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JOURNALISTIC CHAMPS AND PORNOGRAPHIC CHUMS

Hefner's and Flynt's Obituaries and the Boundaries of Journalism

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Abstract: This article examines journalism's relationship with pornographic publications. This article focuses on Hugh Hefner, Larry Flynt, and their empires. I examine the discourse about the two by analyzing fifty-nine obituaries (thirty-nine for Hefner and twenty for Flynt). I argue the two represent the complicated boundary between the institution of journalism and the industry of pornography. Hefner and *Playboy* are considered journalistic and celebrated for innovative approaches to photography and historically significant reporting and writing. The recognition of the two situates them as a necessary social capital, despite the criticism of the depictions of women in the magazine's pages. Flynt, despite his identification as a First Amendment champion, is yoked to his social deviance. *Hustler*'s explicit and graphic content is not celebrated; instead, it is negated. Therefore, Flynt and his publication are positioned outside of journalism's boundaries. Ultimately, the legacies of the two as pornography giants are remembered differently: one as a complicated member of the journalism community and the other as the man who stuck a woman in a meat grinder.

Keywords: Journalism Studies, Pornographic Magazines, Boundaries, Metajournalistic Discourse, Hugh Hefner, Larry Flynt

Introduction

The passing of media moguls Hugh Hefner (September 27, 2017) and Larry Flynt (February 10, 2021) generated worldwide headlines and high-profile obituaries. The world defined the two by their lavish and controversial lifestyles, multimillion-dollar brands, and contributions to the magazine and pornography industries. The two built branded media and marketing

empires on the breasts of their nude centerfolds. Hefner's Playboy enterprises extended beyond the magazine's pages to clothing, jewelry, cigarette lighters, and more. The Playboy Bunny became an iconic symbol in pop culture (Beggan and Allison 2001). The Playboy name featured prominently on television—*The Girls Next Door*—and on film—*House Bunny*. Flynt's Hustler began not from the same journalistic roots as Hefner but instead emerged from Flynt's ownership of a strip club. His brand became more pervasive in the sex industry, where the Hustler name is attached to adult films, sex toys, and lingerie.

Playboy's work is seen more conservatively compared to *Hustler*, which featured more explicit nudity and graphic sex acts than the former's pictorial presentation (Dines and Perea 2005). Flynt's publication wasn't shy about its pornographic attachment and extreme depictions of sexual acts (Kipnis 1999). *Playboy* mixed visual content with political commentary, literary fiction—one of the most notable being the publishing of *Fahrenheit 451*—and their iconic interviews. *Hustler*, by contrast, was known for their "Asshole of the Month" column and the Honey Hooker and Chester the Molester comics.

The two are featured prominently in men's magazine history (Kipnis 1999; Beggan and Allison 2001; Streittmatter 2004; Dines and Perea 2005; Dines 2011; Reynolds 2017). The *Columbia Journalism Review* pointed out that Hefner "did a lot of great journalism" (M. Dalton 2017); Dublin's *The Independent* called *Playboy* "among the most respected publications in American journalism" (2008). Flynt advocated for the First Amendment and progressive causes (Dines 2011). Because of their established presence in journalism, this article looks at the obituaries of Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynt to understand their journalistic legacies in terms of how members of the journalism community define Flynt's and Hefner's places in the profession and determine how their pornographic works can or cannot fit within journalism's normative boundaries. This project attempts to (1) analyze the legitimizing qualities of an obituary and how it can be used to understand the boundaries of journalism and (2) examine how actors defined as deviant in the public sphere contribute to the construction of professional boundaries and values. Therefore, I ask, How does the journalistic discourse in the obituaries of Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynt position Hefner and Flynt as journalists and situate pornographic magazines in relation to journalism's institutional boundaries?

