literature is that research should focus on journalists’ reflexivity and their claim of “cultural authority” in the new media landscape (Zelizer, 1992)—a common point in other research areas in the social sciences upholding the “boundary work” argument (Lamont and Molnár, 2002). In journalism studies, this shift toward discursivity was partly inherited from the long lasting ties binding this field of research to literary studies. Researchers in this field have long elaborated on the concept of “interpretive community” — initially built to describe what binds a reader and a text (Fish, 1980, 1976) — and then extended it to a discourse oriented analysis of professional values among newsmen as well as professional jurisdictions over the production of news (Berkowitz and TerKeurst, 1999; Robinson and DeShano, 2011; Zelizer, 1993).

The discursive approach to boundary work is a valuable tool for understanding journalists as a distinct professional group with their own set of norms and values. It played a crucial role in analyzing how journalists define and maintain the boundaries of their professional identity and expertise. However, this approach also comes with certain limitations that we aim to address in this article.

The first limitation is of a conceptual nature. Traditionally, the literature on professional boundaries has primarily focused on discourse, viewing boundary work mainly as an exercise of reflexive epistemic authority, as Gieryn describes it – “the legitimate power to define, describe, and explain bounded domains of reality” (Gieryn, 1983). In this article, we emphasize the importance of recognizing boundary work as a material and mundane activity that occurs within the “social dramas of work” (Hughes, 1976) in which journalists interact with others. This perspective broadens the understanding of boundary work by considering its practical manifestations within the context of journalists’ work environments.

The second limitation, deriving from the conceptual one, is methodological. Typically, researchers have examined discursive boundaries by analyzing journalists’ self-reflection in research interviews or in books authored by them and dealing with journalism. However, this approach tends to overlook the valuable insights gained from workplace observations, which have historically been a fundamental aspect of the sociology of journalism. Looking for boundary work as an activity intertwined with the daily routines of journalists can help distinguish between how journalists describe their work and what they actually do. It also prevents an undue focus on a limited number of journalists, particularly those who are highly visible or vocal and may be perceived as spokespersons for their entire professional group.

Additionally, it stresses the fact that boundary work occurs in the journalists' work environment and during their interactions with other participants to this work arena, such as event organizers, PR officers, and the public, who are all engaged in "credibility contests" (Gieryn, 1983) with journalists.

## **1.2. Twitter and the social drama of journalism**

The arena on which these professional authority contests take place occasionally extends from the workplace to the public sphere—a well-known arena of jurisdictional claims in many professional groups (Abbott, 1988). Research conducted on how journalists use Twitter in their work has highlighted the variety of ways such an arena is invested, including such purposes. For some, posting on Twitter does not change journalists' social role and values (Hayes et al., 2007) or, for the media that promotes it, is only a transparency ritual (Karlsson, 2010). For others, however, Twitter modifies journalists' work insofar as it affects judgments made on information and even competes with news agencies in terms of credit for its most frequent users (McGregor and Molyneux, 2020); sometimes, it is even likely to influence the political orientation of articles written by journalists (Wihbey et al., 2019).

Twitter features, which encourage users to circulate messages and create conversational threads, influenced the initial choice to present users with tweets of the people they follow in reverse chronological order and contributed to make Twitter a "noisy" environment (Honeycutt and Herring, 2009) where people "loosely inhabit a multiplicity of conversational contexts at once" (boyd et al., 2010). Since 2015, though, different algorithmic features have tempered the "noisy" nature of Twitter and adjusted content on users' timelines according to how they are profiled or their content display preferences. Thus, message circulation on this platform follows three logics: a chronological logic, a logic of user exposure and voluntary promotion, and an algorithmic logic of preselection. Consequently, the exposure acquired by Twitter users partly depends not only on unstable short-term logics such as those introduced by hashtags (Bruns and Burgess, 2012) but also on fairly stable long-term logics linked to the network effect specific to social media, also described as "preferential attachment" (Albert and Barabási, 2002) which enables the most followed individuals to accumulate followers without following them back and to structure follower–followee relationships according to the principle of homophily, which emphasizes social attributes such as profession (Bruns et al., 2017).

