

“Without, the somber Real, Within, our hearts of hearts, the beautiful Ideal”¹

A note on some variations in journalistic ideals among Nordic journalism students.

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ABSTRACT

Using data from a websurvey of journalism students in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland (N=2183) in 2008, this paper presents two correspondence analyses: one of differences among the students in regard to their journalistic ideals and aspirations, another in regard to their prioritizing of news items. In both cases, the major differences (the axes) is discussed in relation to a variety of factors, including: national differences, the students social background and -trajectory (e.g. class background, gender, age, work experience etc.), current place of study, their journalistic aspiration (preferred work place) etc. Not unexpected, the analysis suggest the differences are the result of a complex relationship between national traditions, the students habitus, their aspirations and previous work experience etc.

INTRODUCTION

Georges Canguilhem advised that sociologists ought to be like pirates when it comes to methodology, seizing the opportunities at hand. In the course of the last 10 years I have been involved in various research projects related to the professional socialization of Norwegian/Nordic journalism students (Studdata 1999-, Hovdabrekka 2005-) and the logic and structure of the Norwegian journalistic field (Hovden 2008)². Through this work, a range of survey datasets with many identical or at least closely related questions have been produced, both longitudinal and national-comparative. More than the sum of their parts, I think these data together provides an unprecedented opportunity for statistical investigation of central practices and preferences of journalists. In a Bourdieuan perspective, the data offers among other things the opportunity to study the formation of professional values, in other words, to investigate the impermanent and contested border between the private and professional life. Also, the cross-national data provides an opportunity to ask whether there exist a common ‘Nordic journalism model’, with common ideas and ideals concerning what journalism – and journalists – ought to be, and to what this model should aspire, cf. (Hovden, Bjørnsen, Ottosen, Zilliacus-Tikknanen, & Willig 2009:1)

Some analyses already done in this regard (some in cooperation with others) include the study of changes in Norwegians journalism students ideals and aspirations during journalism school and in their first years as full-time journalists (Bjørnsen, Hovden, & Ottosen 2007) and of more general differences among Nordic journalism students (Hovden, m.fl. 2009). Also, the professional ideals of Norwegian journalists (and some of the methodological uncertainties in this kind of data) is subject to a more focused analysis in (Hovden 2010b).

In this paper I present two small analyses of broad differences among the Nordic journalism students using correspondence analysis. The first analysis look at differences regarding the students’ expressed adherence to various traditional journalistic ideals, whereas the second analysis look at a similar problematic using a more practical approach - the prioritizing of different stories for a newspaper. In this way, the students’ relation to these ideals is explored in two different settings, the first by their general adherence to various ideals for the profession, the second in a more practical - but closely related - situation.

¹ We have two lives about us / Two worlds in which we dwell / Within us and without us / Alternate Heaven and Hell: / Without, the somber Real / Within, our hearts of hearts, the beautiful Ideal. [Richard Henry Stoddard](#) (1825–1903).

² Some of the main points of this dissertation is summed up in (Hovden 2010a).

By use of the technique of supplementary points, the various ideals is explored in relation to national differences, the students social characteristics and their educational/professional career and aspirations.

DATA

The data used in this paper are based on a web-based questionnaire administered to every student at 18 Nordic schools of journalism in the fall semester of 2008. Fifty-three percent (2370) responded. This study was largely a replication of a study conducted in fall 2005, the main difference being that in the former study, only first-year students answered the questionnaire. Some characteristics of the two surveys are given in table 1.

The questionnaire – which was offered in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and Finnish translations – consisted of over sixty questions covering a wide array of subjects including social recruitment, motivation for studying journalism, preferences regarding future journalistic working life, views on the role of journalism in society, attitudes toward the profession, journalistic ideals, media use and ideas about what traits are most important for journalists. The questionnaires can be downloaded from the projects web site³.