The work in this article begins by contextualizing these questions within

the scholarly literature on metajournalistic discourse, collective memory, and the obituary. To explain the relevance of Hefner and Flynt to journalistic boundary work, I conducted a textual analysis of the obituaries of both men who appeared in prominent journalistic venues in the two weeks following their deaths. Through that analysis, both men emerged as contributors to the journalism profession, with Flynt positioned outside of the boundaries; Hefner, however, existed absent of a binary and moved freely between the institute of journalism and the pornography industry. This analysis is not to say both either belong or neither belong within the boundaries of journalism, but rather to explore how journalistic voices remembered both men. And in those memories, do the obituary writers provide context as to where, in relation to journalism's boundaries, either man and their publication belong? My article closes where it begins: understanding how, in death, we can understand the values of life. The conclusion of this manuscript provides journalism's epitaph for the two pornographic publication giants: Flynt's excision from and Hefner's celebration within the collective memory of the journalism community.

The Collective Memory of Journalism and the Obituary

A great deal of work is done to cognize journalism's knowledge of itself as a profession. Much of this is done through boundary work within journalism studies. Conceptually, this study is first rooted in metajournalistic discourse, which allows for an argument about the definitional work done through the public dialogue of and within journalism. Second, interrogating the concept of collective memory in journalism provides a discussion of how these definitions are internalized and naturalized, thus allowing journalists to recognize their position and standing (Meyers 2007). Third, identifying the obituary as a means of both collective memory and legitimation in journalism creates the base for this article's methodological and analytical work.

Metajournalistic Discourse

Journalism's unique position as the first draft of history allows it to be seen as a sense-making profession that has the privilege of maintaining democracy and social order (Deuze 2007), therefore creating a collective

memory (Zelizer 2004). The sense-making is part of a public process of interpreting events and a means by which the profession comprehends itself. Metajournalistic discourse establishes that journalism supplies knowledge of events and materializes from a journalist's interpretive process used to make meaning of their role within the world (Zelizer 1993, 2007; Carlson 2016). Through metajournalistic discourse, journalism uses normative language to identify members of its profession. This is reinforced through inculcating events that create belonging (Couldry 2002). And that belonging allows for definitional and boundary work to be done. Through that, the journalism profession is legitimized, and authority is given to the journalists who are a part of it (Carlson 2016). Journalists then become a community, and how that community creates discourse needs to be understood (Berkowitz 2000; Koliska et al. 2020; Buozis et al. 2021). Journalists construct this discourse and community by establishing symbols, forming borders, and marking off deviant actors from within the profession and outside of it (Carlson 2016).

As the field of journalism evolves, there is an increased need to respond critically to how the journalistic space is occupied. Metajournalism research into different sites extends beyond traditional journalistic sources like newspapers to include media-centric blogging (Vos et al. 2012) and popular culture (Ferrucci 2018). The sites in which the discourse occurs provide means of defining journalism further, reframing its boundaries, and legitimizing its authority (Carlson 2016). This type of discourse can occur in several places, including obituaries. Journalism can be read, consumed, and conversed about just about anywhere, and thus, place can often be seen as lacking specificity or emphasis.

As a result of the evolving system, journalists will continue to dispute who and what belongs within the boundaries of the profession (Lewis 2012). Boundary work, journalistic interpretation, and paradigm repair are three discursive ways in which this negotiation occurs (Carlson 2016). The three interrelated elements do two things: engage the journalism community in a conversation with and about itself and provide a definition of journalism to the public (Berkowitz 2000). Journalists use their authority culturally to provide and decide on meanings of events (Carlson 2007), which are therefore interpreted and situated within a collective memory (Zelizer 1993). This process of situating normative boundaries within the profession

and, therefore, publicly acting on and performing them results in collective memories being developed and sustained.

Collective Memory and Journalism

The concept of collective memory is "as much about current needs as about the events and people of the past" (Hume 2010, 182). It serves as a repository of society's ability to remember and forget the past and a chance for society to respond to the present and the future by thinking critically about those past events (Edy 1999). Collective memory is traditionally created and reinforced by elites using metaphors and symbols (Neiger 2020), but evolving contexts see it constructed by multiple perspectives and voices. This diversity in perspective and the evolution of media messages allowed for collective memory research to evolve (Ashuri 2005). Media has become the "primary means by which most people understand the past" (Kitch 2006, 94).