These characteristics increase one's interest in understanding how authority is shared among professionals with a strong visibility in the public space, as is the case with journalists. Relaying a tweet to followers can indeed be akin to distributing authority or sharing the professional scene, to use an image from one of the first studies on the subject (Lasorsa et al., 2012). In this study, focusing on the 500 most followed journalists on Twitter, the most common practice for sharing the scene is posting a website link and half of the identified links were to the journalist's employer media and a quarter to other media. This result was confirmed in another study on foreign correspondents, which showed that journalists use Twitter not as a reporting or public discussion tool but rather as a promotion platform for their employer (Cozma and Chen, 2013).

Research focusing on political journalism has highlighted other ways to use Twitter. Some discuss a subtle blurring of professional and normative boundaries, notably through humor, to build a personal relationship with the audience (Molyneux, 2015). More often, however, Twitter appears to function as an instrument of professional "normalization" insofar as the conversations among journalists in the platform also promote this activity to the public. It is thus a matter of building and defending journalists' "interpretive community" and drawing boundaries within it (Molyneux and Mourão, 2019; Mourão, 2015). Predictably enough, these professional boundaries are not distinct from those drawn along journalists, such as gender (Usher et al., 2018).

Building on this research, we consider Twitter mentions as ways to confer authority to someone by pointing to his or her account. Among the different possibilities to interact on this platform (e.g., retweeting or replying), mentioning is specific in that it transfers authority directly to another individual or institution and performs such action in public. Of course, Twitter users can use mentions for very different purposes, sometimes to oppose to someone and not to endorse his or her opinion. But mentions are “identity-driven” (Cha et al., 2010) : they bind users together. Therefore, they can be studied as a distinct practice, unevenly distributed and thus conducive to statistical analysis. We make the hypothesis that frequent mentions of a specific group by another one are traces of an intense authority trading between them, whereas intense mentioning within one’s group signals strong boundary work in action.

## 2. Data and Methods

The current data were collected from Twitter from July 7 to September 19, 2018. First, we manually gathered the official accounts and hashtags of 33 music festivals in France during the summer season, which we chose to represent greater diversity in terms of public attendance and musical style. The number of spectators attending a festival has been estimated from reports by local press and the festivals’ official websites. We then used Twitter’s Application Programming Interface (API) to collect a comprehensive dataset of all tweets either containing one of the selected festival’s official hashtags or mentioning their official account(s). Through this method, we collected a total of 223,712 tweets posted by more than 90,000 Twitter profiles.

These tweets feature a lot of mentions (see Table 3 below). Upon examination, these mentions unveil the various ways in which journalists actively engage with other participants involved in the promotion of musical events. Consequently, interactions that often remain concealed in the final journalistic output are brought to light through these mentions.

For example, many tweets include mentions that serve as indicators of a journalist's presence at a music event. These mentions frequently encompass references to the music festival itself, and on occasion, the journalist may incorporate details pertaining to their employing organization or colleagues who are concurrently participating in or contributing to the journalist's coverage.<sup>1</sup>

This is exemplified in a tweet published by a radio journalist who shares a photo of a concert in a concise message, enabling her to announce a broadcast scheduled for the following day (<Sampha at the beach. At @eurockeennes And tomorrow night on @franceinter @JocelynInter>, <https://twitter.com/RebeccaManzoni/status/1014938077993799682>). Occasionally, tweets of this nature, in which the mentions serve as a testament to the work accomplished and a means of dissemination also include a link to the produced news piece (<My article on Rhoda Scott who captivated the audience at @jazzalavillette, surrounded by her talented Ladies All Stars. What energy at 80 years old!>, <https://twitter.com/i/web/status/1038738506066145280>).

Furthermore, in many instances, these tweets establish visible connections with news intermediaries such as PR officers, who typically remain inconspicuous in the realm of newswork. Those mentioned in are accorded recognition for their contribution to the journalist's work. This is exemplified in a tweet promoting an interview with a festival director that mentions a music producer, an independent PR professional, and the tourist office of the host city (<Read my interview with Florence Jeux, director of

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<sup>1</sup> In the subsequent paragraphs, we include quotations from tweets sourced from our corpus, originally composed in French and translated into English by us. We have verified that, as of September 2023, these tweets remain publicly accessible.

@francofolies: "We want to remain a popular festival that brings together all generations" @flojeux @gerardpont @MissBatcave #Francos2018 @LaRochelle\_OT>, <https://twitter.com/i/web/status/1038738506066145280>).

