5th WORLD EDUCATION JOURNALISM CONGRESS
9th-11th JULY 2019

"TEACHING JOURNALISM DURING A DISRUPTIVE AGE"

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS WJEC PARIS
5th World Journalism Education Congress Proceedings
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Dear WJEC delegate,

This fifth edition of the World Journalism Education Congress was an unprecedented success. More than 600 delegates from 70 countries gathered in July 2019 to take stock and share the best practices in the field of Journalism Education.

The fruit of this work is this book, consisting of a large part of the communications that fed dozens of paper sessions, plenaries, and roundtables.

The challenges facing both journalism and journalism training are unprecedented. It is more essential than ever to share the work of colleagues from all over the world, thus permitting to inspire all schools of journalism.

I want to thank Philippe Rodrigues-Rouleau, a doctoral student of Professor Marc-François Bernier of the University of Ottawa, who did the enormous work of collecting and shaping these acts. Thanks to this, Paris will leave its mark on the history of our discipline.

After these forewords, you will find the Paris Declaration on Freedom of Journalism Education, signed on July 10 at the City Hall. I urge you to read this text and share with your colleagues and the authorities of your countries.

Pascal GUÉNÉE,
WJEC Paris 2019 Chairperson, head of School,
IPJ Dauphine | PSL Journalism School
It is my honor and a privilege to present the conference proceedings of the WJEC 2019 held in Paris in July 2019.

These proceedings include more than 80 of the 200 papers presented at the WJEC 2019, which has been the most popular and successful congress of all the WJEC, with more than 600 participants, professors, researchers, professionals, and representatives of journalism schools from 70 countries.

The papers are distributed under different topics which are:

- Fact Checking & Verification in the Era of Fake News & Post Truth
- When the Fourth Estate Collides with the Fifth Estate
- Ethical Challenges for Teaching and Undertaking New Forms of Journalism
- One Journalism or Many Journalisms? Connecting Students with Multiple Conceptions and Ways of Work
- Sociology of Journalism in a Fast-Evolving Sector
- Technological Mutations and The Future of Journalistic Practices.

As you can appreciate, there is a lot to read and cogitate.

As the Chair of the Scientific Committee, I would like to thanks many of the participants who have submitted papers and have acted as peer reviewers at the same time. The scientific mission of the WJEC, as it is the case in any scientific associations, can’t be achieved without this deep involvement from many of you.

Marc-François BERNIER (Ph. D.),
Chair of the WJEC Paris 2019 Scientific Committee,
Full Professor at the Department of Communication at the University of Ottawa.
It is my pleasure to recommend this unique volume produced from the robust content of WJEC 2019.

Not only was this latest iteration of World Journalism Education Congress the largest, but it also had the strongest intellectual value. We have known for years that WJEC has held great value for those who attend the congress and have the opportunity to bathe in the rich, diverse content and build relationships with participants from as many as 70 different countries. More recently, we have seen the importance of preserving as much of that valuable content as possible and distributing it to a much broader audience that will be able to access it for years to come. These proceedings do that and also provide an important stepping stone to the content that came before and that will be discovered in the future. We appreciate the exemplary work that Pascal Guénée and his associate, Sophie Puig, have done to make these important proceedings available to the world.

WJEC has been fortunate to provide stimulating content and personal interaction in Singapore (2007), Grahamstown, South Africa (2010), Mechelen, Belgium (2013), Auckland, New Zealand (2016) and Paris (2019). The World Journalism Education Council is a council of journalism education associations with members from every continent. WJEC has a proud tradition that will only become stronger under the new leadership of Dr. Verica Rupar from the Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. It has been my incredible honor to be the founding chair of this movement. While we look forward to Beijing/Shanghai in 2022, we should take stock of the robust content that the impressive Paris meeting produced.

Joe FOOTE
WJEC Chair Emeritus
Déclaration de Paris sur la liberté d’enseignement du journalisme
Adoptée à l’unanimité par le Conseil Mondial des Écoles de Journalisme lors de sa séance plénière du 8 juillet 2019

Nous, membres du Conseil Mondial des Écoles de Journalisme :

Sommes convaincus qu’il existe un lien étroit entre la qualité de l’enseignement du journalisme et la qualité de l’information à laquelle les personnes ont droit.

Sommes convaincus qu’il ne peut y avoir un environnement d’information de qualité sans journalisme de qualité.

Sommes convaincus que la qualité du journalisme dépend en grande partie d’une formation initiale et d’une formation continue adéquates.

Sommes convaincus que la formation au journalisme a un rôle fondamental à jouer en faveur de sociétés plus inclusives et du programme de développement 2030 des Nations Unies.

Sommes convaincus que cette Déclaration aidera les collègues à faire comprendre à leurs autorités la spécificité de l’enseignement du journalisme tant du point de vue académique que de celui des ressources.

De plus, nous sommes convaincus que cette Déclaration contribuera à renforcer le WJEC (Conseil Mondial des Écoles de Journalisme) en tant que réseau mondial de formateurs au journalisme.

Préambule :

• Réaffirmant la Déclaration de principes élaborée lors de la première réunion du Congrès mondial de formation au journalisme à Singapour en 2007, qui préconisait la formation au journalisme comme un domaine distinct, avec son propre corpus de connaissances et de théories, étroitement lié à la pratique du journalisme et méritant le respect au sein des milieux universitaires et professionnels;

• Notant que le journalisme, en tant que discipline académique, joue un rôle important dans la société, notamment en ce qui concerne les progrès réalisés vers la réalisation des objectifs de développement durable de l’ONU;

• Reconnaissant qu’à une époque de désinformation, de mésoinformation et de menaces pour la liberté de la presse, le rôle du journalisme indépendant est plus important que jamais;

• Constatant que les ressources allouées à la formation au journalisme sont un investissement dans la capacité institutionnelle à long terme pour aider à garantir un journalisme fort, indépendant et de qualité ;

• Assumant le rôle clé que la formation au journalisme peut jouer en cette période historique :
S’entendent sur les principes suivants pour les enseignants et les formateurs en journalisme, tant universitaires que professionnels :

- Maintenir une gouvernance solide et indépendante des écoles de journalisme et des départements de journalisme, qui doivent avoir un niveau de pouvoir et de prise de décision équivalent à ceux d’une faculté, et dont l’autonomie académique est reconnue des acteurs externes ;
- Préserrer l’enseignement du journalisme en tant que champ distinct par rapport aux autres domaines de la communication ;
- Mobiliser les financements nécessaires à l’excellence des programmes d’études et aux activités pratiques, requis pour la qualité du fonctionnement d’une école de journalisme ;
- Maintenir un équilibre entre les connaissances universitaires et les compétences techniques nécessaires au métier de journalistes ;
- Reconnaître l’égalité de genre dans et par la formation au journalisme comme une priorité ;
- Promouvoir la diversité en tant que facteur clé de la formation au journalisme : diversité des étudiants, diversité du personnel, diversité dans les sujets enseignés ;
- Encourager un esprit critique dans la recherche sur l’enseignement du journalisme, y compris en ce qui concerne les innovations en matière de pédagogie, les expériences, les pratiques journalistiques et les modèles d’affaires.

