

Article

Reframing Journalistic Resilience: The Necessity of Networked Ecologies

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Abstract

As violence and professional precarity intensify for journalists, resilience has become a central framework for understanding how journalists continue working under sustained risk. However, journalism studies research has largely conceptualized resilience through hierarchical models that distribute responsibility across bounded levels of authority. This conceptual article offers a critical synthesis of journalism studies research, resilience scholarship, ecological approaches, and public health prevention frameworks to examine how existing models align with contemporary threats toward journalists. We first map prevailing orientations to resilience (e.g., individual, organizational, and institutional) and show how these models can privilege episodic or reactive responses to journalistic harms and obscure gaps in coordinated interventions to mitigate violence. We then advance an ecological reorientation of journalistic resilience grounded in networked ecologies. We propose a three-part framework (individual-in-relation, collective, and networked) that conceptualizes resilience as a relational and cross-institutional capacity. Finally, we introduce public health prevention models as a translational lens for operationalizing ecological resilience as coordinated infrastructure spanning prevention, intervention, and recovery. This framework offers a conceptual foundation for studying and strengthening resilience across contemporary media environments.

Keywords: journalistic resilience; networked resilience; digital violence

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1. Introduction

As violence against journalists intensifies globally, media scholars and practitioners have called for more effective strategies to support journalists' work and well-being ([Committee to Protect Journalists, 2025](#); [Relly & Waisbord, 2022](#); [Shah & Shah, 2024](#)). Journalists worldwide face escalating risks of physical violence, legal intimidation, online harassment, state hostility, economic precarity, and attacks on the legitimacy of journalism as an institution ([Reporters Without Borders, 2025](#)).

The U.S. context illustrates the rapid convergence of these pressures in a democratic system. In the U.S., efforts to defund public news organizations ([Taormino, 2025](#)), restrict journalists' access to press briefings ([Grynbaum, 2025](#)), enact mass layoffs of journalists ([Marcus, 2026](#)), and challenge journalistic privacy ([Luscombe & Barr, 2026](#)) underscore escalating tensions between journalists and the federal government amid growing economic precarity. These dynamics reflect the broader political hostilities, digital exposure, institutional fragility, and economic instability reshaping the global press.

Heightened civil unrest has intensified these risks, with physical threats to journalists rising sharply in 2025 (Sugars, 2025). Amid widespread U.S. immigration protests, dozens of journalists have been physically assaulted, shot with rubber projectiles and chemical agents, and unlawfully detained or dispersed by enforcement officials, prompting legal action and condemnation from press freedom advocates (Fisher, 2025).

In response, resilience—the capacity of an individual, community, or system to adapt to disruption while maintaining its core structure and identity (Healy, 2006)—has emerged as a central framework for understanding how journalists continue to work under conditions of sustained risk. Resilience scholarship seeks to understand how journalists endure, adapt, and sustain their work amid violence, burnout, and chronic precarity (Frey, 2023; Shah & Shah, 2024). Yet, how resilience is defined, conceptualized, and operationalized remains uneven in journalism and media studies. While emerging community-based responses to state hostility demonstrate decentralized, relational forms of adaptation, such as shared documentation networks and collaborative protection efforts (Bauck, 2025; Rodrigo, 2026), journalism scholarship has largely located resilience within hierarchical structures of authority: individual coping, newsroom policy, or institutional advocacy.

We argue that this hierarchical orientation increasingly misaligns with the conditions shaping journalistic risk. Contemporary threats are digitally mediated, politically coordinated, and structurally patterned across platforms, states, and economic systems. Journalists' reliance on digital platforms for news distribution, audience engagement, and professional legitimacy has left them vulnerable to abuse. Social media platforms can amplify harassment, collapse public and private boundaries, and constrain journalists' ability to disengage without professional consequences (Nelson, 2023; Waisbord, 2020). Journalists' reliance on platform moderation protocols capable of mitigating these threats places journalists and news organizations in a dependent relationship with companies whose priorities may not align with journalistic safety or democratic accountability (Dodds et al., 2026; Nelson, 2023).

These conditions suggest that contemporary threats to journalists are not merely individual or organizational problems, but networked and infrastructural ones. To account for these conditions, we turn to networked ecologies: the dynamic, interdependent systems of actors, platforms, institutions, audiences, policies, technologies, and professional communities through which journalism is produced, circulated, contested, and sustained (M. F. Perreault & Perreault, 2021; Phillips & Milner, 2021; Bruns, 2018; Sjøvaag et al., 2019). This perspective does not dismiss individual, organizational, or institutional approaches to resilience. Instead, it situates them within a broader environment of relationships and infrastructures through which harm and resilience are produced. In this sense, networked ecologies capture the distribution of risk, power, and responsibility across contemporary journalistic environments.

This article develops a conceptual reorientation of journalistic resilience in three moves. It first synthesizes resilience scholarship in journalism studies and adjacent fields, showing how the field has approached resilience via three individual, organizational, and institutional levels of response. It then examines the assumptions embedded in these approaches, highlighting the tendency to locate responsibility within bounded domains of authority, even as contemporary threats circulate across wider information ecologies. Finally, it advances networked ecologies as a framework for understanding journalistic resilience as relational, distributed, and cross-institutional—better suited to the digitally mediated and politically contested environments in which journalists engage. Public health prevention models serve as a translational lens for organizing this ecological approach across prevention, intervention, and recovery.