Additionally, other tweets feature mentions of colleagues engaged in peer-to-peer conversations, such as those between two journalists employed by the same local newspaper who engage in banter regarding the latest article by one of them (<@Charrues When @mlouedec1 recommends a Joe Dassin t-shirt to go with this year's theme, Indian (summer) 🤔 #Charrues #VieillesCharrues #Charrues18>, [https://twitter.com/We\\_Culte/status/1017141093421502465](https://twitter.com/We_Culte/status/1017141093421502465)).

The dataset was then shortened to 16 festivals to minimize false-positive issues from unspecific hashtags. It represents a total of 83,800 tweets posted by 36,999 profiles. Additional information on these festivals, such as their year of establishment, number of spectators, and duration, were found on their official websites and in press archives.

**Table 1. Festivals and their most important characteristics**

Festival	Type	Created (year)	Duration (days)	Spectators	Tweets	Official tweets	Tweeting profiles	Tweets by spectator	Tweets by user
charrues	pop-rock	1992	4	280000	15821	136	8742	0.06	1.8
francofolies	pop-rock	1985	5	150000	7179	299	2870	0.05	2.5
eurockeenes	pop-rock	1988	4	135000	6065	188	2656	0.04	2.3
lolla	pop-rock	2017	2	120000	11350	144	6465	0.10	1.8
cabaret_vert	pop-rock	2005	4	94000	15289	959	5079	0.16	3.0
rock_en_seine	pop-rock	2003	3	90000	12262	137	7655	0.14	1.6
musilac	pop-rock	2000	3	55000	3267	144	1210	0.06	2.7
cabaret_frappe	pop-rock	1998	5	50000	137	0	71	0.00	1.9
Mean pop-rock			3.8	121750	8921.3	250.9	4343.5	0.08	2.2
aix	classic	1948	21	86337	2594	113	930	0.03	2.8
laroque	classic	1980	40	80000	995	109	361	0.01	2.8
verbier	classic	1994	18	45000	1196	101	486	0.03	2.5
choregies	classic	1971	16	40000	556	3	278	0.01	2.0
chaise_dieu	classic	1966	12	22000	460	92	175	0.02	2.6
Mean classic			21.4	54667.4	1160.2	83.6	446	0.02	2.54
marciac	jazz	1978	15	240000	4221	198	1510	0.02	2.8
vienne	jazz	1981	15	222000	1119	92	570	0.01	2.0
juan	jazz	1960	10	26000	1564	128	855	0.06	1.8
Mean jazz			13.3	162666.7	2301.3	139.3	978.3	0.03	2.2
<b>Mean Total</b>			<b>177</b>	<b>1735337</b>	<b>84075</b>	<b>2860</b>	<b>36999</b>	<b>0.049</b>	<b>2.3</b>

**Table 1** shows some crucial differences between festivals. The first pertains to duration, size, and visibility. Pop-rock festivals tend to be concentrated on shorter durations and attract many spectators (compared not only to classical music especially but also to jazz if one considers the fact that jazz festivals are held at a much longer duration). They are also much more visible on Twitter, with a mean total tweet count of 8921.3 (compared with 2301.3 for jazz festivals and 1160.2 for classical music festivals). A second key difference concerns the relation between physical spectators and digital ones. Pop-rock festivals, besides producing many tweets, also have a high degree of online mobilization compared with their physical audience. The tweet/spectator ratio during pop-rock festivals is 4 times higher than for classical music festivals and 2.7 times for jazz festivals. This could be explained by the active production of tweets by the festivals' organizers and the official festival accounts. The number of official tweets is far more important in pop-rock festivals (twice as much for jazz festivals and three



times more than those for classical music festivals). They are thus more likely to produce retweets and mentions in our dataset. Finally, we observe a third interesting phenomenon in **Table 1**: the mean number of tweets sent by a user about a festival is not significantly different regarding festival types.