Journalism is also the second draft of history in creating collective memory. Journalism and collective memory allow for deeper thinking about how the past makes meaning in and for the present. Journalism's capability to remember the past and provide perspective on the future allows it to be creatively used to circuitously contribute to collective memory (Zelizer 1995, 2008). The work journalism can do within collective memory has the power to shape public agendas (Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2013) and raise "the public awareness of a common past" (Lang and Lang 1989, 126).

Journalism can, therefore, create a collective memory of itself as a profession. This means journalism can define news practices publicly, and, important to this article, magazine journalism is integral to the construction of America's story (Kitch 2005; Winfield and Hume 2007). Engaging with journalism as collective memory, journalistic texts can be seen as authority building for the journalism community (Edy 1999). As journalists publicly ask questions about who qualifies as a journalist and how the boundaries of journalism are established (Deuze 2003; Singer 2003), the use of collective memory becomes a strategy to "construct narratives about their past to support their legitimacy and relevancy in the present" (Carlson 2010, 237). This can be seen through the study of obituaries. Obituaries have served as a key conduit of collective memory in US society and in constructing journalism's collective memory.

The Intersection of Journalism and Society's Collective Memory: Obituaries, Bunnies, and Honeys

The obituary is a modern form and component of collective memory (Casey 1987; Connerton 1989). Obituaries emerged as a way for the elite to shape worldviews, or at least perceptions of elites within an aristocratic world, and "contribute a vital resource for actively shaping and demystifying collective memory" (Ricoeur 2000, cited in Fowler 2005, 61). The obituary presents meaning and purpose to the person's life yet situates itself in a position of authority as a lasting element of judgment. At the turn of the twentieth century, obituaries shifted focus and content, and collective memory became inclusive of more voices (Hume 2000). This would include those who were considered "dissident" (Fowler 2005, 62) and would often be more individualized and contribute to the framework of social institutions (Connerton 1989). Despite changes, the obituary "still mainly derives from a bourgeois world" (Fowler 2005, 62) and is a product of those who either receive an elite education or come from privilege, which predominantly includes cultural producers.

Given that those who are eulogized in an obituary are, as Hume (2000) posits, modern heroes, the narratives are often celebratory despite the possibility of deviant acts. The death of prominent journalists allows for occasions in which past and present can come to terms with one another, often in the form of an obituary (Schudson 1992; Fowler 2005). This type of journalistic discourse discusses shared norms and values of the profession and reaffirms the boundaries of the profession to the public. Collective memory allows this to occur (Carlson 2007). Previous research about eulogizing journalists through coverage or obituary provided context to how journalists shaped the collective memory of journalism and provided definitional control, boundary reinforcement, and legitimation for journalism. This includes television journalists being remembered for their unique moment in mass communication history (Carlson and Berkowitz 2011), reinforcement of authority through the memories of journalists like Mary McGrory and David Brinkley (Carlson 2007), and the role of American (Carlson 2006) and Israeli (Avital-BenAtar 2020) journalists in wartime coverage. Journalists wrote obituaries about their colleagues to maintain relevance and enhance cultural authority. This allowed for an acknowledgment of history but also a challenge to the profession's future (Avital-BenAtar

2000). Therefore, the obituaries of these media figures become moral tales and a means by which the profession and its audience can address shared values and define the practices for social good (Kitch 2005). As journalists employ this memorializing and commemorative discourse (Edy 1999), they engage in metajournalistic discourse (Carlson 2016; Avital-BenAtar 2020). The metajournalistic discourse constitutes boundary work, creating bounds journalists work within or are discursively situated outside of the profession. Notably, this body of scholarship does not include the likes of Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynt, highly controversial figures in the world of magazine journalism and pornography. Instead, research tends to focus on members of the traditional news community, both in print and broadcast.