These public health models are designed to address patterned harms across populations and systems by distinguishing among primary prevention, which seeks to reduce the conditions that make harm likely; secondary prevention, which aims to identify and interrupt harm as it emerges; and tertiary prevention, which supports recovery and reduces longer-term consequences after harm has occurred (Calvet et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2022). Applied to journalism, this continuum helps translate networked ecologies into an actionable framework for asking how journalists, newsrooms, professional associations, advocacy groups, platforms, and other actors might prevent exposure to harm, intervene during escalation, and sustain recovery over time. At a moment of profound occupational risk, this approach recognizes journalism as embedded within interconnected systems of actors and infrastructures, all essential to building distributed, relational networks of care, protection, and resistance. If resilience is to move from a conceptual ideal to durable infrastructure, it requires a translational framework capable of bridging theory and practice.

To evaluate the shifting landscape of journalistic risk and assess the utility of journalistic resilience scholarship, our critical synthesis is broadly guided by four questions: What are the prevailing models of journalistic resilience?; What theoretical and structural assumptions shape how these models assign responsibility and response?; What are the strengths and limitations of extant models in addressing contemporary occupational harms among journalists?; and how might existing resilience models be reoriented to account for the networked environments through which contemporary journalistic harm unfolds?

To address these questions, we conduct a critical synthesis of scholarship on journalistic resilience across journalism studies and adjacent fields. Critical synthesis is a form of conceptual analysis that evaluates and compares research to identify dominant assumptions, conceptual gaps, and opportunities for theoretical development (Torraco, 2005; Jaakkola, 2020). This interpretive approach integrates insights across the literature, recognizing how theoretical concepts are shaped by intersecting disciplinary histories, professional norms, and institutional assumptions to inform theoretical development.

We first map how resilience has been organized around individual, organizational, and institutional levels of responsibility. We then analyze how these approaches distribute care and accountability, particularly in relation to digitally mediated harassment and platform-dependent journalistic labor. Finally, we build from this synthesis to develop a networked ecological framework and use public health prevention models as a translational lens for organizing that framework across prevention, intervention, and recovery.

2. Resilience in Journalism Studies: A Critical Review

Resilience originated in psychology and psychiatry to explain how individuals achieve positive outcomes despite facing difficulties (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). Early models focused on the role of personal traits in building resilience (e.g., sociability, communication skills, adaptive attitudes). Subsequent work incorporated external social, cultural, and structural factors affecting adaptation (e.g., family, community, cultural context), characterizing resilience as a dynamic and processual capacity shaped by layered protective and risk conditions that can be cultivated to improve outcomes for individuals and communities alike (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). As the concept was adopted in sociology and anthropology, scholars expanded it to encompass collective and cultural resilience, reflecting “the capacity of a distinct community or cultural system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to retain key elements of structure and identity that preserve its distinctness” (Healy, 2006, p. 12).

Journalism scholars have broadly drawn on these interdisciplinary definitions when examining how journalists respond to professional disruption, violence, and precarity (Relly & Waisbord, 2022; Šimunjak, 2023). This shift coincides with what Wahl-Jorgensen (2020) describes as an “emotional turn” in the field, as scholars increasingly foreground

journalism's normative and affective dimensions. Contemporary journalistic labor routinely involves exposure to graphic imagery, violent rhetoric, and online hostility, compounded by expectations that journalists maintain visible and interactive online presences (Nelson, 2023). Consequently, trauma, harassment, and chronic stress have become embedded in everyday professional practice.

These harms are unevenly distributed. Women, journalists of color, LGBTQ journalists, freelancers, and early-career journalists face heightened vulnerability, contributing to burnout, disconnection, and attrition across the profession (Chen et al., 2020; Miller & Lewis, 2020; Johnson, 2025). At the same time, many journalists continue to express a strong moral commitment to public service and civic responsibility, deriving meaning and satisfaction from their work even under hostile conditions (G. P. Perreault, 2023). For some, adversity reinforces journalism as a calling rather than merely an occupation (Stupart, 2023). For others, it signals inevitable burnout and possible exits from the profession (Ivask et al., 2024; Mesmer, 2023; Mathews et al., 2023).

Related scholarship on well-being, happiness, and joy has similarly sought to address journalism's emotional dimensions by examining how journalists sustain meaning, connection, and professional fulfillment amid precarity. This work reframes emotion as a source of strain and potential resource for endurance and renewal (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2024). Calls to recognize joy as a news value, for instance, encourage reconsideration of how stories are told and how meaning is constructed around journalism's core concerns (Parks, 2021; G. P. Perreault, 2023). Other scholars position joy as an outcome of meaningful labor and a sustaining force over time (G. Perreault & Mellado, 2026; Bélair-Gagnon & Perreault, 2025), while related work advocates cultivating professional cultures centered on connection, care, and collective purpose in journalistic work (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2023; Bossio et al., 2024b). Together, this scholarship broadens the field's understanding of journalism's emotional life by emphasizing the conditions under which journalists find meaning, satisfaction, and sustainability in their work.

At the same time, the uptake of well-being discourse has prompted concerns about toxic positivity, whereby happiness becomes a bureaucratic mechanism that suppresses negative emotions and shifts responsibility for emotional regulation onto individuals instead of institutions (Deuze, 2025; Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2023). These tendencies risk aligning well-being with neoliberal logics of self-management and personal responsibility, positioning workers as responsible for continually adapting to precarious conditions rather than challenging the structures producing harm (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2026; Joseph, 2013).