En conséquence, nous, Membres du Conseil Mondial des Écoles de Journalisme, appelons :

- Les enseignants et formateurs en journalisme et leurs institutions et organisations à promouvoir l’adhésion à la présente Déclaration ;
- les responsables de l’enseignement supérieur et des ONG dédiées à la formation au journalisme, pour qu’ils prennent en compte ces principes dans leur pratique ;
- les départements nationaux de l’éducation, les industries médiatiques, les entreprises privées et les donateurs, y compris les donateurs internationaux, à assurer un financement suffisant à l’enseignement du journalisme tout en respectant son indépendance ;
- le Programme international de l’UNESCO pour le développement de la communication à soutenir cette Déclaration et la porter à l’attention des États membres de l’UNESCO.
Paris Declaration on Freedom of Journalism Education

Adopted by the World Journalism Education Council during its plenary session, on July 8th 2019.

We, members of the World Journalism Education Council:

We believe there is a strong link between the quality of journalism education and the quality of information people to which they are entitled to.

We believe that there cannot be an environment of quality information without quality journalism.

We believe that quality journalism depends greatly on proper journalism education and training.

We believe that journalism education has a fundamental role to play towards more inclusive societies and the United Nations' 2030 development agenda.

We believe that this Declaration would help colleagues to make their authorities understand the specificity of journalism education from the academic and from the resources point of view.

Furthermore, we believe that this Declaration would contribute to strengthening the WJEC as a global network of journalism educators.

Preamble:

• Reinforcing the Declaration of Principles developed at the first meeting of the World Journalism Education Congress in Singapore in 2007 which advocated for journalism education as a distinct field with its own body of knowledge and theory, closely allied with the practice of journalism and deserving respect within both the academic and professional communities;

• Noting that journalism, as an academic discipline, plays a significant role in society including progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals;

• Acknowledging that in an age of disinformation, misinformation and threat to press freedom, the role of independent journalism is more important than ever;

• Observing that resources allocated to journalism education are an investment in long-term institutional capacity to help guarantee strong, independent and quality journalism;

• Responding to the key role that journalism education can play in this historical period:

Agrees on the following principles for journalism educators and trainers, academic as well as professional:

• Maintain strong and independent governance of journalism schools and journalism departments, which should have a faculty level of power and decision-making, and have recognized academic autonomy from external actors;

• Preserve journalism education as a distinctive stream compared to other fields of mass and strategic communication;
• Mobilize the necessary funding for excellence in curricula and extracurricular outreach as required for the quality functioning of a journalism school;
• Maintain a balance between academic knowledge and the technical skills of the journalism craft;
• Recognize gender equality in and through journalism education as a cross-cutting priority;
• Promote diversity as a key factor in journalism education: diversity among students, diversity among staff, diversity among topics taught;
• Encourage a critical spirit for journalism education research, including in experiments and innovations concerning pedagogies, journalistic practices and media business models.

Therefore we, Members of the World Journalism Education Council, calls on:

• Journalism educators and trainers and their institutions and organizations to advocate for adherence to this Declaration;
• Leaders in higher education and training NGOs to take the principles into their practice;
• National departments of education, media industries, private businesses and donors, including international donors, to ensure sufficient funding for journalism education while respecting its independence;
• UNESCO’s International Programme for the Development of Communication to support this Declaration and bring it to the attention of UNESCO member states.
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FACT CHECKING & VERIFICATION IN THE ERA OF FAKE NEWS & POST TRUTH
Montreal’s “Robo-Calèches” Controversy: An Alternate Reality Live Verification Simulation

Elyse Amend
Concordia University, Montreal, Québec, Canada

Abstract

In response to the context of increased mis- and disinformation and so-called “fake news” faced by journalists today, this paper reports on the results of an experimental in-class fact-checking and verification simulation with 23 second-year undergraduate students, conducted as part of a research methods course in Concordia University’s Journalism Department. By analyzing and connecting student articles based on the simulation, final assignment responses, and the results of a voluntary anonymous questionnaire, this research seeks to provide insight into the use of simulations to teach fact-checking and verification, and bridge a theory-practice gap often experienced in journalism education and training.

Introduction

This paper reports on the results of an experimental in-class simulation focused on challenging second-year undergraduate journalism students to apply verification and fact-checking skills during a live and dynamic event. The impetus for carrying out this experimental simulation was borne from consistent observations of students enacting what Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2014) refer to as “journalism of assertion.” Oftentimes, students will consult and quote numerous sources in an effort to achieve “balance” in their stories, but do not carry out extensive verification of source statements in favour of producing stories quickly in news environments that necessitate immediacy.

There has been much talk over the past few years about the importance of fact-checking and verification in the face of increased dis- and misinformation, and within the context of so-called “fake news.” As Guy Berger (2018, 9) notes, proliferation of dis- and misinformation means journalists are at increased risk of being duped by questionable information or malicious actors, and of becoming the targets of lies, hoaxes, and campaigns that seek to discredit them. Some worry the proliferation of such dishonest information and low levels of media literacy will lead to a situation in which publics increasingly distrust journalism and rely on information spread within their own social networks, that confirms their already-held beliefs, and which is often inaccurate. Some have expressed this reality is already discernable through observed “negative impacts…on public beliefs about health, science, intercultural understanding and the status of authentic expertise” (Berger, 2018, 9).

In this context, journalism educators must play a central role in providing journalists-in-training increased opportunities to encounter fact-checking and verification, and to hone these skills in the classroom before experiencing them on the job where the stakes are arguably much higher. There have in recent years been a number of instructive resources produced to guide journalism teachers
in implementing fact-checking and verification in the classroom. Many of these focus on helping students learn how to systematically corroborate source statements and verify information, and outline digital tools to help authenticate audio-visual material. These resources have made invaluable contributions to journalism education. However, many seem to prioritize verification processes that happen “outside of the action” or on fact-checking other people’s work. This paper, and the experimental in-class simulation it reports on, thus mainly seek to offer input on how educators can approach teaching fact-checking and verification “on-the-spot” and in more dynamic ways, and to help bridge a theory-practice gap often experienced in journalism education and training (Kay et al., 2011).