The next step in our methodology was to recode Twitter users into categories based on their self-definition. First, we read the descriptions of all accounts that sent more than five tweets during the selected festivals and, based on those accounts, produced the first version of the categories. Then we searched for words that belong to those categories in all the descriptions including those from accounts with fewer than five tweets but whose descriptions contain explicit biographical cues, and coded the profiles accordingly (for example, to recode the musicians' accounts, we systematically searched for terms designating specialties in this field, such as "pianist" or "singer".) This approach, though not perfect, was intended to prevent an elitist closure of the sample of accounts studied that would have derived from the selection of only the most active or followed accounts. The recoding was carried out by a single person in order to avoid intercoder reliability issues. The recoded profiles (8% of the total) authored 24.7% of the tweets posted during the festivals. The profiles were recoded into 10 exclusive categories (see **Table 2**).

**Table 2. Twitter profile activity categories**

Activity	n profiles	% of recoded users	n tweets	%	Description
Journalists	611	21.29	2219	10.71	Individual profiles of journalists (reporters, editors, etc.). Includes radio producers or hosts and journalism students but not photographers.
Musicians	397	13.83	1718	8.29	Professional musicians' profiles. Includes "artists" and "sound designers" and all profiles that mention a recent album or concert. Does not include profiles of musicians mentioning another activity.
Amateurs	365	12.72	3387	16.35	Personal profiles presenting themselves either as music lovers or fans of an artist.
Influencers	349	12.16	1988	9.60	Individual profiles mentioning a personal blog or a YouTube channel (on any subject). Does not include Instagrammers.
Photographers	322	11.22	1224	5.91	Does not include profiles of photographers mentioning also another activity.
Sponsors and corporate accounts	307	10.70	2188	10.56	Profiles (official or personal) that can be associated with companies (including music industry companies) or local administrations. Includes other festivals' accounts.
Media	260	9.06	3555	17.16	Official profiles of national and local media (radio stations, TV stations, web media, and printed press)
Politicians	195	6.79	543	2.62	Elected persons (mayors, members of parliament, etc.)
Official accounts and staff members	64	2.23	3890	18.78	Profiles that can be linked to the festivals' organizing teams (directors, technicians, etc.). Includes community managers and PR officers working for the festivals.
Not coded	34129	—	63088	—	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36999</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>83800</b>		

### 3. Analysis

#### 3.1. Tweeting patterns among music festival attendants

Adding the number of tweets sent per profile during the summer, we find it unsurprising that the most active accounts were the official festival accounts or those of the organizing teams (representing 22 of the first 100 accounts). This is followed by accounts of media firms (20 of the first 100), music amateurs

(15 of the first 100), sponsors and companies (7 of the first 100), influencers (7 of the first 100), photographers (4 of the first 100), journalists (3 of the first 100), and musicians (2 of the first 100).

Focusing on individual—as opposed to institutional—profiles, one would observe that journalists are not the most active in the online music scene. They are in fact far behind fans and influencers. This result is apparent in the second column of **Table 3**, which shows the average number of tweets sent by Twitter profiles based on their category. Journalists posted an average of only 3.6 tweets during the festival season, far below official accounts (60.8) and the media (13.7) but also below music fans (9.3) and influencers (5.7). Only politicians (2.8) and the general audience of festivals (1.8) tweeted less than journalists. Hence, the first result of our research is that the event-based approach to Twitter use by people who report and comment on music does not show robust activity among journalists in this arena. Despite being well represented as individuals during the festivals, journalists produced a small volume of tweets compared to those produced by new cultural intermediaries such as music amateurs and influencers.

Other metrics can help describe journalists' Twitter practices as opposed to other profile categories found during music festivals. Their seniority (defined as the number of days since their profiles were created) is important and brings them closer to institutional or media profiles than to other individual profiles. Meanwhile, their network of followers, while on average higher than those of influencers or music fans, is much lower than those of institutional accounts, media, companies, or elected officials.

**Table 3**

user. activity	n profile s	mean tweets during festivals	median. tweets since creation	median. followers	median followed	p. verified	mean. seniority	p. is_RT	p. is_RE	p. @
corporate	307	7.1	3809	2457	594	0.26	2163	0.51	0.08	0.93
influencers	349	5.7	8289	650	513	0.02	2182	0.51	0.20	0.92
journalists	611	3.6	5012	986	789	0.10	2522	0.47	0.13	0.93
media	260	13.7	10222	5073	725	0.27	2511	0.46	0.04	0.91
music amateurs	365	9.3	6386	321	384	0.01	1862	0.64	0.19	0.97
musicians	397	4.3	2577	1191	377	0.17	2303	0.64	0.10	0.98
officials and staff	64	60.8	2470	1362	404.5	0.17	2554	0.50	0.14	0.83
photographers	322	3.8	4490	326	378	0.00	2161	0.39	0.27	0.93
politicians	195	2.8	4147	1369	794	0.19	2125	0.75	0.06	0.97
other	34129	1.8	3553	197	234	0.007	1671	0.63	0.18	0.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>36999</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>3665</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>0.016</b>	<b>1717</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.95</b>