Similar tensions emerge within resilience scholarship. Although scholars generally agree that resilience is a "key personal resource that laborers need to effectively cope with difficulties they face in work" (Šimunjak, 2023, p. 130), existing approaches tend to rely on self-reported data and risk individualizing labor conditions that shape well-being. Critiques have argued that journalism has treated violence as episodic rather than systemic, and individualized coping strategies are often emphasized over coordinated interventions designed to interrupt harm as it emerges (Bossio et al., 2024b; Holton et al., 2023). These tendencies limit the field's capacity to account for the cumulative and structural risks that increasingly define journalistic labor. In a profession long shaped by an ethos of objectivity and increasingly defined by political turbulence and structural precarity, such approaches risk normalizing adaptation to harmful conditions rather than foregrounding the institutional transformations necessary to reduce harm.

Resilience nevertheless remains a valuable framework because of its interdisciplinary and technical foundations, which provide useful analytic tools for understanding how journalists navigate adversity. To clarify where these limitations emerge, the following section examines how individual, organizational, and institutional approaches conceptu-

alize harm and mobilize response. As we demonstrate, prevailing models of resilience often remain structured by hierarchical logics that organize care and accountability within discrete levels of authority rather than across the interconnected systems through which journalistic harm unfolds.

3. Hierarchical Logics of Journalistic Resilience: Vertical Authority and Bounded Responsibility

As resilience scholarship has matured and moved across disciplines, responsibility has shifted upward from individual coping toward organizational policy and institutional intervention. Our analysis suggests that this expansion masks a deeper structural continuity: resilience is often organized through hierarchical logics that confine care and accountability within bounded domains of authority.

Hierarchy here reflects more than the presence of institutions. It describes a governance model in which responsibility flows vertically across discrete levels—journalists, newsrooms, professional associations—instead of relationally across interconnected systems. Adaptation is organized within formal structures, and intervention remains bounded by institutional jurisdiction. Within this model, resilience is theorized and operationalized at three primary levels: individual, organizational, and institutional. Although responsibility appears to expand across levels, it remains structured through vertical (mostly top-down) authority and segmented domains of care.

3.1. Individual Resilience and Adaptive Coping

The most prevalent strand of resilience research in journalism centers on individualized responses to harm. Often grounded in a “thick skin” ethos, this work frames resilience (often through journalists’ voices and applied theories) as a personal capacity to withstand hostility, regulate emotion, and continue professional performance despite adversity (Chen et al., 2020; Martin & Murrell, 2020). In this sense, journalists are socialized to expect harassment and normalize exposure to abuse as an inevitable feature of public-facing work, particularly in digital environments (Sampaio-Dias et al., 2024; Miranda et al., 2023). News organizations can reinforce this orientation by emphasizing individualized, reactive approaches that place responsibility on journalists themselves to adapt and to support one another (Holton et al., 2023; Sampaio-Dias et al., 2024).

Through this lens, scholars operationalize resilience through individual coping behaviors. Although coping and resilience are conceptually related (Van der Hallen et al., 2020), coping refers to context-dependent strategies deployed in response to stressors. Research documents practices such as emotional distancing, self-care routines, boundary setting, and strategic disengagement from digital platforms (Bossio et al., 2024a; Holton et al., 2023; Šimunjak, 2025; Kim & Shin, 2025). Studies of emotional labor similarly illustrate how journalists regulate feelings to meet professional norms, for example, by suppressing anger or distress to maintain credibility and productivity (Ivask et al., 2024; Miller & Lewis, 2020).

These strategies may preserve agency and offer immediate relief. Their adoption and effectiveness vary widely, though, and are shaped by identity, professional experience, and newsroom culture as well as their understanding of violence and personal threshold for hostility (Ivask et al., 2024). By locating adaptation primarily at the individual level, this individual approach risks normalizing violence as an occupational constant and obscuring the political, economic, and platform-level dynamics that facilitate recurring exposure to harm and exacerbate inequities tied to gender, race, and sexuality (Elsheikh et al., 2025; Sammut et al., 2025). Scholars often frame violence as episodic for an individual and external to journalism itself, and resilience becomes synonymous with short-term endurance rather than structural prevention (see Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2024, for illustration).

In journalism, coping-centered models may unintentionally ‘responsibilize’ journalists for harms produced by organizations, platforms, political actors, and economic systems (Pyysiäinen et al., 2017). Although such models emphasize autonomy and personal capacity, they can also reflect neoliberal governance logics that shift responsibility for adaptation onto individuals while allowing organizations and institutions to avoid more active roles in reducing risk (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2026; Joseph, 2013). The issue, then, is not that coping strategies are unimportant; journalists need immediate tools for managing harm. Rather, the limitation lies in treating coping as the primary site of resilience without adequately redistributing responsibility across the systems that produce, amplify, or fail to interrupt risk.

3.2. Organizational and Institutional Strategies for Journalists’ Well-Being

Organizational approaches shift attention from personal adaptation to newsroom practices, leadership, and professional norms. This scholarship calls on news organizations to develop coordinated responses through newsroom policies, training, structured crisis response protocols, and peer support systems that signal institutional acknowledgment of harm and scale protective practices across newsrooms (Holton et al., 2023; Bossio et al., 2024b; Waisbord, 2020).