Table 1. The Hovdabrekka surveys, 2005 and 2008. Source: <http://hovdabrekka.wordpress.com>

	Hovdabrekka I 2005	Hovdabrekka II 2008
Included schools - Norway	Oslo, Volda, Bodø, Kautokeino, Stavanger, Bergen (UIB), Gimlekollen*, Norwegian School of Management BI*, Bjørknes International College and Norwegian School of Business Studies (MI)*	Oslo, Volda, Bodø, Stavanger, Bergen (UIB), Gimlekollen* and Norwegian School of Management BI.
Included schools - Sweden	Göteborg*, Mitthögskolan*, Södertörn**	Göteborg, Kalmar, Mitthögskolan, Södertörn*, Stockholm
Included schools - Denmark	Århus**, Roskilde, Odense**	Århus, Roskilde*, Odense**
Included schools - Finland	Jyväskylä*, Tampere, Helsinki	Jyväskylä*, Tampere**, Helsinki
Total number of institutions in sample	19	18
Students included	Only first-year students	All students
Population and gross sample	929	4152
Net sample	474	2370
Response rate (individual)	51 %	53 %
Response rate (institutional average)	52 %	62 %

*=The institution had a response rate below 50%. **= response rate below 40%.

SPACE 1: THE SPACE OF JOURNALISTIC IDEALS

In the 2008-questionnaire, the students were asked: “Here are some assertions regarding the professional role of the journalist. What is your opinion of these? A journalist ought to regard himself as ...”⁴. The students then rated 17 assertions from “very much agree” to “very much disagree”. A simple table of the responses by gender/country is given in table 2.

Table 2. Differences in journalistic ideals, by land and gender. Percentage “agree very much”. Nordic students 2008, N=1824. (see appendix 1 for original questionnaire)

³ The questionnaires can be downloaded from <http://hovdabrekka.wordpress.com/the-surveys/>

⁴ “Her følger et antall påstander om journalistens yrkesrolle. Hva er din oppfatning om hver og en av disse? En journalist bør betrakte seg som”

	1. Hvilket land studerer du journalistikk i? and 12. Er du kvinne eller mann?				12. Er du kvinne eller mann?			
	--- Danmark ---		--- Finland ---		--- Norge ---		--- Sverige ---	
	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male
neutralreporter	28	24	60	41	26	26	40	26
mirrorsoctety	10	8	16	10	19	12	18	10
investgpowerful	49	49	69	66	53	43	62	59
simplifyexplain	62	51	68	62	41	40	61	41
freeallinterests	19	13	35	23	13	15	22	28
recreation	16	15	21	13	11	4	13	15
objectiveinfo	34	29	64	49	34	30	47	33
influenceopinion	24	21	17	20	25	18	28	28
telltruthregardl	19	24	21	30	17	22	23	31
forwardopinions	16	8	35	30	17	5	15	5
mediafirmwellbe	4	6	1	3	4	4	3	3
intercultunderst	25	12	29	21	38	11	36	23
educonsumers	17	7	23	18	14	7	20	7
faciliatepubdeb	44	25	58	52	62	40	60	49
defendindividual	16	14	38	34	57	45	34	31

To further our understanding of this data, I will use multiple correspondence analysis (MCA). This is a statistical technique which Bourdieu has used many times in his analysis of social spaces and fields, most famously in *Distinction* (1984). It is a specific form of Geometric data analysis (GDA), closely related to principal component analysis, and aims to optimally represent a large set of categorical variables (modalities) and individuals as two superimposed clouds of points in a low-dimensional space. The distances are computed on the basis of the chi²-differences between attributes of the total set of modalities which form the basis of the statistical construction (in my case, their answers to selected questions in the questionnaire). As this procedure results in a high dimensional cloud of points which are unfit for viewing with human eyes, the distances in-between individuals (and modalities) are usually represented as a Cartesian system in two dimensions, organized around the two principal axes which explain most of the variance (or, to use the terminology of French data analysis, its inertia) in the modalities. Correspondence analysis is a technique closely related to principal component analysis, but whereas the later is used for metric data, correspondence analysis is usually used for categorical data. For a short introduction to the methodology, see (Le Roux & Rouanet 2010). In both cases, the logic of the analysis is that it “looks” for underlying dimensions (factors in MCA, components in PCA) which explain most of the variance in the matrix.