The use of common narrative structures reinforces the opportunity for journalists to contribute to the collective memory by providing lessons or morals while also shaping how people remember public life or mediated events (Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger 2015). Because of this, I analyzed the obituaries of cultural icons like Hefner and Flynt to find out how the two are defined or legitimized as journalists and to determine if journalism's boundaries could include pornographic publications. In academic and popular discourse, Hefner and Flynt are identified as deviant actors (Kipnis 1999; Beggan and Allison 2001; Streittmatter 2004; Dines and Perea 2005; Dines 2011; Reynolds 2017). This is seen in how they both violated accepted norms, which Reese (1990) identifies as imperative to identifying deviance within the profession. Research about journalistic deviance emphasizes the need to expose "normally hidden conflicts within journalism" (Carlson 2014, 36). Journalistic misconduct is where journalism communities attempt to right their wrongs by publicly defining appropriate practices. When deviance in the profession exists, journalism will call attention to the acts or the tensions they create (Carlson 2012), excise that actor from the profession (Bennet et al. 1985), or utilize historical context and collective memory to provide context for a better future in journalism (Carlson 2014). In most circumstances, journalists will do their best to restore the profession's image publicly. This attention to the profession's credibility and authority usually results in paradigm repair (Reese 1990; Steiner et al. 2013).

When journalists reaffirm their values through the outing of deviant actors and their practices, values in journalism become increasingly more established and concrete (Vos et al. 2012). Frequent misconduct in the past concerns journalism communities and becomes a reason they come together to settle issues over definitional control (Carlson 2014), something

both Hefner and Flynt represent, although in different ways. Therefore, examining their obituaries is important. Was deviance revisited or evident? Was either man included within the definition of journalist to start with? Could the obituaries reveal a pushback on the normative boundaries and force them to be reconsidered and extended? How were these media figures discursively positioned in obituaries vis-à-vis journalism?

Method

Hefner and Flynt were chosen for this project because of their unique placement in the journalism community. First, both ran magazines identified as men's lifestyle magazines. Second, both magazines (*Playboy* and *Hustler*) were focuses of intense public scrutiny and critique for their pornographic content. Third, the role both men played as publishers, editors, and content producers of the magazines definitionally positioned them within the boundaries of journalism; however, the pornographic content in their magazines situates them outside of the normative values associated with journalism. Last, the pornographic content in their magazines is not fictitious; rather, it is pictorial and traditionally uses the real names and stories of the women featured. Both magazines featured news features, interviews with prominent figures, and traditional journalistic content outside the pictorials. Arguably, Hefner and Flynt attempted to position themselves and their publications that featured nude women and explicit content in their pages as journalistically valuable, defined, and legitimate (Streitmatter 2004). And the legacies of both men are situated within both collective memories of society and journalism. Given the obituary is a journalistic text and collective memory is an important component of boundary work, utilizing metajournalistic discourse as a framework for analysis is important to answering my research question.

To understand how journalism defines or legitimizes Hefner and Flynt in relation to its boundaries, this study uses a purposeful sample of obituaries published within fifteen days of their deaths. The obituaries come from mainstream journalism organizations: newspapers, magazines, publication websites, and trade publications. They were found through searches in Nexis Uni, ProQuest newspaper databases, Factiva, Apple News, and Google News. While searching, articles containing news coverage appeared. Those were discarded as obituaries are the unit of analysis for this project. Additionally, smaller publications picked up and published larger news

publications or wire service obituaries of Hefner and Flynt. To avoid repetition, duplicates were discarded from this analysis. It is also important to note that the term *obituary* used in this article is not a death notice or paid advertisement (Starck 2006, 2008). The search yielded fifty-nine texts for analysis (thirty-nine for Hefner and twenty for Flynt).

I evaluated these texts using a constant comparative approach (Maykut and Morehouse 2001) to identify how members of the journalism community defined Hefner's and Flynt's places in journalism while creating larger meanings about the boundaries of what types or genres of publication are included in journalism. The initial reading of the obituaries was solely for the familiarity with the content. I conducted a second reading using MAXQDA, a qualitative textual analysis software. Initial concepts, terms, and themes emerged by running frequencies of words and common word phrases. Using the computational results and initial reading as my guide, the third and fourth readings established, reiterated, and solidified themes from the obituaries that illuminated examples of boundary-building and deviance. The analysis and discussion of the obituaries concerning this question follows.