Emerging research documents these efforts, particularly in studies of newsroom solidarity and geographically bounded professional networks (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2022; Šimunjak & Menke, 2023). For instance, Kantola and Harju (2023) highlight how informal peer check-ins, shared editorial decision-making, and visible managerial backing function as “connective practices” that help journalists navigate hostility while sustaining professional engagement. In hostile political environments, journalists rely on collective safety strategies, such as traveling in groups, coordinating the publication of contentious stories, and cultivating alliances with NGOs and transnational advocacy networks, to mitigate threats (Mitchell, 2025).

Such interventions formalize responsibility beyond the individual and more explicitly acknowledge systemic occupational risk. Yet, organizational responses remain uneven and reactive. Scholars note that protections are often activated only after high-profile incidents, vary by employment status, and depend on editorial discretion (Nelson, 2023; Holton et al., 2023; Waisbord, 2020). Limited reporting and measurement of harassment further obscure its prevalence, contributing to inconsistent prevention and response protocols (Malcorps et al., 2023; Waisbord, 2020).

These gaps disproportionately affect those who fall outside core newsroom infrastructures, such as freelancers, junior staff, and marginalized journalists, whose experiences may not be reflected in standardized procedures (Bossio et al., 2024a). Furthermore, while peer-based interventions can validate journalists’ experiences, high costs and evidence suggesting that nonclinical, organizational forms of support may be more effective complicate reliance on individualized therapeutic responses (Vilk et al., 2024).

At the institutional level, professional associations, advocacy organizations, press freedom groups, and journalism schools have sought to formalize support structures beyond individual news organizations. These actors provide safety trainings and trauma-informed programming (International Women’s Media Foundation, n.d.-b; Coalition Against Online Violence, n.d.), best-practice guides and newsroom policy templates (American Press Institute, 2023; International Women’s Media Foundation, n.d.-b; PEN America, n.d.), identity-specific safety resources addressing gendered and racialized harassment (International Women’s Media Foundation, n.d.-b; Thomson Reuters Foundation, n.d.), and tailored guidance for freelancers (ACOS Alliance, n.d.; International Women’s Media Foundation, n.d.-b).

Institutional efforts also include therapy and peer-support programs ([Journalist Trauma Support Network](#), n.d.; [International Women’s Media Foundation](#), n.d.-c), emergency funding and relocation assistance ([Committee to Protect Journalists](#), n.d.; [International Women’s Media Foundation](#), n.d.-a), legal guidance and resources ([Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press](#), 2024; [Society of Professional Journalists](#), n.d.), and physical safety training ([Reporters Without Borders](#), n.d.), often delivered in coordination with newsrooms.

Today, cross-organization coalitions, including the [ACOS Alliance](#) (n.d.), the [Coalition Against Online Violence](#) (n.d.), the [International News Safety Institute](#) (n.d.), and the U.S. Journalist Assistance Network (JAN) ([Committee to Protect Journalists](#), 2025), coordinate efforts across hundreds of global partners and signatories. These initiatives have significantly expanded the infrastructure available to journalists facing harassment and violence. Nevertheless, these efforts tend to remain fragmented and loosely coordinated across organizations, often operating as stand-alone resources rather than integrated systems capable of providing a rapid, coordinated response. Moreover, the industry has struggled to align its protective initiatives with other powerful institutions, particularly social media companies, that shape the digital environments where harassment occurs ([Waisbord](#), 2020).

Institutional protections may also be vulnerable to shifting political climates. For example, Columbia University’s Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, now the Global Center for Journalism and Trauma, left Columbia University after fifteen years of providing resources for journalists confronting harassment and violence as a downstream consequence of the Trump Administration’s removal of federal funding for the university, underscoring the limits of resilience strategies that depend primarily on institutional authority ([Fu](#), 2025).

3.3. Reimagining Responsibility

Individual, organizational, and institutional orientations reveal a patterned logic in how scholars and practitioners have theorized and operationalized resilience. Responsibility moves upward from individuals to organizations to institutions, expanding the scale of intervention. Yet, the underlying architecture remains vertical. Violence is variably recognized as systemic, but interventions are often unevenly distributed across the prevention continuum, with substantial attention devoted to prevention and long-term recovery but fewer coordinated mechanisms designed to interrupt harm as it unfolds. Accountability is rarely redistributed across the interconnected systems that generate risk. These limitations are consequential given the structural and cumulative challenges shaping journalistic labor, including:

- The normalization of harassment and violence as occupational hazards embedded in routine journalistic labor, not only isolated risks ([Bélair-Gagnon et al.](#), 2024; [Waisbord](#), 2020).
- Unequal exposure to harm structured by intersecting identities, professional roles, employment precarity, and visibility, producing stratified vulnerability across gender, race, sexuality, beat, and status ([Holton et al.](#), 2023; [Miller & Lewis](#), 2020; [Miller](#), 2023).
- Inter-, intra-, and extra-organizational pressures, including newsroom norms, platform governance systems, audience dynamics, and political polarization, constrain how journalists and organizations respond to violence ([Holton et al.](#), 2023; [Waisbord](#), 2023).
- Networked and digitally amplified forms of harassment in which abuse spreads rapidly across platforms, collapses public and private boundaries, and overwhelms individual or organizational coping mechanisms ([Nelson](#), 2023; [Marwick](#), 2021).