A multiple correspondence analysis of the first dataset (figure 1) suggest three underlying dimensions which oppose the Nordic journalism students in their answers to the professional ideals: The first axis (not shown) divides the students simply according to their prophency to cross of many versus fewer ideals as “very important”. Whereas this is statistically the most important dimension (as it explains most of the variance in the table), it appear of less analytical interest as it appear first a foremost related to a more general prophency⁵. The second axis (horisontal) opposes the students in a manner close to Johnstone, Slawski and Bowmans (1976) seperation between an “participary role” and “neutral role”: students on the left side (participators) more often mentions as very important ideals of critisizing injustice, scrutinize the powerful, stimulate the public to new ideas, influence public

⁵ The tendency to choose many “very important”-categories is significantly and strongly correlated with all the active variables, which suggest that this is a general effect and not related to a particular profile in regard to different weight given to the ideals. The first dimension also mixes, and therefore obscures two very different principles: choosing very many and very few ideals as “very important”* both indicates a lack of prioritizing. To explore this prohecy further, a logistic regression was done on the odds for agreeing “very much” to at least 6 of the 17 ideals (=32% of the students), controlling for various factors. Overall, country and origin appear as the statistically strongest factors: female students are overall twice as likely as male students to be in this “many ayes”-group, and students of Sweden and Norway are both about half as likely to be in this group as students of Finland, and students of Denmark are even less likely than them to choose at least 6 ideals as very important*. Differences according to age, beeing a first-year students or not, having previous some form of higher education or journalistic paid experience, or studying a master-level study did not appear statistically significant ($p > |z|$).

opinion, defend individuals against injustice* and contribute to inter-cultural understanding*, whereas the students on the right side (neutrals) more often say as important being a neutral reporter of events, give objective information, mirror common opinions and being free from all interests. The third axis (vertical) is first and foremost linked to the question if providing recreation is an important journalistic ideal, where those who agree with this also tend to agree to mirroring society and bring forward various opinions as important (agnostics), which is opposed to investigative ideals (criticizing injustice, defend the individual and scrutinize the powerful). The later opposition, however is weak, and the main of the discussion will therefore be focused on the difference between neutral vs. participatory ideals (axis 2*).

To these four basic compass points of this space of journalistic ideals - participants vs. neutrals, investigators vs. recreators - the journalism students are very unevenly distributed according to different other characteristics (shown in this space as passive points⁶, in italics). We will look at some of these differences, while reminding ourselves that when we compare the distribution according to single variables - like country - we are simultaneously bringing in all the differences between these variables according to other differences - like different age and gender distributions.

As the map (and more importantly, the table) indicates, Finnish students tend more often than other students to say that being objective and neutral are very important ideals, whereas the Norwegian students are more likely to not agree to this. The Danish students, in contrast, are overall less likely to agree to ideals related to participatory, neutral and investigative ideals, and are thus placed closer to the pole of recreational indifference*, whereas the Swedes occupy somewhat of a middle position in this space.

These differences between the countries, however, becomes more complex when one takes into account of gender and differences between the schools. First, even if there is overall (for the space of axis 2 and 3 in the map) no significant differences between the sexes at the Nordic level, there are major differences between the genders in two countries (Norway and Finland), and in case of the differences between neutralism and participation mentioned above, the difference is first and foremost between Norwegian and Finnish females, illustrating that there is no simple bivariate relation between gender or country and journalistic ideals⁷. This is also shown in the way students at different schools differ markedly in their ideals, and in some cases, the biggest differences are among schools in the same country (e.g. BI* and Bergen University)⁸. To some degree, the left-right opposition appear to be partly related to the institutional type: students of journalism studies at older universities, which are usually more academic in scope with more focus on theory and less on practical skills, tend to place themselves further from the right, "neutral" pole of this space, compared to other schools in the same country).