**Table 3** also describes the practices of linking and sharing authority using the metrics provided by Twitter's API for each tweet. Through these aggregated metrics, the practice of retweeting (measured by the probability that a tweet is a retweet) is rather low among journalists, photographers, and the media, three categories whose likelihood of tweets being retweets is lower than 50%. Music amateurs, musicians, and politicians, for instance, have higher retweeting probabilities. In addition, responding to other tweets is unevenly distributed between categories. While institutions such as businesses and the media but also politicians scarcely reply to tweets, influencers (20% of replies) and photographers (27%) do it frequently. Journalists have an intermediary rate of reply (13%).

In addition, **Table 3** shows a homogeneous probability that a tweet contains a mention. On average, all categories of actors have mention rates close to 90% (except official festival accounts at only 83%). However, this result is probably due to the data collection method, which is based on the selection of tweets that mention official festival accounts or hashtags. Hence, more information can be gained by

observing the intensity of mentioning practices (i.e., the number of mentions by account) rather than their probability and by differentiating between outgoing mentions (mentions made to other accounts) and incoming mentions (mentions by other accounts) for each category of users. The results are presented in **Table 4** below.

**Table 4**

profile activity	mean out mention	mean in mention	in/out mention
corporate	17.1	43.4	2.53
influencers	12.7	18.7	1.47
journalists	8.5	14.8	1.75
media	31.0	62.0	2.00
music amateurs	23.1	15.8	0.68
musicians	11.7	75.2	6.45
officials and staff	116.7	1466.6	12.56
photographers	9.9	40.4	4.08
politicians	6.8	12.2	1.78
other	4.1	6.6	1.62

As shown in **Table 4**, we measured the authority of a group of Twitter users through the in.mentions/out.mentions ratio. Journalists enjoyed a higher degree of authority during music festivals as music amateurs, who were the only group whose mentions were less frequent than their act of mentioning (in/out\_mention < 1). However, their authority level was far lower than those of corporate accounts, the media, musicians, and photographers (official accounts are excluded for the methodological reason mentioned above). This shows that journalists seem to hold a minimal level of authority on the platform based on the definition of authority as the in/out\_mention ratio. Corporate or managed accounts (those of not only organizations but also musicians and photographers) were more mentioned than their act of mentioning. Even the media as institutions do not enjoy a particularly high authority on Twitter according to this measure.

### **3.2. A bounded authority trade**

The question remains whether journalists use Twitter as a boundary drawing tool. To find out the answer, we measured the distribution of mentions between account categories in **Table 5**. The diagonal of this table shows the endogenous mentions by different categories of actors to members of the same group. We used these figures as measures of the boundary work performed by the actors in the music scene: the more they mentioned their peers, the higher the boundary they draw with other actors. Event promoters had the highest level of endogenous mentions (25.8) and were inclined to mention their own accounts or those of other festivals. Music lovers, meanwhile, had the lowest level of endogenous mentions (4.0). Journalists also had a low level of endogenous mentions (8.0%), which was close to that of influencers, photographers, businesses, and elected officials. Musicians and media had a higher level, which, as in the case of official accounts, is probably linked to their professional account management.

Focusing on journalists' accounts, we observed that they under-mentioned not only corporate accounts (2.0%, which is half the average share of mentions given to corporate accounts) but also influencers (0.7%), music amateurs (0.4%), musicians (5.5%), and photographers (0.5%). In contrast, they over-mentioned the media (13.6%, almost three times more than the average share of mentions given to the media). Therefore, journalists tend to distribute authority to the media. However, the opposite is not true; official media accounts do not mention journalists more than other types of accounts such as those

of musicians or politicians, for example. In some ways, the relation between journalists and the media is similar to the one between music fans and musicians. The former tends to over-mention the latter but do not receive the same authority credit from musicians.