These conditions suggest that resilience cannot be fully understood through discrete levels of responsibility alone. As journalists encounter harm across overlapping professional, social, political, and technological environments, resilience must also be conceptualized across the relationships, infrastructures, and institutions through which those environments are sustained.

4. From Hierarchy to Ecology: Networked Resilience as Sustainable Infrastructure

Resilience in journalism continues to be organized through hierarchical flows of authority, even as threats confronting journalists exceed institutional boundaries. The limits of such approaches are especially visible in digital environments, where journalism operates within infrastructures it neither designs nor governs.

Platform architectures reward visibility and engagement while amplifying harassment and constraining journalistic disengagement (Nelson, 2023; Waisbord, 2020). News organizations exercise little control over moderation systems that shape exposure, escalation, and the preservation of evidence, even as they remain economically dependent on platform-driven traffic, advertising revenue, and subscription funnels within an oversaturated information marketplace (see Dodds et al., 2026).

These asymmetries reflect broader institutional shifts as journalism confronts the concentrated power of large technology companies. For decades, media scholarship has documented the remaking of journalism in response to digital platforms, highlighting the normalization of 24/7 news cycles, the cultivation of journalists' personal brands and direct audience engagement, mounting concerns about misinformation and the erosion of professional authority, and the rise of influencers, bloggers, vloggers, and other forms of citizen journalism (Dvir-Gvirsman & Tsurriel, 2022; Laaksonen et al., 2024; Nielsen & Fletcher, 2023; Usher, 2021).

More recently, the proliferation of generative artificial intelligence platforms has introduced additional uncertainties, as AI systems function both as tools that may increase journalistic efficiency and as sources of concern about the further concentration of informational and infrastructural power in the hands of a small number of large technology companies (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2026).

Today, a small, yet powerful, number of platform companies, such as Meta, Google, and OpenAI, shape the economic and political conditions under which news is created, distributed, and monetized. Within these infrastructures, extremist networks, coordinated trolling campaigns, and harassment entrepreneurs flourish, often shielded by expansive interpretations of free speech (Marwick, 2021). This dynamic has intensified amid the political realignment of major technology firms. Silicon Valley's once broadly liberal public posture has, in recent years, bent toward the accommodation of political power, particularly as companies confront regulatory scrutiny (Khanal et al., 2025; Montgomery, 2026).

As platform companies recalibrate political alliances and regulatory strategies, they increasingly structure the terms of public discourse itself. In this environment, they do not simply host journalism; they structure the terms of visibility, monetization, moderation, and audience engagement. Under such conditions, resilience cannot be conceptualized as a property of the journalism institution alone (Bossio et al., 2024a; Holton et al., 2023). Instead, systemic violence necessitates a systemic response.

Ecological Reorientation

Rather than dismissing hierarchical approaches altogether, we advocate for an ecological perspective that considers individual, organizational, and institutional levels collectively, exploring how relationships among individuals, groups, institutions, environments, and broader structural forces shape journalistic resilience. This reorientation is grounded in the concept of communication ecology, "in which journalism influences and is influenced by the environment" in which news is created (M. F. Perreault & Perreault, 2021, p. 977).

Scholars have applied ecological perspectives to examine the dynamics of harassment, risk, and vulnerability through ecological frameworks examining journalism's discursive dimensions (M. F. Perreault & Perreault, 2021), socio-ecological dynamics affecting journalistic risk (individual, interpersonal, institutional, community, and global; Markovikj &

Serafimovska, 2023), and the dimensions of the digital environments in which journalists navigate their relationships to other online creators (Cheng & Avieson, 2025).

While these ecological approaches have been particularly useful for diagnosing how harassment and risk operate across multiple contexts, they have been used less frequently to examine how journalists develop strategies to mitigate, resist, and recover from those harms. In the present study, we extend these perspectives by foregrounding networked ecologies: the dynamic, interdependent systems of actors, platforms, institutions, audiences, policies, and technologies through which journalism is produced, circulated, and contested (M. F. Perreault & Perreault, 2021; Phillips & Milner, 2021; Bruns, 2018; Sjøvaag et al., 2019).

Within these ecologies, power and responsibility are relational—not solely hierarchical—emerging through patterns of connection and coordination across actors, institutions, and platforms rather than residing within any single organization. Approaching resilience through this lens shifts attention from isolated coping or institutionally bounded interventions toward the networked practices, alliances, and infrastructures journalists mobilize to anticipate, absorb, and respond to threats that themselves circulate across interconnected media systems.

We propose an ecological framework for understanding journalistic resilience that operates across and between three interrelated levels: *individual-in-relation*, *collective*, and *networked*. We advance this framework as a conceptual intervention intended to reorient existing scholarship. Importantly, these levels are analytically distinct but empirically overlapping. They are not sequential or hierarchical but mutually constitutive; they overlap and interact with one another as journalists experience and respond to violence and harassment within interconnected systems of actors, institutions, and infrastructures. This approach, outlined in Table 1, expands how responsibility, risk, and sustainability are conceptualized across the journalism ecosystem.

In the following section, we turn to public health prevention models as a translational lens for operationalizing this ecological framework, clarifying how individual-in-relation, collective, and networked resilience might be organized across prevention, intervention, and recovery.

Table 1. Ecological Model of Networked Journalistic Resilience.