Verification, Fact-Checking, and In-Class Simulations

The term “fact-checking” in journalism is commonly understood as the process of validating politician and public figure statements against other trusted sources (Silverman, 2016). “Verification” refers to editorial processes of validating the accuracy of statements and facts before stories are published or broadcast (Silverman, 2016). While these two closely-related practices have been increasingly part of discussions about journalism in recent years, they are nothing new (Merpert et al., 2018; Ireton & Posetti, 2018; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). As Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) note, verification is what sets journalism apart from other forms of mass media:

“In the end, the discipline of verification is what separates journalism from entertainment, propaganda, fiction, or art. Entertainment – or its cousin “infotainment” – focuses on what is most diverting. Propaganda selects facts or invents them to serve the real purpose: persuasion and manipulation. Fiction invents scenarios to get at a more personal impression of what it calls truth. Journalism alone is focused on the process employed to get what happened down right.” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, 98-99)

What is different in the current context is the ubiquity of dubious information and its increased proliferation, especially through online channels including social media, where quality control of what gets spread as “news” is generally low (Ireton & Posetti, 2018, 17).

A recent handbook part of UNESCO’s Series on Journalism Education (Ireton & Posetti, 2018) defines three categories of problematic information: (1) disinformation, or “deliberate (often orchestrated) attempts to confuse or manipulate people through delivering dishonest information” (Berger, 2018, 7); (2) misinformation, or “misleading information created or disseminated without manipulative or malicious intent” (Berger, 2018, 7); and (3) malinformation, or information that is largely true, but is created or distributed by “agents” with an intent to harm an individual or group (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2018, 46).

Today’s journalist—and by extension, today’s journalism student and educator—can encounter these three forms of dishonest information in their day-to-day work. However, some have observed working journalists do not employ a homogenous set of particular fact-checking and verification

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1. Examples include Ireton & Posetti’s Journalism, ‘Fake News’ & Disinformation (2018), Silverman’s The Verification Handbook (2014), Bradshaw’s revised Online Journalism Handbook (2017), the Canadian Journalism Foundation and CIVIX’s joint NewsWise initiative, resources from the Poynter Institute and their International Fact-Checking Day material, among others.
practices, while many journalism textbooks and educational resources either omit or brush over such skills (Shapiro et al., 2013). Thus, this research turned to classroom simulations as a teaching strategy grounded in experiential learning and focused on dynamic, on-the-spot practices and outcomes. Successful simulations are carefully-designed learning experiences that work to recreate believable situations and the choices and consequences involved in them (Amend, Kay & Reilly, 2012). Classroom simulations are generally organized into three stages: (1) the preparation phase, during which students are provided instruction and background material; (2) the interaction phase, during which students apply what was learnt in the preparation phase and test different strategies to achieve their goals during the actual simulation; and (3) the debriefing phase, during which students (and instructors) reflect on what they learnt through the simulation in discussions and/or written assignments (Asal & Blake, 2006, 3).

Many have recognized simulations as able to stimulate student interest and engagement with learning material beyond the textbook through hands-on activities, help them learn from first-hand experience, and encourage discussion and teamwork (Anderson, Swenson & Kinsella, 2014, 86; Asal & Blake, 2006; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Hess, 1999). Simulations have also been noted to help students retain information, apply often abstract concepts to practical problems, and shift students’ roles from the recipients of knowledge to active participants in learning processes (Olson, 2012; Fink, 2003; Hertel & Millis, 2002; Veil, 2010; Dutta-Bergman, Madhavan, & Arns, 2005; Worley, 2007; Shellman & Turan, 2006). Additionally, classroom simulations give students the opportunity to apply new skills they may not yet be completely comfortable with in a lower-stakes environment (Amend, Kay & Reilly, 2012), and allow them to learn from their mistakes (Olson, 2012; Sasley, 2010).

Despite such positive outcomes, some have noted in-class simulations are not extensively used in journalism education (Olson, 2012; Amend, Kay & Reilly, 2012). To respond to this gap, this research sought to carry out an in-class live verification simulation with 23 second-year journalism students.

**Course Background and Simulation Design**

The experimental in-class simulation took place Nov. 20, 2018, near the end of the Fall 2018 semester. It was part of a second-year undergraduate course titled Research Methods for Journalism in Concordia University’s Journalism Department. Overall, this course seeks to introduce students to journalistic research methods with a focus on primary sources, such as official documents, legal and financial records, access to information/freedom of information requests, electronic databases, and in-depth interviews. The main course objectives are to teach students skills needed to make sense of information gathered through research, and use it to report accurate and compelling stories.

I made the decision to carry out this pedagogical experiment based on observations of students not applying textbook knowledge related to fact-checking and verification processes to their work. I consistently noticed students would include a number of statements from diverse sources in their assignments, using a somewhat misconstrued version of the two- or three-source rule as a replacement of thorough verification practices. Two comments I have often found myself noting on student assignments are, “Just because someone says something doesn’t mean it’s true,” and, “Don’t forget, even well-meaning sources can be wrong.” I wanted to organize a classroom experience that would achieve three main goals: (1) remind students of the importance of
developing a critical and skeptical attitude and not taking source reliability for granted; (2) give students the opportunity to experiment with the fact-checking and verification tools covered during the course; and (3) raise information retention through hands-on learning in a safe environment.

The ensuing in-class simulation involved an alternate reality based on current events in Montreal: we held a mock-press conference led by an actor posing as the president of a technology company whose contract with the City of Montreal was put in jeopardy after one of their automated robotic horse-drawn carriages malfunctioned and caused a traffic accident and serious injury to pedestrians. This scenario was chosen for two main reasons: first, rather than mimicking a more serious or traumatic event, this scenario put forth a playful alternate reality with a lesser chance of negatively impacting students. Second, in reality, there has actually been an ongoing controversy around horse-drawn carriages in Montreal—known locally by the French “calèches”—following several incidents in past years where the well-being of the horses and the safety of pedestrians have been called into question. As a result, the City of Montreal moved to completely ban these popular tourist attractions by 2020. This news story is one students were deeply familiar with, and thus was chosen to frame the alternate reality scenario for the exercise. The simulation followed a three-phase organization, as outlined by Asal and Blake (2006):

(1) Preparation

About one month before the simulation date, students attended two classes specifically involving practices of fact-checking and verification. The first was focused on how to spot and substantiate a “verifiable” or “checkable” statement, such as historical facts and data, comparisons, legality, and statistical information, and discerning the differences between fact and opinion (Merpert et al., 2018). The lecture underscored the importance of developing increased media literacy and a habit of skepticism. The second preparatory class involved a workshop that introduced students to online and social media verification, and digital tools for corroborating images and videos.