Strange Bedfellows: Journalism's Relationship with the Purveyors of the Bunnies and Honeys

Most obituaries described Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynt as civil libertarians. However, how journalism defines them, the question of this article, is where the similarities diverge. In my analysis, Hefner and Flynt are seen differently in the context of their obituaries. The obituary writers position Flynt outside the boundaries of journalism completely and share that he is tethered to them only because of his role as publisher of *Hustler* and his First Amendment battles. Hefner is more intricately intertwined with journalism, both by his history with it and his contributions to it. For Hefner, his career belongs within journalism's boundaries, but the *Playboy* brand and his lecherous lifestyle situate him outside the boundaries. While Flynt's career places him in an oppositional binary with the journalists who memorialize him, the collective memory established about Hefner is constructed to be as porous as the walls of his not-so-secret grotto.

Flynt: Porn's Fiddler on the Roof

Larry Flynt's obituaries all open with a variation of the following headline: Larry Flynt, founder of *Hustler* magazine and First Amendment cham-

pion, dies at seventy-eight. In all twenty instances, the journalists make clear why Flynt matters to the collective memory. Their headline writing doesn't include idioms or clichés. They don't write around a point or present vagueness through generic vocabulary or over-the-top adjectives. Flynt's relation to journalism emerges in the connection to his magazine and the First Amendment.

Obituary writers describe Flynt's experience leading *Hustler* magazine as publisher, not editor, as being full of "smut peddling" (Valentine 2021), "backwoods humor" (Tapp 2021), and "raunch" (Koseluk 2021). Flynt's work isn't explained as journalism, nor are terms related to journalistic production used to describe him or his publication. In fact, the word *journalism* is mentioned once in all twenty obituaries. That mention focuses on Flynt's response to *Playboy*'s use of journalism. The Times staff (2021) contextualizes Flynt as a publisher focused on "confrontational publishing" and "sick parodies and scatological humour." His attempts at "serious journalism" emerged after seeing his competition cover major events "such as the assassinations of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King and brutality in Vietnam." For Flynt, it wasn't journalism; it was business. His "journalism" is typified as "sensational and aggressive" rather than staid or appropriate. By 1978 he would forgo his attempt to compete with his journalistic counterpart, *Playboy*, and return to satire with a cover photo of a woman being fed into a meat grinder and an emphasis on "pink shots," "orgies," and "fetishes" (Rogers 2021; Reuters Staff 2021; Dickinson and Portwood 2021; Valentine 2021). Flynt returned to "salacious, satirical, perverse, decadent, gleefully immoral and hypocritical" coverage with "glossy, full-color photos of female genitalia, pictured naked women in demeaning poses and often depicted group sex and sex-toy fetishes" (McFadden 2021). Flynt would lean hard into the adult entertainment industry.

Flynt's battles for First Amendment freedoms, particularly freedom of speech, are where his impact is most significant. Nearly every obituary portrays Flynt as a First Amendment champion or advocate (Rogers 2021; Aquilina 2021; McFadden 2021). The obituary writers don't assign this definition by their own accord. Instead, the journalists positioned Flynt and the First Amendment in Flynt's voice. To Flynt, his being made "a free speech folk hero" meant that he was "admired" and "despised" (Ulaby 2021). His win in the courtroom allowed him to become more offensive in his magazine and the Hustler brand. Mossburg and Flynn (2021) write that Flynt believed "free speech is only important if it's offensive." Tapp (2021)

remembers Flynt for celebrating his free speech win, considering another issue he encountered: being shot by a white supremacist after *Hustler* published a photo of a black woman. The journalists do not inscribe Flynt as an advocate of free speech in his publishing of journalistic content but in his celebration of pornography. Roberts (2021) describes this as Flynt's desire to challenge power. The *Los Angeles Times* went so far as to connect Flynt's self-promoted advocacy to him being a "pornographer with a higher purpose" (Corwin 2021).