Ecological Orientation	Description	Primary Site of Resilience	Key Forms of Support	Illustrative Examples
Individual-in-relation	Resilience emerges through relationships and positions that help journalists manage harm	Peers, mentors, colleagues, affinity groups, and trusted interpersonal networks	Emotional support; safety advice; mentorship; shared knowledge; identity-based recognition; informal care	Queer journalism networks such as NLGJA and the LGBTQ+ Journalism Network; peer support among journalists navigating identity-based harassment
Collective	Coordinated responses among groups of journalists and the organizations that support them	Newsrooms, professional associations, unions/guilds, freelance networks, safety coalitions	Safety protocols; shared professional norms; risk assessment; coordinated editorial response; freelancer protections; cross-organizational collaboration	ACOS Alliance Freelance Journalist Safety Principles; newsroom peer-support groups; professional safety coalitions
Networked	Cross-institutional and platform infrastructures for anticipating, responding to, and recovering from harm	Platforms, advocacy organizations, press freedom groups, legal organizations, technology designers, funders, policymakers, journalism schools	Platform reporting channels; rapid-response advocacy; documentation systems; legal assistance; public solidarity; platform-design interventions; shared safety infrastructure	PressProtect; online violence response hubs; cross-platform documentation and escalation systems; journalist-centered platform safety tools

The first level, *individual-in-relation*, shifts focus away from purely individualized coping strategies toward the relationships through which journalists manage violence and harassment. This reflects a sociological understanding of ecologies in which individuals are always situated within networks of relationships and systems, shaped by, and shaping, the layered interactions that connect people, systems, and environments (Tacchi, 2006).

While much of the existing literature examines how journalists respond to threats through personal coping strategies, an ecological approach highlights how resilience is sustained through trusted relationships and support systems that extend beyond the individual. This encompasses existing intra-organizational literature highlighting support among colleagues and mentors, as well as extra-organizational affinity- and identity-based communities formed around shared experiences.

Queer journalism networks in the United States and the United Kingdom provide one illustration of this relational dimension of resilience. Journalists covering LGBTQ+ issues, or publicly identifying as queer or trans, frequently encounter overlapping forms of professional precarity and identity-based harassment online (Bhat, 2024; Johnson, 2025; Miller, 2023). In response, many rely on informal peer networks to exchange safety advice, provide emotional support, and share strategies for navigating hostile digital environments.

Organizations such as NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists and the LGBTQ+ Journalism Network help facilitate these relationships through mentorship programs, networking spaces, and online community forums (LGBTQ+ Journalism Network, n.d.; NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists, n.d., 2025). The resilience generated through these networks derives from formal organizational policy, but, perhaps more importantly, from durable interpersonal ties, shared knowledge, and mutual recognition they enable across newsrooms, geographic regions, and career stages. Individual journalists are the foundation of this approach, enacting agency, engaging other journalists and resources, and, sometimes, leveraging their unique positionalities to facilitate and bolster their individual resilience.

The *collective* level builds on these relational dynamics but focuses on coordinated responses among groups of journalists and the organizations that support them. Whereas the *individual-in-relation* level emphasizes how journalists draw on interpersonal ties and support networks to navigate violence, the *collective* level emphasizes more organized efforts to address these threats through shared action within newsrooms, across collaborating outlets, or through professional associations, advocacy groups, and press freedom organizations.

Existing research has begun to document informal and structured peer-support groups within newsrooms or geographically bounded professional communities (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2022; Vilk et al., 2024; Šimunjak & Menke, 2023). Our framework extends this work by emphasizing how collective resilience emerges through coordinated safety practices, cross-organizational collaboration, and shared professional responsibility.

The ACOS Alliance provides one example of this collective orientation. Following the kidnapping and murders of journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff in Syria in 2014, the organization developed the Freelance Journalist Safety Principles to establish shared expectations around risk assessment, training, communication, and duty of care between freelance journalists and the news organizations that commission their work. Rather than locating safety responsibility solely at the level of the individual reporter, the principles frame safety as a collective professional obligation distributed across journalists, editors, institutions, and industry partners (ACOS Alliance, n.d.).

In this sense, collective resilience emerges through interpersonal solidarity and the development of coordinated norms, protocols, and professional infrastructures designed to reduce harm and redistribute responsibility across the field.

The *networked* level expands this analysis by focusing on the communicative environments through which these collective efforts increasingly take shape. This level highlights the infrastructures, systems, and institutions—especially digital—that allow journalists, organizations, and advocacy groups to connect across geographic, institutional, and professional boundaries.

Because online abuse often circulates through the same platforms journalists rely on for reporting, collaboration, and audience engagement, resilience increasingly depends on forms of connectivity that extend beyond individual newsrooms or professional communities. This includes practices amplifying the work of targeted journalists, sharing documentation of harassment, or coordinating responses across outlets and advocacy groups. We refer to this configuration as *networked resilience*: a coordinated, multi-actor capacity to anticipate, respond to, and adapt to violence and harassment across institutional and platform boundaries.

Han et al.'s (2024) PressProtect, an interface for journalists to use social media in the face of harassment, illustrates this networked orientation. Developed following interviews with Asian American and Pacific Islander journalists, the project identified how existing platform tools often failed to protect journalists facing targeted harassment on X/Twitter. PressProtect proposed platform-level “defensive defaults” that would give journalists greater control over hostile audience interactions and reduce exposure to coordinated abuse. This example demonstrates how resilience may emerge through interpersonal support or professional coordination, but also through infrastructural interventions embedded within the platforms where journalistic labor occurs. In this sense, networked resilience depends partly on how technological systems themselves are designed, governed, and contested.