The hypothesis regarding authority sharing along professional boundaries on Twitter must therefore be nuanced. Journalists have a robust commitment to giving authority to the media as an institution, assigning close to 25% of the authority they distribute to either journalists or the media. Yet, they have low endogenous mentioning practices, similar to those of influencers, photographers, or politicians (less than 10% of endogenous mentions).

**Table 5. Who mentions whom?<sup>2</sup>**

Activity of the mentioning profile	Activity of the mentioned profile										
	corporate	influencers	journalists	media	music amateurs	musicians	officials and staff	photographers	politicians	other	ensemble
corporate	9.3	1.6	2.2	6.2	0.3	5.4	30.1	0.8	0.1	43.9	100.0
influencers	5.2	7.2	2.6	4.7	0.8	7.2	32.0	0.8	0.1	39.4	100.0
journalists	2.0	0.7	8.0	13.6	0.4	5.5	30.3	0.5	0.2	38.9	100.0
media	1.8	0.6	2.5	16.5	0.3	6.0	28.0	0.2	0.1	44.0	100.0
music amateurs	3.1	0.6	2.1	6.0	4.0	11.1	33.0	1.2	0.0	38.9	100.0
musicians	2.2	0.9	2.7	6.6	1.2	14.9	22.6	0.9	0.1	47.9	100.0
officials and staff	4.1	1.3	1.9	6.3	0.9	8.9	25.8	0.7	0.2	49.9	100.0
photographers	3.6	1.6	0.9	2.5	0.9	7.0	32.0	6.5	0.0	44.9	100.0
politicians	8.2	0.4	2.7	5.0	0.1	2.6	27.0	0.4	7.0	46.6	100.0
other	4.0	0.9	1.3	4.2	0.9	8.9	36.1	1.5	0.3	41.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 6** provides the symmetrical information on the origin of the mentions made to different actor categories. It shows that journalists' mentions come more frequently from the media (6.2% of received mentions) than it is true in general (4.2%). However, they received much fewer mentions from uncategorized users (57.7%—the lowest rate of all profile categories—as opposed to 74.8% for the average share of mentions received from uncategorized profiles). The mentions received by the media from uncategorized users (60.3%) were also scant. Journalists and the media in general received the least number of mentions from anonymous Twitter profiles. Even influencers received a bit more mentions from the public. Meanwhile, journalists and the media were over-mentioned by most of the other identified users. The opposite is true for official accounts and staff, which were over-mentioned by anonymous accounts.

**Table 6. Who is mentioned by whom?**

Activity of the mentioning profile	Activity of the mentioned profile										
	corporate	influencers	journalists	media	music amateurs	musicians	officials and staff	photographers	politicians	other	ensemble
corporate	6.5	4.2	3.6	3.3	0.9	1.7	2.4	1.7	1.3	2.9	2.8
influencers	3.0	15.9	3.7	2.1	1.9	1.9	2.2	1.4	0.5	2.2	2.3
journalists	1.4	1.7	12.9	7.0	1.1	1.7	2.4	1.0	1.8	2.5	2.7

<sup>2</sup> We have highlighted cells in order to better visualize the intensity of mentioning practices. Undermentioned groups (less than 50% of average mentions share) are in Dark blue, slightly undermentioned in light blue, slightly overmentioned in light red and overmentioned (more than twice the average mention share) in dark red.

media	1.9	2.6	6.2	13.2	1.1	2.9	3.4	0.7	0.9	4.4	4.2
music amateurs	3.5	2.7	5.7	5.1	17.8	5.7	4.3	4.0	0.7	4.2	4.5
musicians	1.4	2.2	4.0	3.1	2.9	4.3	1.6	1.7	0.5	2.8	2.5
officials and staff	3.8	4.6	4.2	4.4	3.3	3.8	2.8	1.9	2.7	4.4	3.7
photographers	1.5	2.6	0.9	0.8	1.6	1.3	1.6	7.9	0.0	1.8	1.7
politicians	1.5	0.3	1.2	0.7	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.2	16.4	0.8	0.7
other	75.5	63.1	57.7	60.3	69.4	76.4	78.6	79.4	75.2	74.1	74.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 4. Discussion

Securing their professional authority has been a challenge for journalists before the advent of social media. As stated already in the 1980s, “journalists always enjoy a precarious authority with their readers. In the most stable of times, their accounts are frequently challenged” (Eason, 1986). Our results highlight the continued fragility of journalists’ jurisdiction over their news gathering and sharing activity in the platformized information world. Their claim of authority over music, which we have measured here using one social network, is limited by the relative weakness of the mentions they receive compared to those they grant. It is also weakened by their limited ability to define the boundaries of their professional group on this network through endogenous mentioning practices and by the weakness of the authority conferred on them by the network’s anonymous—but numerous—users as opposed to institutional ones.