Hefner: Journalism's Rebel without a Cause

Hugh Hefner's place in journalism is more complicated than Flynt's. Where Flynt's only ties to journalism's boundaries are his role as publisher and his First Amendment case, Hefner's story is much more nuanced based on where in his career a journalist chooses to memorialize him. The beginning of Hefner's career, before he established the *Playboy* empire beyond the pages of the magazine, is heavily rooted in the boundaries of journalism. As his career developed, he responded flatly to his critics and spent more time on the bunny-laden brand than the magazine itself. Hefner's obituaries see him in a variety of ways, with pioneering journalist being one of them.

The obituary writers remember Hefner's connection to journalism as a role he's filled for decades, first as a cartoonist (Rall 2017; Woo 2017; Bursztynsky and Longo 2017) and then as an essayist who criticized the United States' conversations about sex (Convery 2017; The Telegraph Staff 2017; Feeney 2017; Jeffries 2017). The work propelled him into other journalistic venues, such as working for *Esquire* (Mansnerus 2017; Woo 2017) and *Children's Activities* magazines (Feeney 2017; Mansnerus 2017; Alpert 2017). His creation of *Playboy* magazine and his service as its editor-in-chief until his death is recognized as one of his most significant journalistic accomplishments by all thirty-nine journalists.

Playboy is postured as a journalistic outlet that provides a platform to famous writers and marginalized communities. Fallon (2017) writes that Hefner saw "what men's magazines could be: A place for men to be uninhibitedly men, and a place for serious, essential journalism and fiction" that included "hard-nosed reporting" compared to the "easy-reading journalism" of women's magazines. Hefner's work in journalism positions him as "an American icon" who "reshaped the cultural landscapes of modern

journalism" (USA Today Editors 2017). According to the obituaries, this reshaping emerged from Hefner's use of "iconic writers such as John Updike, Margaret Atwood, Kurt Vonnegut, and Ian Fleming" (Alpert 2017). It also is seen through the monthly *Playboy* interviews, an "extended question and answer format" (Feeney 2017) that writers describe as being innovative and "politically influential" (Steinberg 2017). This "thought-leading content" (Anderson 2017) legitimized *Playboy* in journalism because "People paid attention to what *Playboy* had to say" (Pitzulo 2017). The journalistic work, attuned to the time's cultural, political, and social issues, in *Playboy* challenged the status quo, and Hugh Hefner is personified as the root of it.

The obituaries describe Hefner's journalistic authority by the name—Hefner versus Hef—they use in conjunction with his legacy and work. Hefner is remembered as a journalist who is attached to the legacy of *Playboy* magazine. Hef is remembered as a chauvinist and misogynist. "Hefner" is attached to journalistic references in the obituaries. All seventy-seven uses of "Hef" in the obituaries are connected to issues of sex and lifestyle choices. Journalists privilege one's use over the other in his obituaries when discussing Hugh Hefner's connection to the journalism profession. Yet, the two names are as important to understanding Hefner's legacy as both ears are to the iconic bunny image. This delicate balance, which depends on which part of Hefner's career one identifies as more important, is why Hefner's relationship to journalism is difficult.

Like a rebel without a cause, Hefner was dissatisfied with the country's values. As a result, he created a men's magazine that advocated for change. Some journalists even posited he should be remembered within boundaries for his "journalistic advocacy" (Yarbrough 2017) and for privileging "journalism as activism" in his practice (Anderson 2017). He did this by publishing notable journalists and authors, pioneering the style of the *Playboy* interview, and providing a space for minority voices and images. However, as Hefner grew from "revolutionary" (Hartley 2017) to recluse (Alpert 2017), he became less of a rebel and more an adherent to the system he once fought against. As a result, journalism remembers Hefner as a member of its ranks for his commitment to quality journalism, his innovation in photography, and his dedication to diversity in his publication. In his obituaries, Hefner is a journalist who used pornography to capture his audience and tell the stories he wanted to read.