This ecological reorientation is well-suited to the systemic and digitally mediated character of contemporary threats. However, without sustained organizational investment, these networks may remain informal and inaccessible, vulnerable to platform decisions and significant emotional labor by a select number of journalists (Holton et al., 2023; Kantola & Harju, 2023).

The challenge, therefore, is to draw awareness to networked resilience and to consolidate it within a broader ecological framework capable of supporting long-term sustainability. To that end, we draw on public health-informed continuums of care as a translational lens. By situating ecological resilience along a spectrum of prevention, intervention, and recovery, these frameworks offer a structured means of operationalizing resilience and embedding it within durable institutional and cross-platform infrastructures.

5. Operationalizing Ecological Approaches to Resilience via Public Health

Journalism studies research occupies a complex position at the intersection of academic inquiry and professional practice. While scholars are deeply invested in supporting a profession under strain, longstanding tensions between journalism research and news work have produced a persistent research–practice gap (Schaetz et al., 2025; Wilner et al., 2025). This divide reflects differing priorities and expectations about what scholarship can deliver in professional settings. For resilience to become embedded in the structures that support journalism, it must be guided by a translational framework that connects scholarly insight with practical application.

Public health provides such a framework, as many of the harms journalists confront are increasingly understood as occupational hazards and population-level health concerns rather than isolated professional challenges (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2024; Waisbord, 2020). Exposure to violence, chronic harassment, traumatic events, burnout, moral injury, and persistent precarity can produce cumulative psychological, emotional, and physical conse-

quences that extend beyond individual incidents or organizations, affecting the health and sustainability of the journalism profession more broadly. Whereas public health approaches are designed to address harms that emerge across interconnected systems, populations, and environments, they are particularly well-suited to understanding contemporary threats to journalistic well-being.

This orientation has increasingly informed scholarship on journalistic well-being and occupational risk. Researchers have drawn on trauma-informed frameworks developed in public health and psychology to examine journalists' exposure to violence, disaster, and chronic stress, while others have adapted occupational health models to analyze newsroom cultures that shape burnout, moral injury, and psychological safety (Feinstein et al., 2025; Niblock, 2023; Seely, 2019; Stanford Medicine WellMD & WellPhD Center, n.d.). Public health frameworks do more than diagnose harm; they provide models for organizing prevention, intervention, and recovery across interconnected systems. In doing so, they help translate ecological understandings of resilience into distributed and actionable forms of care and responsibility.

Consequently, public health models align well with ecological approaches to journalistic resilience that emphasize the layered conditions shaping journalistic resilience. Organizational culture, identity-based vulnerability, digital exposure, social support networks, and the meaning journalists derive from their professional roles interact to influence how individuals experience and respond to risk.

Within public health, these commitments to collective care and shared responsibility are often operationalized through prevention frameworks that organize responses across a continuum of risk. Rather than concentrating resources solely at the point of recovery, such models distinguish between efforts to prevent harm before it occurs, mitigate or interrupt harm as it emerges, and support recovery after harm. Developed in response to the limitations of acute-care and individual behavior models, these frameworks treat harm as patterned and therefore preventable, requiring coordinated responses across multiple levels and stages of risk.

The primary–secondary–tertiary prevention model is particularly instructive in this regard (see Calvet et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2022). The model demonstrates how systems that concentrate resources at the point of recovery consistently fail to address the structural conditions that produce recurring harm. By distinguishing between upstream prevention, midstream intervention, and downstream recovery, the model translates resilience from an abstract ideal into a pragmatic framework for capacity building. It enables scholars and practitioners to identify where responsibility is concentrated, which stages of response are overemphasized, and where preventive investment is lacking.

Within this framework, primary prevention refers to upstream efforts aimed at reducing the conditions that make harm more likely before it occurs. Secondary prevention involves midstream interventions designed to identify, interrupt, or mitigate harm as it emerges. Tertiary prevention focuses on downstream forms of recovery, rehabilitation, and longer-term support after harm has occurred. To clarify how this ecological approach redistributes responsibility across the broader journalism ecology, Table 2 maps the three orientations to resilience we identified (individual-in-relation, collective, and networked) across the prevention continuum. The table identifies primary actors or responsibility holders at each level while also illustrating how prevention, intervention, and recovery might operate in practice.

Table 2. Ecological Orientations Across the Prevention Continuum.