Two weeks before the in-class simulation, I also introduced students to the concepts, goals, and rules of the Nov. 20 exercise, and what was expected of them in the related final assignment. One week before the in-class simulation, students received background information on the simulation’s alternate reality scenario via a mock press release.

(2) Interaction

Prior to beginning the actual in-class simulation on Nov. 20, students were reminded of the rules and scenario background. Then, an actor posing as the president of the fictional company proceeded to give a 30-minute press conference accompanied by a 17-slide presentation with text, numerical, and visual material. During the press conference, students were challenged to identify and verify the actor’s statements as he attempted to shift blame, and dropped a trail of mis- and disinformation along the way.

The press conference script included 26 verifiable true statements, for example:
• “Fares are regulated at $53 for a 30-minute ride and $85 for 60 minutes.
• The weather may have been a factor in the accident, due to that morning’s light mixed precipitation of rain and snow.

The press conference script also included 16 verifiable false statements such as:

• “In 2017, nearly 30 million tourists from around the world visited Montreal.” (In 2017, 11.1 million tourists visited Montreal.)
• “Another vehicle going down St. Vincent Street attempted to make an illegal left turn onto de la Commune.” (St. Vincent and de la Commune Streets do not intersect.)

Furthermore, the accompanying slides contained 18 verifiable false elements, including textual statements and images with misleading captions.

The mock press conference was followed by a 15-minute question period, during which students asked the actor to clarify elements and revisit material on the slides. Students were allowed to take written notes and use their laptops during the simulation; they were not allowed to record the mock press conference or question period. Students had the remainder of the class (about 60 minutes) to produce an accurate 350-word news article that reported on the day’s events.

**Debriefing**

Following the in-class simulation, students had one week to completed a final report assignment based on it. Students were given access to the slideshow presentation part of the mock press conference, but not to the script. The assignment required them to thoroughly address four points:

1. The press conference and accompanying slides included at least 34 verifiable false statements. Identify 10 of those false claims. For each, describe how you went about debunking it. Include at least two sources for each claim that helped prove it false.

2. The press conference included a number of verifiable true statements. Identify at least five accurate elements. For each, provide at least two sources that helped prove it true.

3. Draw up a brief plan for how you would theoretically go about researching [the company’s] shady practices and its relationship with the City of Montreal. In other words, who would you talk to and what documents would you go after?

4. Describe what you think the importance of fact-checking and verification is, and what the journalist’s role in them is. If this entire scenario were actually true, what do you think the effects of publishing your article without fact-checking and verification could have been?

During the last class of the semester on Nov. 27, 2018, we held a post-mortem on the in-class simulation, the final report results, and the students’ main takeaways and learning outcomes from them. To capture as much information as possible, students were also asked fill out an anonymous,
voluntary qualitative questionnaire following the exercise, which was used to evaluate the simulation and their learning outcomes.

Findings

For the purpose of this research, three data sources were analyzed to provide insight into the simulation itself, the students’ performance, and their main takeaways from it: (1) the short articles students produced; (2) the students’ final report assignments; and (3) the voluntary anonymous questionnaire. The student articles were analyzed for both factual and false statements, and the types of sources they used in their reporting. The analysis of the articles sought to provide some insight into how well students applied the fact-checking and verification skills they learnt in the course “on the spot.” The final report assignments were analyzed for two main components, namely how well students applied fact-checking and verification after the fact, and for the main themes that emerged out of their discussions of the importance of fact-checking and verification to journalism. Finally, student responses to the voluntary anonymous questionnaire were analyzed to gauge both their perceived learning outcomes and reaction to the in-class simulation.

Student articles

In total, 22 of the 23 students (96%) submitted articles about the mock press conference by the deadline, 15 (68%) of which were free of factual errors. This indicates a promising rate of successful fact-checking and verification. However, seven students (32%) submitted work that included one or more pieces of mis- or disinformation as a result of directly repeating false statements the actor made during the mock press conference.

In addition, while the majority of students did succeed at submitting articles free of inaccurate or misleading information, it is somewhat disappointing 20 of the 22 (91%) submitted single-source stories (i.e. based only on material presented during the mock press conference), or submitted stories that lacked clear source identification (i.e. articles indicated students used other sources in their research to debunk false claims, but these were not clearly identified). Only two of the 22 articles (9%) clearly included other sources in their articles. In these, students relied on official sources—such as publicly available documents and statistics from the City of Montreal—and other news reports. For example, one article noted:

“The Cybertime CEO was eager to stress the role that the Model T-800 Robo-calèche would play in saving the city’s tourism industry, which he claimed brought over 30 million tourists to the city in 2017. Tourisme Montreal, however, reported just over 11.1 million visitors from around the world in the same span.”

Interestingly, 20 of the 22 (91%) student articles made it a point to signal that, while there were some things they did know for sure, there were also others they did not, demonstrating one of Kovach and Rosenstiel’s (2014) key components of transparent and responsible journalism. They write:

“If nothing else, this responsibility [of transparency] requires that those engaged in journalism be as open and honest with audiences as they can about what they know and what they don’t. How can you claim to be seeking to convey the truth if you’re not truthful with the audience in the first place.” (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014, 114)
Gestures toward transparency and humility were discernable in students articles through statements such as:

“A CyberTime Industry press release stated that ‘early reports have attributed the incident to a malfunction in the Model T-800 Robo-calèche’s onboard computer, caused by moisture that infiltrated its system after that morning’s light rain.’ These claims have yet to be verified.”

“Witnesses say the vehicle was a 2017 Toyota Camry, license plate starting with TS13. Information on this incident and the driver are still being determined.”

**Final report assignment**

In total, all 23 students submitted a final report assignment, and all were able to successfully verify the required five accurate claims within the one-week deadline. As for the required 10 false statements, 11 of 23 students (48%) successfully debunked 10 false claims and provided the required sources that helped them do so. However, seven of 23 (30%) were only able to debunk eight or nine statements. Three out of 23 (13%) discredited only six or seven false statements, while two out of 23 students (9%) debunked five or fewer of the required 10 false statements.