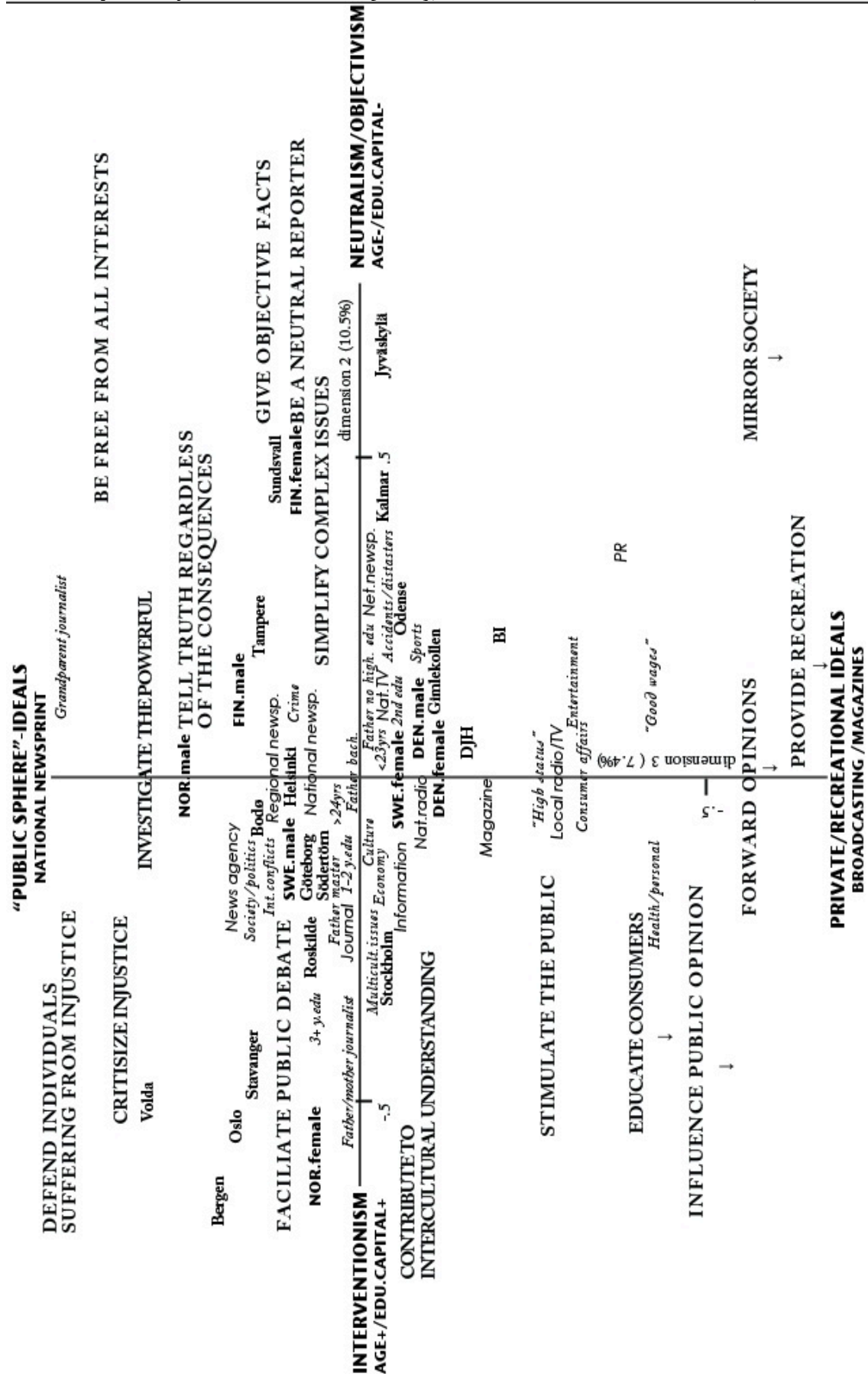
Also, whereas the participant-neutral dimension is positively related to having a previous higher education, and higher age, having inherited journalistic capital (having a parent, or even grandparent as a journalist) increases the chances for that the student place themselves towards the participatory pole, whereas the general capital volume of the parents increases with their adherence to participatory or neutral ideal (in contrast to recreational).

⁶ In correspondence analysis, active points are those variables which distribution among the individuals contribute to define the structure of the space, whereas passive points do not, but are merely projected into the space (which distance to the active points and other passive points can be interpreted as suggestive of their correlation with these points).

