Beyond Negativity: Exploring the Core Elements and Emerging Trends in Constructive Journalism

Appendix A Representative sample of publications analyzed

Year	First Author	Title	Journal	Type	Elements Addressed	Media Context
2017	Kleemans, M.	Children's Responses to Negative News: The Effects of Constructive Reporting in Newspaper Stories for Children	*Journal of Communication*	Empirical and Practical Studies	√	Dutch children's news experiment
2017	McIntyre, K.	Constructive Journalism: An Introduction and Practical Guide for Applying Positive Psychology Techniques to News Production	*The Journal of Media Innovations*	Foundational Theoretical Works	×	Global outlets & journalism programs
2018	McIntyre, K.	Positive Psychology as a Theoretical Foundation for Constructive Journalism	*Journalism Practice*	Foundational Theoretical Works	√	Positive psychology in newsrooms
2018	Meier, K.	How Does the Audience Respond to Constructive Journalism? Two Experiments with Multifaceted Results	*Journalism Practice*	From Special Issues	√	German-language experiment
2019	Bro, P.	Constructive Journalism: Proponents, Precedents, and Principles	*Journalism*	Foundational Theoretical Works	×	US & EU theoretical-historical review
2019	Hermans, L.	Elements of Constructive Journalism: Characteristics, Practical Application and Audience Valuation	*Journalism*	Foundational Theoretical Works	√	Dutch online survey
2019	Wiard, V.	'The City Is Ours, So Let's Talk about It': Constructing A Citizen Media Initiative in Brussels	*Journalism*	From Special Issues	×	Brussels citizen media case study
2021	Overgaard, C.	Constructive Journalism in the Face of a Crisis: The Effects of Social Media News Updates About COVID-19	*Journalism Studies*	Empirical and Practical Studies	√	US Facebook-style COVID-19 simulation
2022	Hermans, L.	Interest matters: The effects of constructive news reporting on Millennials' emotions and engagement	*Journalism*	Empirical and Practical Studies	√	Online platform simulation
2023	van Antwerpen, N.	Constructive Journalism: Techniques for Improving the Practice of Objectivity	*Journal of Media Ethics*	Foundational Theoretical Works	√	Western news objectivity integration

Description: This appendix presents a representative sample of the publications included in this study's content analysis. For each entry, the table lists the year of publication, first author, article title, journal name, study type, whether the constructive elements addressed, and the media context examined. This overview contextualizes the data sources by highlighting the diversity of research designs, thematic focuses, and news environments covered across the selected literature.

Appendix B

Below is a detailed codebook for the seven Level-2 codes, each including: a brief explanation, the coding criterion, the decision rule, and a real or illustrative example.

1a Definition

- **Explanation:** Captures explicit definitions of constructive elements.
- **Criterion:** Text segments containing definitional language (e.g., "is defined as," "refers to," "means").
- **Decision rule:** If a sentence or clause provides a clear, academic definition of an element, tag it as 1a Definition; ignore operational examples in the same segment.
- **Example:** "Solutions: When covering problems, also add a solution-oriented framing of news." (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019)

1b Purpose

- **Explanation:** Identifies statements of intended functions or theoretical roles of each element.
- **Criterion:** Segments mentioning aims, objectives, or theorized effects (e.g., "aims to," "serves to," "functions as").
- **Decision rule:** If a passage describes why an element exists or what it is supposed to achieve, tag 1b Purpose; if it merely defines without purpose language, use 1a instead.
- **Example:** "There's an emerging field of what's been called constructive journalism or solutions journalism, and this is about bringing positive elements into conventional reporting, remaining dedicated to accuracy, truth, balance when necessary, and criticism, but reporting in a more engaging and empowering way." (McIntyre, 2015)

2a Interrelate

- **Explanation:** Captures discussions of how two or more core elements interact or co-occur.
- **Criterion:** Text that explicitly links elements (e.g., "Solutions and empowerment often co-occur," "The interplay between inclusiveness and context").
- **Decision rule:** When a segment discusses relationships among existing six elements, tag 2a Interrelate; if it also proposes a new element, code for whichever theme is dominant.
- **Example:** "The frequently used constructive elements were solutions orientation, future orientation, and explanation and contextualization." (Tshabangu & Salawu, 2021)

2b Emergence

- **Explanation:** Captures proposals of new or supplementary constructive elements.
- **Criterion:** Segments where authors explicitly introduce or advocate a novel element (e.g., "we propose X," "recent studies have introduced Y as an element").
- **Decision rule:** If a passage names or argues for an element not among the original six, tag 2b Emergence; disregard mere mentions of core elements.
- **Example:** "Another thread of research has examined the visual elements of constructive journalism. Dahmen (2016) found through photographic analysis and interviews that photojournalists can distinguish themselves from citizen journalists by capturing restorative narratives—stories of recovery, resilience and restoration that come long after an immediate tragedy—in their images." (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018)

3a Application

- **Explanation:** Captures concrete instances of elements being applied in studies or journalistic practice.
- **Criterion:** Descriptions of methods, cases, or procedures used to employ an element (e.g., "by conducting participatory interviews," "in the coverage of climate change, reporters included…").
- **Decision rule:** If the text describes *how* an element was put into practice or operationalized, tag 3a Application; do not tag if only theoretical.
- **Example:** "In an experiment, 20–40-year-old participants (n = 341) read a story containing constructive elements or not." (Hermans & Prins, 2020)

3b Impact

- **Explanation:** Captures reported positive effects or contributions resulting from applying an element.