While not all 23 students completed this part of the assignment with full marks, it is promising that success rates for this exercise were relatively high. Perhaps more importantly, however, were the themes that surfaced out of the student reflections on the importance of fact-checking and verification in journalism. Four significant themes emerged:

1. **Responsibility to the audience/public**

   The most prevalent theme in the student responses was the role thorough verification and fact-checking play in producing accurate and responsible journalism for audiences/publics. The theme was present in 17 of 23 responses (74%), indicating these students felt a certain level of accountability to their perceived audiences. Students expressed this theme in a number of ways, for example:

   “A journalist’s job is to inform the public and hold people accountable. If their information isn’t accurate they can be doing more harm than good and creating even more confusion.”

   “Truth and accurate information can help the people make enlightened decisions. The journalist’s role is therefore to protect the citizen from abuse, and to empower them.”

2. **Responsibility to themselves**

   As noted above, while 17 of 23 students responded fact-checking and verification were most important to uphold their journalistic responsibility to “the public,” an almost equal number of respondents—16 of 23 (70%)—said it was just as important for protecting their own bylines and reputations as journalists. Most of these students, however, did not take a purely self-interested approach to this, but strongly connected it to the first theme of carrying out their responsibility to their audiences. This second theme was expressed in similar ways across student responses:
“I believe that if this would have occurred, I would have certainly been called out by readers, my editor, or other journalists, and maybe even fired. In a time where information is easily accessible everywhere, I would have no excuse to not have fact checked or verified the information. My journalism career would then certainly be at risk due to this.”

“If we, as future working journalists, want to be seen as a reliable source we must continue to check the information given to us, as well as the information we find ourselves—especially since we are entering this domain during the fake news crisis.”

Such responses indicate verification and fact-checking are on students’ minds especially in the current climate of increased mis- and disinformation (Berger, 2018) and so-called “fake news,” which closely ties to a third theme present in student responses.

(3) **Combating the “fake news” climate**

While not quite as prevalent as the first two themes of responsibility to one’s audience and responsibility to oneself as a journalist, a third theme present in 10 of 23 responses (43%) was fact-checking and verification as a way to counter charges of dis- and misinformation made against journalism. Some students expressed this by directly mentioning so-called “fake news”:

“Moreover, by not fact-checking, the journalist doing so is misleading and contributing to fake news.”

“Journalists often brush over the importance of fact-checking, but in an era where fake news is on the rise and when government officials start blatantly lying to the public, verification and fact-checking is more important than ever.”

Others noted combating the spread of mis- and disinformation was part of the journalist’s role in upholding the reputation of journalism itself:

“The misinformation could quite literally potentially cause mayhem and the world of journalism might actually cease to function properly.”

“I think accuracy, through fact-checking and verification, is perhaps the most important foundational aspect of journalism. It is what fundamentally separates news from entertainment, fact from fiction.”

(4) **Importance of transparency and humility**

A final theme present in student responses was not as widespread, but is still important to consider: four of 23 (17%) noted the importance of transparency, humility, and skepticism, along the same lines Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) do. For example, a handful of student responses included statements such as:

“I was very careful in the facts that I included in the article. I also warned the reader that fact-checking was still in [progress], because I knew that most of the information was unreliable. Journalists must get involved in a timely manner, but they should be careful with the information that they could not verify on time.”
“Believing things are false is not a bad habit because it reminds you that it is easy to bend the truth and verification is always necessary.”

Qualitative surveys

At the end of the semester, students were asked to fill out a voluntary anonymous survey to gauge their learning outcomes and views on the in-class simulation. The survey response rate was generally low—only eight of 23 students (35%) returned a completed survey. Despite this low rate, however, the consistency across responses merits some consideration. As outlined below, students were asked to briefly address eight questions on the qualitative survey:

**Question 1: How would you describe your fact-checking and verification knowledge and skills prior to taking the course?**

Seven of eight respondents (87.5%) described their levels of knowledge about fact-checking and verification as “mediocre” or “average.” One of eight (12.5%) described their knowledge level as “nothing.”

**Question 2: What fact-checking and verification tools, if any, did you have experience using prior to taking the course?**

Seven respondents (87.5%) noted they had experience with general Google-searching before the course. One person (12.5%) listed social media verification as something they had some experience with, while two respondents (25%) mentioned low levels of prior experience with reverse image searches.

**Question 3: What would you say are the most important fact-checking and verification skills and tools journalists need today?**

Half of the survey respondents (four of eight) highlighted maintaining a “skeptical” or “critical” approach was the most important thing journalists need to keep in mind when it comes to fact-checking and verification. Being able to properly verify visual information was also an important skill highlighted by three of the eight respondents (37.5%). One respondent noted cultivating diverse sourcing practices was important, while another mentioned “knowing how to get official documents” through access to information/freedom of information.

**Question 4: What would you say were the most useful aspects of the in-class exercise?**

Echoing responses to question three, half of the respondents (four of eight) highlighted the in-class simulation was most successful at teaching the necessity of developing a skeptical or critical approach to all information and statements journalists come across in their work. Interestingly, the second-most cited takeaway, underscored by three of eight respondents (37.5%) was the in-class simulation was good practice for note-taking, as students were not allowed to audio-record the mock press conference. One student also noted the simulation was useful for learning how to work “fast but efficiently.”
**Question 5:** What parts of the in-class exercise would you say were not useful?

All eight survey respondents answered there was no element part of the in-class simulation they found ineffective. One student did, however, write the visual aids in the form of the slide presentation that accompanied the mock press conference may have made things “too easy.”

**Question 6:** What was your one major takeaway, or the one most important thing you learnt from the in-class activity?

The majority of respondents (seven of eight, or 87.5%) again underscored the importance of maintaining a “skeptical” or “critical” attitude, and not “taking for granted” the truthfulness of people’s statements. One student highlighted the importance of structure and organization in journalistic work as their main takeaway from the in-class simulation.

**Question 6:** How likely would you be to voluntarily participate in another simulation activity focused specifically on journalistic verification and fact-checking?

Six of the eight respondents (75%) noted they were “very likely” to participate in another simulation focused on verification and fact-checking. Most connected this likelihood of participating to gaining hands on experience. Some respondents also included additional comments on why they would do so, for example:

- “Any experience that gets you closer to the real deal is valuable education.”
- “Anything that can give me tangible experience and help me refine my journalistic skill set is something I’m interested in.”

Two respondents (25%) did write they were not very likely to participate in another verification or fact-checking simulation—but not necessarily because they found the exercise without value. Instead, these two respondents noted they felt the in-class simulation provided them with sufficient tools and knowledge to effectively carry out fact-checking and verification in “the real world”:

- “Not super likely, simply because I feel my brain is wired enough to be alert for the real world now.”