⁷ In many cases, the differences are also marked between the sexes inside the same schools (e.g. UIB and Jyväskylä), but in other cases, the differences appear negligible (e.g. Stockholm and Oslo).

⁸ Note also that in this map, the placement of the institutions are based exclusively on the answers of first-year bachelor students, who were surveyed right after starting their studies, and therefore have had little time to be "socialized" by the schools teachers or milieu. The reasons for these differences, thereby, seems to have to be sought in the different recruitment of the students.

Figure 1: The space of journalistic ideals (MCA), axis 2-3. Nordic students 2008, N=1824.



Multiple correspondence analysis (indicator matrix, principal normalication). N=1824. Explained inertia for axis 1-4: .2188 (21.9%), .1045 (10.5%), .0744 (7.5%), .0650 (6.5%). Active points: agreement to 16 ideals for journalists (dichotomized 1="agree very much", 0=other answer).

SPACE 2: THE SPACE OF NEWS VALUES

In another question in the 2008-questionnaire, the students were asked: "Imagine this: You work as a news journalist in a newspaper in a large town. The following 12 items are discussed for inclusion in tomorrow's paper. Mark those 5 which you think are the journalistically best." The respondent was then given a list of 12 cases, one example being "Political horse-trading in the city council: The Conservative Party has done a U-turn and now supports the motion of the building of a new town hall. In return, the Labour Party shelves a proposal for property tax."⁹ A simple table of the responses by gender/country is given in table 3. A multiple correspondence analysis follows.

Table 3. Differences in news prioritizing, by land and gender. Percentage "agree very much". Nordic students 2008, N=1824. (see appendix 1 for original questionnaire)

	1. Hvilket land studerer du journalistikk i? and 12. Er du kvinne eller mann?							
	--- Danmark ---		--- Finland ---		--- Norge ---		--- Sverige ---	
	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male
v61hestehandelbystyret	62	70	75	75	57	60	55	64
v61sykehjemsplass	50	40	48	36	54	48	39	38
v61advokatarrest	9	12	9	7	10	14	17	9
v61playboy	5	12		8	4	11	1	6
v61industri	84	82	95	85	88	86	86	84
v61fotball	25	41	16	32	30	54	34	45
v61pelle	20	13	29	14	20	21	28	20
v61fiskemonopol	58	51	52	53	48	36	43	48
v61demimoore	7	8	9	12	9	4	8	3
v61nynazister	40	44	38	32	55	42	47	48
v61teater	51	44	72	59	54	49	55	56
v61luteliggere	75	70	59	63	67	63	73	73

The first axis (figure 2) appear to mainly separate out those students with a tendency to include some the five most marginal and "incorrect" answers from those that do not (prioritizing the playboy story, the news that Demi Moore is in town, the drunken antics of the well-known lawyer, the news of the sale of the soccer player or the rescue of the German shepherd).