- **Criterion:** Segments that mention outcomes, benefits, or improvements linked to use of an element (e.g., "led to increased trust," "resulted in higher engagement").

- **Decision rule:** If a statement attributes a favorable outcome to the use of an element, tag 3b Impact; if it only describes application without outcomes, use 3a.

- **Example:** "Further research isolating whether individual techniques effect comprehension differently would assist journalists when considering the aims of individual stories, and where constructive elements could best serve to reduce negative emotion without impeding comprehension." (van Antwerpen et al., 2022)

3c Challenge

- **Explanation:** Captures identified difficulties, barriers, or criticisms in conceptualizing or applying elements.

- **Criterion:** Text noting limitations, obstacles, or unresolved issues (e.g., "challenges include," "it remains difficult to," "critics argue that").

- **Decision rule:** If the text highlights a problem or barrier related to an element's definition or use, tag 3c Challenge; if it simply notes neutral observations, do not tag.

- **Example:** "This supports the necessity to investigate whether and how constructive elements can be included in other negative topics beyond natural disasters and to investigate how this may inspire prosociality." (Kleemans, Schlindwein, et al., 2017)

Appendix C

Below are seven representative coded excerpts—one for each Level-2 code—showing (1) how the segment was selected, (2) why it was assigned that single code, and (3) the insight drawn from it.

1a Definition

- **Excerpt:** Solutions: When covering problems, also add a solution-oriented framing of news. (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019)
- **Rationale for selection:** This sentence gives a clear definitional statement of the element.
- **Code:** 1a Definition
- **Insight:** Establishes that "solutions" is understood as a framing technique, confirming its role as a core construct.

1b Purpose

- **Excerpt:** There's an emerging field of what's been called constructive journalism or solutions journalism, and this is about bringing positive elements into conventional reporting, remaining dedicated to accuracy, truth, balance when necessary, and criticism, but reporting in a more engaging and empowering way." (McIntyre, 2015)
- **Rationale for selection:** The phrase "reporting in a more engaging and empowering way" describes the intended function.
- **Code:** 1b Purpose
- **Insight:** Highlights that these positive elements from constructive journalism aims not only to inform but to engage and motivate audiences.

2a Interrelate

- **Excerpt:** The frequently used constructive elements were solutions orientation, future orientation, and explanation and contextualization." (Tshabangu & Salawu, 2021)
- **Rationale for selection:** Lists three core elements occurring together in the same analysis.
- **Code:** 2a Interrelate
- **Insight:** Indicates these three elements form a tightly linked cluster.

2b Emergence

- **Excerpt:** Another thread of research has examined the visual elements of constructive journalism. Dahmen (2016) found through photographic analysis and interviews that photojournalists can distinguish themselves from citizen journalists by capturing restorative narratives—stories of recovery, resilience and restoration that come long after an immediate tragedy—in their images." (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018)
- **Rationale for selection:** Explicitly names and argues for a novel element.
- **Code:** 2b Emergence
- **Insight:** Demonstrates scholarly observation toward including visual techniques as part of the framework.

3a Application

- **Excerpt:** In an experiment, 20–40-year-old participants (n = 341) read a story containing constructive elements or not." (Hermans & Prins, 2020)
- **Rationale for selection:** Describes a concrete empirical procedure applying elements.
- **Code:** 3a Application
- **Insight:** Shows how "constructive elements" can be operationalized in controlled experimental designs.

3b Impact

- **Excerpt:** Further research isolating whether individual techniques effect comprehension differently would assist journalists when considering the aims of individual stories, and where constructive elements could best serve to reduce negative emotion without impeding comprehension." (van Antwerpen et al., 2022)
- **Rationale for selection:** Links application of techniques (elements) to improved journalistic decision-making.
  Code: 3b Impact
  Insight: Suggests that understanding impacts can guide journalists in selecting which elements to employ.

3c Challenge

- **Excerpt:** This supports the necessity to investigate whether and how constructive elements can be included in other negative topics beyond natural disasters and to investigate how this may inspire prosociality." (Kleemans, Schlindwein, et al., 2017)
- **Rationale for selection:** Identifies a gap and barrier in current scope of applications.
- **Code:** 3c Challenge
- **Insight:** Points to the limitation that constructive elements have been tested narrowly, indicating a need for broader application.