**Question 7:** Would you like to have more in-class simulations in other journalism classes? Why/why not?

All eight of the survey respondents noted they wanted to see more simulations in their journalism courses generally. They expanded on this through statements like:

- “Good practice, gives me confidence, a taste of the real world for a journalist.”
- “Because I feel like it’s a better way to learn for some scenarios, rather than just being lectured.”
- “There are so many areas of journalism (press conferences, interviews, police reporting) that we learn about, yet never get to experience in practice as undergrads. I think a lot of my classes could be improved by adding a practical element (simulations) to the curriculum.”
Discussion and Future Considerations

As noted earlier, this experimental in-class simulation set out to accomplish three main goals: (1) to remind students of the importance of developing a critical and skeptical attitude; (2) to give students the opportunity to experiment with the fact-checking and verification tools; and (3) to raise information retention through hands-on learning. While it would have been preferable student success rates in submitting articles free of dis- or misinformation at the end of the exercise would have been higher than 68 per cent, observations from the student reflections part of the final report assignment and qualitative survey results indicate a number of successes.

First, based on the consistent answers found in 87.5% of the survey responses, the simulation exercise seems to have been successful at its goal of reinforcing the importance of always questioning information and statements, regardless of their origin, and instilling a skeptical approach to journalistic work. Furthermore, alongside an expressed concern for their own bylines and journalism as a whole, a majority of student reflections (74%) indicated maintaining a critical attitude toward fact-checking and verification linked strongly to a perceived responsibility to their audiences. This perception of responsibility to “the public” echoes much of what has been written about western journalism’s public service and watchdog functions. Watchdog journalism is typified by a self-perceived responsibility of providing citizens information, uncovering hidden evidence, and raising alarms to fulfill “the public’s right to know” (Meyers, 1993) and prevent abuses of power (Coronel, 2008; Bennet & Serrin, 2005; Hanitzsch, 2011; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). Based on student responses, the simulation exercise seems to have been effective at reinforcing such journalistic traditions.

Second, consistent survey results indicate the simulation was successful at giving students the opportunity to practice and hone their fact-checking and verification skills. As evidenced by survey results, most students in the class had only average or low levels of knowledge about fact-checking and verification prior to taking the course. While not all students were completely successful at producing a short article free of mis- or disinformation based on the mock press conference, the relatively high success rate (68%) is promising. And, while only 48% of students were able to successfully debunk the 10 false pieces of information required in the final assignment, survey responses indicate the simulation exercise was effective at giving students the ability to practice their newly-acquired skills in a relatively “low stakes” environment.

Third, while follow-up research is required to better understand how the simulation contributed to information retention, survey results do suggest this type of hands-on learning activity is successful at getting students to apply textbook concepts and lecture material on fact-checking and verification in a simulated “real world” environment.

While this in-class simulation exercise is only one example involving 23 students, at the very least its outcomes offer additional evidence that support the use of such hands-on learning activities for teaching fact-checking and verification skills, and in journalism education more generally. As noted earlier, while some past research has pointed to the value of simulations for journalism education, they have not widely been used in the classroom (Olson, 2012; Amend, Kay and Reilly, 2012). To reinforce important journalistic standards and provide students hands-on experience in a safe setting, journalism educators might consider ways in which they can implement classroom
simulations to make lecture and textbook material more “real” and dynamic. Or, as one student participating in the simulation put it:

“I think that journalism is very much a practical discipline and a craft. Experiences that allow students to actually DO the things we learn about (and the media we consume) have the most significant positive impact on our skills, knowledge, and confidence prior to working in the field.”

Based on this experience, I anticipate incorporating simulations for fact-checking and verification in future iterations of the course. However, lessons learnt during this first experiment point to three elements to be reconsidered:

1. As Baranowski (2006) notes, for single session simulations to be successful, students need a “clear and thorough set of presimulation instructions” (41). While the processes and rules for the simulation seem to have been clear, I expected students to do a certain amount of research on the topic at hand (Montreal’s horse-drawn carriage controversy and upcoming ban) to be prepared for the mock press conference and question period. My assumptions were incorrect, as most students seemed either unprepared or too shy to challenge the actor’s claims during the question period. In future iterations, I plan to add an additional element to the preparation stage of the simulation (Asal & Blake, 2006), namely an assignment that requires students to thoroughly research and produce a “backgrounder” on the simulation’s topic (for one example, see Anderson, Swenson & Kinsella, 2014).

2. As noted in this research, and by others (Baranowski, 2006), it is difficult to gauge student knowledge retention or the long-term outcomes of the simulation. For future iterations, it may be useful to conduct follow-up research, such as a second survey or a focus group with students months after the simulation has occurred.

3. Finally, when initially planning this exercise, I wanted to include additional components, beyond the mock press conference and press release material, to increase the simulation’s depth and give students more material to interact with—such as audio-visual, online elements, and imitation social media accounts created specifically for the exercise. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I overestimated the resources I needed and how much I could do in the time I had. As others have noted, a lack of time, funds, expertise, and other resources often presents barrier to in-class simulations (Anderson, Swenson & Kinsella, 2014; Olson, 2019; Moizer et al., 2009). For future iterations, I plan to pursue collaborations with other colleagues and departments to help make such exercises more dynamic, share resources, and increase the number of students such in-class exercises may reach.

About the Author

Dr. Elyse Amend is a former Montreal-area community newspaper journalist. She holds a Ph.D. in Communication Studies from McGill University, and has been teaching journalism at Concordia University since 2011. Her past research has focused on science, health and environment journalism, alternative forms of journalistic storytelling, journalism ethics, and the discourse of “anti-science” in Canadian political debates. Her current research projects examine reforms to the Canadian Access to Information Act and impacts on journalism practice, data journalism and
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References


Artificial Intelligence is a Journalist’s Best Friend: An Approach to Using Algorithms in User Credibility Evaluation, Content Verification, and Their Integrated Application in Teaching Journalism

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Abstract

This paper explores how convergent media challenges the conventional division between actors involved in the news production chain especially in a digital context and on social media platforms. Due to the nature of fake news, fake news sources and aggregators, it is not always easy to clearly distinguish who can be unequivocally considered the source, author, editor, and publisher of the given content. Instead of strictly differentiating between the actors concerned, they should simply be regarded as users. By doing so, it is possible to avoid restricting the term “user” to news consumers. The User Credibility Index (UCI) and a good number of applications offered by Artificial Intelligence and machine learning aim at providing both journalists and journalism students with combined and integrated tools to evaluate the credibility of news and/or information sources, verifying and fact-checking in the process of news production. This paper offers a conceptual basis of a system designed for filtering out fake news and deception as well as evaluating the reliability status of sources and users. Besides the overview of AI solutions and frameworks offered by researchers and institutions, their possible applicability in teaching journalism is also discussed. Even though the utilization of Artificial Intelligence seems attractive in user evaluation, it can only support and supplement decision-making process rather than replacing it together.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, journalism, algorithms, verification, fake news, user credibility, social media, journalism education