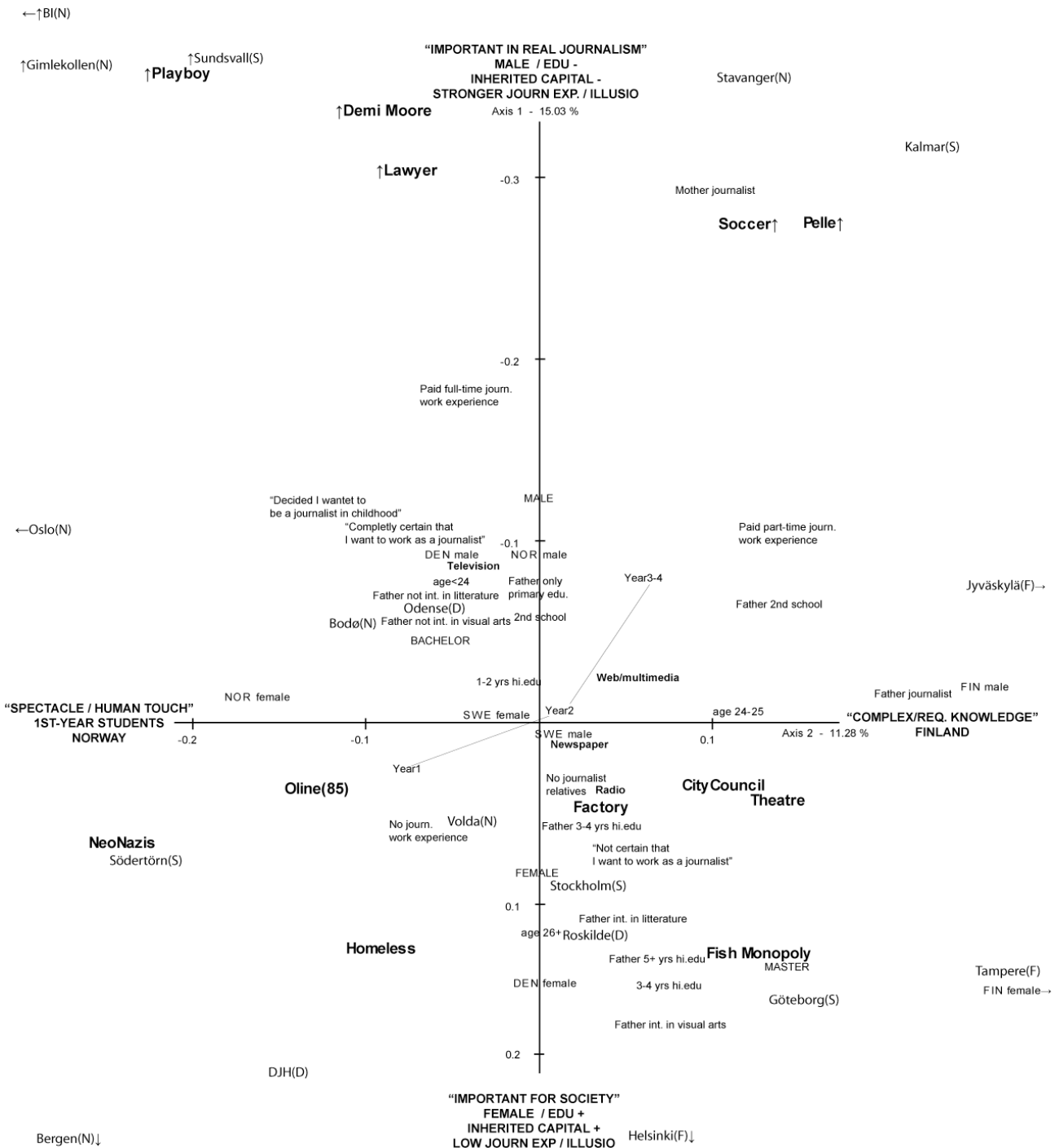
The second axis is somewhat more puzzling. It opposes students choosing the stories of rallying neo nazies, the suffering old woman unable to get a room at a day care centre and the growth of the number of homeless, against the stories of the close of a major factory, political horse-trading, the suspicion of a local fish sale monopoly and the temporary closing of the town's only theatre. To some degree, this axis appear to separate "easy" stories with most "spectacular" (with excellent photo-opportunities) and emotional potential (the "human touch") against stories which are more complex and would require more specific knowledge to cover.

The first axis is clearly related to gender, as the male students have a overall higher tendency to choose at least one of these five "incorrect" stories (61% vs 54% for the female students). Even if some of these differences appear to be journalistic expressions of gender socialization (the soccer-and playboy-story appeals much more often to male students), some stories show small gender differences (the lawyer, Demi Moore) and in the case of the rescue of the German shepherd (a classical "human interest story"), it is twice as often chosen by the female students. In fact, the opposition is hard to understand unless one realise that it is significantly related to several characteristics which are differently distributed between the sexes: the female pole is also one of students with more inherited capital from their parents (both cultural, political and educational capital) and more often themselves have finished some type of higher education beforehand. Those on the male pole, in contrast have more often experiences of paid journalistic work part- or full time and also more often has relatives which have worked as journalists. An important aspect of the logic appear thus to be a opposition between journalistic experience and -capital on the one hand, and on the other hand, inherited capital (of other sorts) and higher education. Rather than merely reflecting differences of "experience" (which implies a "professional" lay theory of socialization), this should verily likely also be seen as an opposition between a stronger and weaker journalistic *illusio* (identification with the struggles and values of the field) and two competing logics of dominance: the logic of the journalistic

⁹ Note that this question is an expanded version of one originally developed by Svein Brurås.

field and a journalistic habitus, versus the “overall” social field (and in particular, the intellectual field and habitus stronger inclined towards this). The first axis is also related to an interest in working in national television (male pole) versus not.