As Hefner's journalism became Hef's empire, his "lecherous, low brow Peter Pan" mentality began to emerge (Douthat 2017), and much of the

collective memory couples Hef with "unclothed wholesomeness" (Feeney 2017), tyranny (Douthat 2017; Heer 2017), sexism and objectification (Pitzulo 2017), and exploitation (Panko 2017). The obituary writers demarcate Hef as a deviant outside of its ranks because of his personal actions—not journalistic ones. The journalists share that this turn from emphasizing "serious, essential journalism" (Fallon 2017; Schudel 2017) to favoring "Bunnies turned bed partners" resulted from the "pubic wars" (Telegraph Staff 2017) with *Penthouse* and *Hustler* and "the feminist critique of *Playboy*" (Pollitt 2017) in the early to mid-1970s. At this time Hef still championed civil rights and provided a platform for marginalized voices in *Playboy* (Barber 2017). He also pushed back on the "'pink shots,' phallic objects, animals and group scenes" that were at the root of his "battle" with his competitors (Telegraph Staff 2017).

Even with the criticism of his behavior, "Hefner and *Playboy* remained brand names worldwide" (A. Dalton 2017). The journalists write that this empire evolved beyond the magazine into "the Big Media age" (Moran 2017), where Hef saw his *Playboy* "scrawling and iconic" (Saraiya 2017) brand including "film and print media products" (Jeffries 2017) becoming one of "the most recognized corporate brands in the world" (Alpert 2017). The journalists emphasize criticism of Hef because of his lavish lifestyle, but they rarely equate it to his professional journalism work with the magazine. Instead, they continually emphasize his dedication to the publication. After a stroke, Hefner "handed over control of his empire to his feminist daughter, Christie;" however, Hefner remained editor-in-chief and owned 70 percent of the Playboy enterprise (A. Dalton 2017). What is important is Dalton's choice to call Hefner's daughter a feminist. In Dalton's obituary, this language concludes his writing. Immediately preceding this thought, Dalton discusses Hef's checkered past with "sexual battery, gender violence, and other charges over an alleged 2008 rape at the Playboy Mansion." This includes reminding readers of Hef's friendship with Bill Cosby, "who faced dozens of such allegations" (A. Dalton). By reminding readers that Hefner not only was editor-in-chief but that the control of the brand was under a "feminist," Dalton seems to erase the criticism in favor of the past and future success of journalism under "editor-in-chief" Hugh Hefner. In effect, Dalton decides for the readers that what matters to the collective memory is that Hefner was a journalist with an iconic legacy and that Hef's debauchery is just a footnote easily corrected with the Band-Aid of feminism.

Rest in Peace: Journalism's Epitaph for Pornography's Giants

Journalism's memory of Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynt is complicated, and the boundary work isn't much simpler. Flynt is a publisher and a businessman. His work began and ended in the adult entertainment industry. Flynt is not a journalist. Hefner is a publisher and an editor-in-chief. His work began and ended in journalism, with ties to the adult entertainment industry. Hefner is a journalist; however, Hef is not. Journalists write that both men should be remembered as icons and titans of their industries. The obituary writers acknowledge Flynt for his contribution to speech and the First Amendment, but this contribution is yoked to his social deviance and need for self-promotion; they demarcate Hefner concerning his contribution to journalism through who he published and what he published.

For Flynt, the obituary writers didn't include his work as part of their community. Rather, they explain his work as purely pornographic. *Hustler* magazine is tied to deeply explicit content, or as one journalist put it: "features on kinkier sexual tastes and close-up photos that bordered on the gynecological" (Mansnerus 2017). Flynt's work was seen as laden with outrageous content that "made its competitor *Playboy* seem mild. Virtually nothing was off limits on *Hustler*'s pages, and Flynt made a point of publishing photos of women's genitalia" (Reuters Staff 2021). Given his attention to prurient and perspicuous detail, Flynt couldn't fit within the value-driven frameworks of journalism's normative boundaries. He is a "flamboyant crusader" (Dickinson and Portwood 2021) who took a single strip club and turned it into a pornographic empire. His work wasn't contributing to the betterment of society. He, as Andrea Dworkin once shared, is too rooted in pornography, which is not "great for women's equality or pleasure" (Pollitt 2021). Flynt's work reflects MacKinnon's (1993) concerns that pornography is very real and has real repercussions. Flynt's explicit depictions of women are visible violence against them and have the ability, as MacKinnon (1993) posits, to perpetuate violence beyond the glossy pages of *Hustler* magazine. In *Hustler*'s case, pornographic publications are not legitimized as journalism. If they are a detriment to society because of smut peddling (Kenning 2021) and disgusting the masses (Rogers 2021), pornographic publications cannot fall under the definition of journalism in the institution's collective memory. Instead, they will rest in peace outside journalism's bounds, especially financially. Flynt is a deviant, but not