Following the event-oriented approach that we propose in this paper, social media platforms such as Twitter do not contribute to increasing journalists’ boundary work and dissemination of professional authority. Our results might be limited by the choices made in terms of journalistic beat (music), social media platform (Twitter) and authority trading proxy (mentions). These choices make sense insofar as we wanted to contrast existing results in the literature drawn from more legitimate beats such as politics, to choose one of the most used platforms among journalists and the music industry and finally to select a practice connecting people rather than messages. Our results should thus question those produced by more journalist-oriented perspectives that might conduct to exaggerate the reality of the boundary work journalists perform online.

Finally, the limitations observed in the trading of journalistic authority on Twitter questions the structure of this new public sphere. On the one side, direct trade of mentions between sources (festival organizers and musicians in this study) and the public seems overwhelming on social media platforms such as Twitter. On the other side, in line with previous research (Smith and Matthews, 2010 ; Kristensen et al., 2021), our results highlight the importance of new cultural intermediaries such as amateurs and influencers on the platformized culture scene. The latter effectively perform boundary work by over-mentioning within their group. They also receive more mentions than average from corporate and official accounts.

On a more theoretical level, we have employed the concept of authority trading among contributors to cultural critique to emphasize that authority in the public sphere is inherently relational. Our data has revealed numerous instances of such trading within the realm of music journalism, often intertwined with the routine professional practices encapsulated in the “social drama of work” that journalists navigate (Hughes, 1937). From our perspective, the acquisition, maintenance, and loss of journalistic authority transpire through such interactions (such as mentioning someone in a tweet during a festival), rather than being a consequence of external changes, such as the emergence of social media platforms

or shifts in public opinion on journalists. In this regard, journalistic authority appears to us as much "journalistical" than "metajournalistical" in nature (Carlson, 2014).

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper delves into the domain of Twitter mentions to shed light on the construction of journalists' authority. By examining relational information derived from mentioning habits in tweets, we aim to grasp the intricacies of journalists' authority within the platformized music scene. Our deliberate departure from conventional studies on the epistemic and reflexive manifestations of journalists' authority challenges the prevailing notion of this authority being sustained through rhetorical boundary work. Instead, drawing on the interactionist tradition that views professional identity as an outcome of the 'social dramas of work' structures, we advocate for considering journalists' authority as a result of a sophisticated system of mutual recognition nurtured through the everyday and mundane exchange of signals — here mentions — on social media platforms.

Our research has limitations such as the sole reliance on data from a specific social media platform, its limitation to a (small) portion of the journalism world, a lack of knowledge of the personal characteristics of the actors, and our inability to reconstruct material interactions accompanying online exchanges in the work environment of journalists. We are also particularly aware of the specificities of music journalism, including the significance of time-limited events such as festivals in this journalistic beat and the professionalization of other actors besides journalists, such as musicians and sponsors.

In spite of these limitations, this study emphasizes the importance of the exchange of journalists' authority within social media and encourages its exploration through the traces they leave on these platforms. Therefore, our findings underscore the relevance of social media data amassed by platforms like Twitter as a valuable resource for social science research.<sup>3</sup> The insights derived from digital platform data offer a nuanced understanding of journalists' ability to exert influence over social issues, not only in their interactions with public authorities or sociologists but also in their daily professional routines.

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<sup>3</sup> The dataset employed in this research was acquired during a period when Twitter data could be conveniently retrieved through the platform's API, notably its academic API introduced in January 2021. However, this API is not currently accessible for public research endeavors anymore. This presents a noteworthy constraint for prospective studies aimed at investigating online boundary work and other social phenomena related to the platform. It also raises concerns regarding the replicability of such investigations.

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