Introduction

Amidst growing concerns in the post-truth era, journalism students in higher education need to be equipped with ample knowledge and applicable tools in order not only to face but to rise to the challenge of evaluating: (1) what is the impact of social media and technological progress on the excessively politicized fake news industry and society; and (2) how could editorial checkpoints in the process of verification be redesigned to rein in the impact of fake news. Waisbord (2018) proposes that “the phenomenon of ‘fake news’ is indicative of the contested position of news [...] and it is symptomatic of the collapse of the old news order and the chaos of contemporary public communication” (p. 1866).

In the era of post-truth and fake news, journalism teachers in higher education are more and more expected to provide their students with advanced tools. These can enable them not only to recognize the various forms of misinformation but also to evaluate the sources, the different motivations and the magnitude of the forms of fake news and their escalation.
Cabañes, Anderson and Ong (2019) offer a broader approach when considering fake news. Namely, it is thought not only to be words on a page, but rather images or other forms of visual content. They also stress that:

“We often become intellectually trapped between trying to distinguish between journalism as ‘true’ or ‘false’ information, when it might be more productive to think of journalism as facts embedded within narratives.” (p. 3)

I argue that beside rigorous fact-checking processes there are supplementary approaches with the purpose of validating not only the complexity of text and images along with the narratives but also the users’ credibility through evaluating and indexing the frequency and extent of news versus fake news generated and/or shared and/or produced by them. I suggest that rather than regarding the post-truth era and the fake news phenomenon as threats that endanger quality journalism, we seize the challenge and opportunity that a “Disruptive Age” offers in order to reimagine and strengthen the apparatuses both in teaching journalism and the teaching verification processes in journalism courses focusing on users (identifiable or non-identifiable) and content (textual, visual, animation, etc.).

In this paper, I attempt to depict the most relevant aspects and the intertwined structure of Artificial Intelligence, user credibility, fact-checking and verification process followed by a discussion of their applicability in teaching.

### Defining Users

Users are commonly known as individuals who have access to social media platforms to consume, share, generate and retweet, etc. information. For many people, the concept of social media equals the sites of Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter (Kane, 2013). Very recently, the rise of messaging apps for news has become conspicuous, especially in authoritarian countries. Among others Whatsapp has gained momentum in the spread of fake news and propaganda. The evidence of the latter was true even in democratic countries, during the latest elections in India in April-May 2019.

However, these platforms change over time in their functionalities, emphasis, content, and use, and therefore the characterization of social media needs to be upgraded.

Social media is not exclusively a collection of online communication channels encouraging input from communities, or the interaction between users, the sharing of information, collaboration, opinions, rants, and fun; just as importantly, it enables users to publish and share content online.

More precisely, Boyd and Ellison (2013) defines the concept of social media as:

“...communication platform in which participants: 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-level data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site.” (p. 8).
Even though this definition is a lot broader and covers the potentials of social media as well, the term of identifiable profiles is still too vague to characterize the changing idiosyncrasies of a user by neglecting whether a user is clearly identifiable or its identity is camouflaged.

Bradshaw and Howard (2018) warn that fake social media accounts are not always automated. In many cases, human operators manually run fake accounts to achieve similar goals, often done by coordinated teams managing a set of accounts. Meanwhile, automated accounts, also known as “political bots,” are pieces of software or code designed to mimic human behavior online. Researchers at Oxford University also found evidence of “cyborg” accounts, whose operators combine automation —to drive volume and speed of activity— with elements of human curation, to make them appear to be legitimate accounts (Bradshaw et al., 2018).

Users are not only humans who generate/share/post content in the information flow. They usually are but they can be anyone and anything including humans, algorithms, and bots that generate content, share, retweet and modify/distort them. Taking into account the existence of bots, fake accounts, trolls, etc., I suggest defining users as content consumers and providers, in short as an account. In this sense, 1 user=1 account is inclusive.

**Challenges in User Evaluation and Content Verification**

If we associate an existing account with a user, serious concerns arise and a good number of questions should be answered.

- Does it matter whether a user represents a real human or not?
- Does it matter in the news flow whether a user-generated-content (UGC) is created by a bot or algorithm?
- Does it matter whether the UGC is linked to another real person or if it is a branded content?

Should each and every question be answered with a firm YES then journalism students and/or fact-checkers are surely going to be ensnared in the labyrinth of user profiling and will get lost in the maze of myriad users.

Data proves that consumers are more likely to trust influencers than brand content: 92% of consumers trust recommendations from others, among them people they don’t know, over branded content (Carlson, 2016). The manifest presence of ‘others’ sheds light on the vulnerability of content consumers and demonstrates how exposed they are to false and misleading information; consequently, the high probability of fake news exposure is evident.

The label “fake news” is a recent addition to the news media vocabulary. According to Google Trends it led a relatively obscure life for many years, until the US presidential elections in November 2016, when its frequency as a search term suddenly increased very sharply (Figure 1). Related terms such as "post-fact" and "alternative facts" also peaked in Google Trends around that time. They all refer to perceived and deliberate distortions of news with the intention of affecting the political landscape and leading to exacerbated divisions in society. People are worried about
fake news because it creates confusion. Suspicions about Russian agents attempting to influence elections and undermine social and political cohesion in several countries have contributed to these worries (Bertin et al., 2018).

Figure 1: The frequency of the term "fake news" in Google Trends (2004-2018)

Studies (e.g., Silverman, 2016) also underline the fact that Facebook, Twitter, and other popular social platforms are the key vectors of fake news-distribution; consequently, a rigorous investigation should be launched into identifying each and every fake or troll account and bot. It is assumed that even thorough scrutiny into an ocean size number of users will not reassuringly provide unquestionable results. User identification does not necessarily result in stating that all bot and fake accounts disseminate fake news, namely, fake news can be distributed by bots, trolls and fake accounts (i.e. users), but not every user spreads and circulates fake news. Consequently, the absence of irrefutableresults leaves much to be desired considering the fact that the credibility of the content or the credibility of the user (source of the information) based on the user’s profile cannot be assessed.