Figure 2: News prioritizing. MCA, axis 1 and 2. Nordic journalist students 2008.



MCA, 12 questions, 24 categories. Eigenvalues for the first four axes (Benzécri's modified rates in paranthesis): λ_1 .1503 (73%), λ_2 .1128 (15%), λ_3 .0978 (4%), λ_4 .0951 (2%). 1646 active individuals¹⁰. Two axes retained for analysis. Only yes (prioritized) categories shown. Note that the placement of schools indicate 1-year students only.

¹⁰ Excluded were 474 respondents who had not answered the question and 63 who had selected less than the five categories required by the question.

The second opposition appears to partly separate the first-year students from the rest (which is also one of having none versus some journalistic experience). Also, it appears also to separate Norwegian students from the Finnish ones, national differences which appear significant also when controlled with logistic regression analysis¹¹. Interestingly, except for a general difference between bachelor- and master-students along the second axis, there appear to be no consistent pattern which separates different types of schools.

¹¹ Controlling for country, gender, age (4 steps), having a higher education (1=yes), study level (1=master), father or mother a journalist (1=yes), wishes to specialize in radio or television (1=yes), having had previous paid journalistic experience (1=yes), father cultural capital (4 steps), fathers educational level (5 steps).

APPENDIX 1: THE QUESTIONNAIRE (EXCERPT)