a deviant among the obituary writers' ranks. Rather, he is a publisher of pornographic content and sometimes everyday magazines.

The journalists memorialize Hefner and *Playboy* differently than they do Flynt and *Hustler*. To start, Hefner's journalistic work is both journalistic and contributing to journalism. *Columbia Journalism Review* claims Hefner's *Playboy* "did a lot of great journalism" (M. Dalton 2017) and "printed more serious journalism and fiction than just about any other magazine publisher" (Vernon 2017). According to journalism's collective memory, as constructed by the obituary writers, by all accounts, Hefner and *Playboy* magazine belong within the boundaries of journalism—Hefner as a journalist and *Playboy* magazine, a men's magazine and not a pornography magazine, as a journalistic product. Seeing the two as journalistic relies on social good—emphasizing sex positivity (Rubin 1984) in the coverage, for example. Hefner's publishing of marginalized voices, attention to progressive causes, and engagement in the political and cultural discourse of society made him, as some journalists describe, a member of activism journalism. He produced work for a cause. The journalism Hefner is known for is respected, even if the lifestyle Hef is known for is not.

In this article I examined how journalists memorialized two media industry deviants: Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynt. The collective memory of journalism excludes one and complicates the other. It sees pornographic publications as being outside the bounds of journalism, but men's magazines that have pornographic images are within them. For journalism, boundary work is complex and requires the capability to talk openly and critically about the actors and non-actors contributing to the profession. In the case of Larry Flynt and Hugh Hefner, two moguls and cultural icons, journalism remembers them as making an impact—even if the memory isn't all that fond. This tells us something about what "journalism" is. It includes fields of what Bourdieu (1987) would call social capital even when women are sexualized and objectified as part of that practice, and it excludes texts in which women are sexualized and objectified in which these status fields are absent. It also means that there is a need to consider how we speak and write about journalistic actors who may not be placed in the hegemonic center of the institution despite their hegemonic identities.

This collective memory shows that the boundaries of journalism cannot be binary. It isn't necessarily a story of one being inside or outside them. Flynt's positioning is clearly outside of the boundaries. Like many others in the adult entertainment industry, he isn't seeking the validation of belonging to

the Fourth Estate. He sought to be an exemplar of the First Amendment, however. Hefner's place, on the other hand, is more nuanced. His juxtaposition within the boundaries of journalism depends on his role within the institution and his character outside of it. His activism journalism is celebrated in the obituaries. His work can be considered a precursor to the advocacy work being done in journalism now. Like Hefner, the personal decisions of modern journalists who engage in more activist approaches to journalism place them at odds with the old guard of the institution. Is Hefner's legacy, much more than that of Flynt, a way in which we can better understand the cohort of journalists currently challenging the system? Will their actions and character, like Hefner's, cause a deeper consideration of their placement and positioning within the collective memory of journalism? Hefner fought objectivity decades before its current battle, and his personal decisions as Hef nearly eclipse that historical success. While the behavior of Hef is vastly different from the racial empowerment of the Lowerys and Joneses, the treatment and attempted excision from journalism's institutional boundaries are similar. For the journalists making the activist move, Hefner's obituaries might be a place in which they can understand how their legacy may be understood in the future. Despite what *Playboy* contends, it's not all about the articles.

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