Ecological Orientation	Primary Responsibility Holders	Primary Prevention: Reduce Conditions of Harm	Secondary Prevention: Interrupt Harm as It Emerges	Tertiary Prevention: Support Recovery After Harm
Individual-in-relation	Journalists, peers, mentors, colleagues, affinity networks, and care providers	Peer mentoring; digital safety planning; identity-affirming support networks; informal knowledge sharing	Immediate check-ins; emotional support; documentation help; connection to newsroom, legal, or professional resources	Ongoing peer support; mentorship after harm; connection to mental health, legal, or professional resources; support for continued participation in journalism
Collective	Newsrooms, editors, managers, unions, guilds, freelance networks, professional associations, and safety coalitions	Newsroom safety protocols; beat-specific risk assessments; manager training; freelancer safety expectations; cross-outlet preparation for high-risk coverage	Escalation protocols; coordinated editorial response; legal consultation; workload adjustments; public statements of support; shared documentation practices	Organizational debriefs; workload or beat adjustments; policy revision; sustained support for freelancers, junior staff, and marginalized journalists
Networked	Platforms, advocacy groups, legal bodies, funders, journalism schools, policymakers, and public institutions	Shared safety infrastructure; platform design; partnerships among newsrooms, advocacy groups, legal organizations, and platform contacts; public education	Cross-platform reporting channels; rapid legal assistance; coordinated advocacy; public solidarity campaigns; platform escalation pathways; preservation of evidence	Policy advocacy; platform accountability work; funding for safety, relocation, legal defense, or sustained care; evaluation of interventions and shared learning across the field

Such an approach resonates with calls to integrate care ethics into journalism, which “emphasizes universal ethical behavior based on ‘caring for’ and ‘caring about,’ placing ethical decision-making within the realm of human relationships and responsibility” (Hossain & Aucoin, 2018, p. 202). By foregrounding empathy, moral responsibility, and equity, a care-centered perspective reframes resilience not as an individual capacity to endure hardship but as a collective commitment to sustaining the people and relationships that make journalism possible (Mathewson, 2022).

Taken together, this logic shifts resilience from an individual attribute to a systems-level capacity distributed across the structures that support journalism (i.e., institutions, networks, policies, technologies, professional communities, etc.) to anticipate, absorb, respond to, and adapt to threats. Instead of asking how journalists can better predict and endure hostility, harassment, or trauma, a continuum-oriented approach asks how networked ecologies—institutions, professional organizations, digital platforms, and communities—can absorb and reduce exposure upstream, interrupt escalation as it unfolds, and sustain recovery when harm occurs.

Where hierarchical models have produced effective resources at the primary and tertiary tiers of support, those focused on secondary prevention—interventions designed to identify, interrupt, or mitigate harm as risk emerges—are more limited. Moreover, many existing initiatives remain siloed within institutional networks, constraining their reach and limiting opportunities for coordinated response.

Adopting an ecological perspective allows scholars and practitioners to identify solutions across the more robust spectrum of prevention while situating them within the social and professional contexts through which resilience is produced. This approach recognizes how resilience is shaped in newsrooms and through the spaces, relationships, identities, and communities that structure journalists' work. Doing so expands our understanding of the resources already available and redistributes responsibility for response across a broader range of actors involved in sustaining journalistic well-being.

6. Conclusions

Resilience has emerged as a central framework for understanding how journalists continue to work under conditions of sustained risk. Yet, as we show, existing scholarship often conceptualizes resilience through hierarchical models that distribute responsibility across bounded levels of authority: individual coping, newsroom policy, or institutional advocacy. While these approaches have rightfully expanded attention to journalists' well-being, they remain unevenly coordinated across stages of response. Prevention and longer-term support are often more developed than the immediate mechanisms needed to interrupt harassment as it unfolds, and they do not always account for the layered institutions, contexts, and spaces through which resilience emerges.

In response, this paper advances an ecological reorientation of journalistic resilience that conceptualizes well-being as a relational and distributed capacity emerging across interconnected systems. By offering and distinguishing between individual-in-relation, collective, and networked levels of resilience, we provide a clearer analytical framework for examining how journalists anticipate, navigate, and respond to occupational threats across professional, technological, and institutional environments. By situating resilience within the broader ecosystems that shape journalistic labor, we build on existing scholarship (see [Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2024](#), who used a public health approach to look at actors and tactics, identification of risk, and protective factors) and offer a foundation for rethinking how journalism as a field conceptualizes protection, care, and sustainability in an era of persistent risk.

To translate this ecological perspective into actionable strategies, we draw on public health frameworks to demonstrate how resilience can be operationalized across stages of risk and systems of responsibility. In doing so, this work advances critical shifts in the way journalism scholars and practitioners conceptualize and operationalize resilience.

First, it positions response to harm as multidimensional. Because health is understood as the product of layered professional, social, and demographic conditions, prevention must address the broader social and institutional determinants of harm ([DiGuseppi et al., 2025](#); [Singh et al., 2022](#)). Second, prevention shifts upstream. By highlighting the social determinants of harm, whole person health encourages investment in structural and environmental interventions that reduce exposure to risk before violence escalates ([Calvet et al., 2021](#); [DiGuseppi et al., 2025](#)). Third, care becomes continuous rather than episodic. Prevention frameworks establish a continuum of care across stages of risk, while whole person health ensures that this continuum addresses the full range of factors shaping well-being rather than focusing narrowly on crisis response ([Calvet et al., 2021](#); [Hossain & Aucoin, 2018](#); [Mathewson, 2022](#); [Singh et al., 2022](#)).

Amid threats to journalists and the legitimacy of the journalism institution, ecological approaches to resilience offer a pathway for aligning scholarship, intra-institutional practice, and extra-organizational professional support infrastructures. Future research should examine how ecological resilience models function, particularly in at-risk communities, especially in digital spaces where much of the violence occurs.

To improve support systems and resources available to journalists, and perhaps to strengthen their well-being and help them sustain longer, more productive careers, we encourage scholars and professionals to test and evaluate the efficacy of their responses within networked ecologies and across a continuum of care that more accurately operationalizes and measures resilience.

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