NOEN SPØRSMÅL OM PRESSEN I DAG

32. Her følger et antall påstander om journalistens yrkesrolle. Hva er din oppfatning om hver og en av disse?

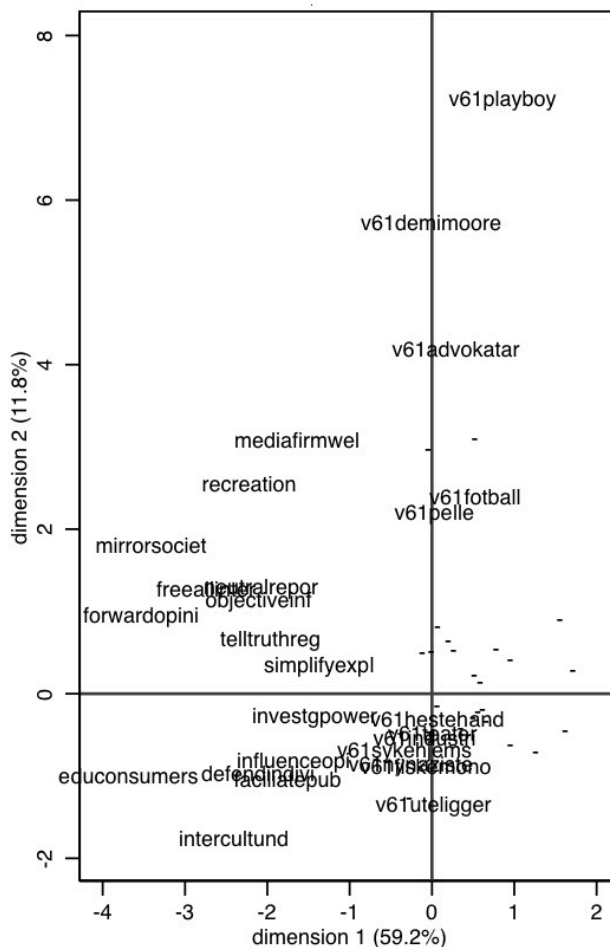
En journalist bør betrakte seg som

	Stemmer helt	Stemmer delvis	Stemmer delvis ikke	Stemmer ikke	Ingen mening
...en kritiker av urettferdighet i samfunnet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som stimulerer til nye tanker og ideer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en nøytral rapportør av det som skjer i samfunnet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som speiler allmenne meninger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en gransker av samfunnets makthavere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som enkelt kan forklare kompliserte hendelser	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som kan stå helt fri fra alle interesser i samfunnet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som kan gi folk adspredelse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som objektivt formidler nyheter og informasjon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som påvirker opinionsutviklingen i samfunnet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som sier sannheten uten hensyn til konsekvensene	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...et talerør for den lokale opinionen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som skal sørge for at mediebedriften går godt økonomisk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som skal bidra til større forståelse mellom ulike folkeslag og kulturer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som skal drive forbrukeropplysning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en som skal sørge for en levende samfunnsdebatt der flest mulig kommer til orde	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...en forsvarer av enkeltmennesker rammet av urettferdighet/overgrep	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

61. Et tenkt tilfelle: Du arbeider som nyhetsjournalist i en avis i en av våre større byer. De følgende tolv sakene er aktuelle til morgendagens utgave (det er en god nyhetsdag....). Kryss av de du mener er de 5 sakene avisen bør prioritere å dekke.

- a) Hestehandel i bystyret. Høyres bystyregruppe gjør helomvending i spørsmålet om nytt rådhus, og slutter seg til APs forslag om AP legger på sin side bort forslaget om økt eiendomsskatt.
- b) Oline Hansen (85) i Langeveien har ventet i fire år på sykehjemsplass, til tross for at hennes lege mener hun for lengst burde få plass.
- c) En kjent advokat i byen er arrestert etter fyllebråk og forulemping av andre gjester på en restaurant.
- d) En 22-årig jente fra byen figurerer med nakenbilde i neste utgave av det amerikanske bladet Playboy. Hun får 500 000 kr. i honorar.
- e) En av byens industribedrifter har på grunn av dårlig ordretting fått økonomiske problemer, og går derfor til oppsigelse av 120 ansatte.
- f) Toppspilleren på byens eliteserielag i fotball er overraskende blitt solgt for 5.000.000 kroner. Laget blir betydelig svekket.
- g) Schæferen "Pelle" reddet og i god behold etter å ha sittet fast på en fjellhulle i fire døgn. Saken har vært omtalt i avisen i to dager allerede. Eieren gråter av glede.
- h) En ny undersøkelse viser at distriktet du arbeider i har Norges høyeste priser på fersk fisk. Avisen har i tillegg avdekket at en matvaregrossist faktisk har monopol på fiskesalg i distriktet.
- i) Skuespilleren Demi Moore ferierer i tre dager i avisens distrikt.
- j) Nynazister planlegger nasjonalt treff i byen i neste måned.
- k) Byens eneste teater må, på grunn av et dårlig økonomisk resultat så langt i år, avlyse alle oppsetningene neste år.
- l) En ny undersøkelse viser at antall uteliggere i byen har blitt doblet de siste fem årene.

APPENDIX 2: AN INTEGRATED MCA



```
. canon (neutral-defend) (v61*), stderr test(1 2 3)
Canonical correlations:
0.2630 0.2119 0.1817 0.1644 0.1258 0.1049 0.0893 0.0746 0.0605 0.0485 0.0297 0.0131
```

 Tests of significance of all canonical correlations

	Statistic	df1	df2	F	Prob>F
Wilks' lambda	.797475	180	15835.6	2.1359	0.0000 a
Pillai's trace	.221582	180	20244	2.1158	0.0000 a
Lawley-Hotelling trace	.231205	180	20090	2.1504	0.0000 a
Roy's largest root	.0743179	15	1687	8.3583	0.0000 u

 Test of significance of canonical correlations 1-12

	Statistic	df1	df2	F	Prob>F
Wilks' lambda	.797475	180	15835.6	2.1359	0.0000 a

 Test of significance of canonical correlations 2-12

	Statistic	df1	df2	F	Prob>F
Wilks' lambda	.856741	154	14639.6	1.7011	0.0000 a

 Test of significance of canonical correlations 3-12

	Statistic	df1	df2	F	Prob>F
Wilks' lambda	.897012	130	13440	1.4141	0.0014 a

 e = exact, a = approximate, u = upper bound on F

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