In case the answer to all the aforementioned questions is NO then meticulous processes need to be run. User modeling in social media and news community forums has typically focused on finding malicious users such as opinion manipulation trolls, paid (Mihaylov et al., 2015) or just perceived to be remunerated users (Mihaylov et al., 2015; Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016; Mihaylov et al., 2018; Mihaylova et al., 2018), “sockpuppets” (Maity et al., 2017), “Internet water army” (Chen et al., 2013), and “seminar users” (Darwish et al., 2017).

A number of studies argue that the news media have already lost their monopoly on news production and dissemination. Audiences no longer obtain their information directly from the news media. Excessively polarized politics generates competing narratives and filter bubbles in distinct echo chambers. In this environment, hyper- partisan and deeply opinionated fake news and propaganda have not only often gone viral but they also appear to be proliferating.

**Audience perception and trust**

Beside the fake news phenomenon and its viral nature, other symptoms also show an erosion in the consumption quality journalism. Although public perception and losing trust in institutions are very
complex phenomena, a survey by Edelman Barometer (2018) clearly indicates how the Fourth Estate seems to have lost trust and how far it is from having fully recovered. The Cambridge Analytica scandal of 2018 seems to have further eroded trust in social media platforms. Newman and Fletcher (2017) carried out an in-depth survey and analysis of consumer perceptions of the quality of news in nine countries. They found that people do not operate with categorical distinctions between "fake" and "real" news but rather see the difference as one of degree. The main reasons (67%) for not trusting media relate to bias, spin, and agendas, the feeling that powerful people are using the media to push their own interests rather than represent ordinary readers. These feelings are most strongly held by those who are young and by those that earn the least.

Trust has been described as a lubricant for societies to function (Arrow, 1972; Fukuyama, 1995). But it may be that trust in journalism, as Kohring (2004) argued, is the cornerstone that enables trust and the functioning of democratic societies in the first place. The premise for this notion, according to Kohring, is that complex societies and organizations operate on the basis of risk and trust because responsibilities must be delegated and cannot be fully controlled by individuals or groups.

Trust in the news media is a necessity within complex societies; without that trust it would be difficult to cooperate with or put faith in others. If one takes this reasoning further, a lack of trust in journalism could ultimately result in a dysfunctional society that is stricken by the absence of trust, the fundamental lubricant for social interactions.

While journalism may contribute to creating and/or undermining trust in institutions and society in general, journalism at times also faces questions regarding trust in its own work. Tsfati and Cappella (2003) suggest that in “audience-media relations, the core of trust is accuracy, credibility, and objectivity” (p. 519).

Figure 2: Percentage rate in each institution, and change from 2017 to 2018 (Edelman, 2018)
A research study conducted by Guess, Nyhan and Reifler (2018) underscores the importance of directly studying selective exposure to fake news and other false and unsupported political content. “The most prominent journalistic response to fake news and other forms of misleading or false information is fact-checking, which has attracted a growing audience in recent years. [...] One in four respondents (25.3%) read a fact-checking article from a dedicated national fact-checking website at least once during the study period.” (p. 10)

The latest edition of Reuters Institute’s Digital News Report 2018 identified a special focus on issues of trust and disinformation in news consumption. The research conducted by YouGov and Reuters Institute found that concern about fake news is generally higher among people with high levels of interest in the news. The vast majority of the respondents (65%) prefer to get to news through a side door, rather than going directly to a news website or app. Over half (53%) prefer to access news through search engines, social media, or news aggregators, interfaces that use ranking algorithms to select stories, rather than interfaces driven by humans like homepage, email and mobile notifications (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy & Nielsen, 2018).

![Figure 3: Where exposure to fake news is highest (Reuters Institute Digital News Report, 2018)](image)

**Credibility assessment**

Despite the aforementioned perceptions, it is not the identity and/or user profiling that is to be scrutinized; instead, it is the measuring of the credibility of a user that seems to be an applicable solution. Among others, Abbasi and Liu (2013) already proposed the implementation of the
CredRank algorithm to measure user credibility in social media, or TweetCred (Gupta et al., 2014), a web-based system that also provides a credibility rating. The score is computed using a supervised automated ranking algorithm to determine the credibility of a tweet based on more than 45 features. The algorithm analyzes social media users’ online behavior to measure their credibility. Research (Alrubaian et al., 2017) proved the applicability of the User Credibility Index (UCI). In their research, they attempted to distinguish credible sources among Twitter social network users by detecting various malicious activities, such as spreading false information on a potentially inflammatory topic, forging accounts for false identities, etc. The proposed system consists of four integrated components: a reputation-based component, a credibility classifier engine, a user experience component, and a feature-ranking algorithm. The components operate together in an algorithmic form to analyze and assess the credibility of Twitter tweets and users.

The integration of either CredRank or TweetCred and the components of Alrubaian’s system is able to provide sufficient results to determine UCI on a grade where the end values signify 1=credible and 0=deceptive and the extent of values in between is almost infinite. Integration into machine learning works best when there is sufficient data for it to pick up on patterns, learn from them and optimize the system accordingly. It is important to mention that using a different ranking system other than the one ranging 1-0 does not affect the assessment process. TweetCred offers a scale of 1 (low credibility) to 7 (high credibility) ranking.

Even though TweetCred offers a reputation-based component, UCI does not do user profiling, hence the users’ identity remains marginal while credibility is assessed.
While fake news is spreading primarily on social media, they still need a “home”, i.e., a website where they would be posted. Thus, if a website is known to have published significant non-factual information in the past, it is assumed it would do so in the future. Verifying the reliability of the source of information is one of the basic tools that journalists in traditional media use to verify information (Popat et al., 2017).

**Content verification**

In the traditional journalism paradigm, the task of news verification is a rather complex procedure. Verification in journalism is understood as finding and presenting the facts and also the facts about the facts (Bill & Rosenstiel, 2014). According to other classic journalistic textbooks, editors should assess news items for their newsworthiness with the following criteria in mind: big picture composition, completeness, conflict, consequence, continuity, controversy, elite countries and persons, importance, interest, negativity, noteworthiness, novelty, oddity, predictability, relevance, sensationalism, timeliness, unexpectedness, and veracity (Galtung & Ruge, 1973; Shoemaker & Mayfield, 1987).

Even if the essence of news journalism is based on verification in order to provide an accurate piece, the proliferation of social media content poses novel challenges both in verification and fact-checking. Detecting whether a journalist truthfully conveys the information to the audience is just one piece of the puzzle.

It is cast in stone that at least two independent sources should be used to verify information. What scenario should be followed if the frequency of occurrence of newsworthy information is either very low or the acquired information spreads and circulates through retweets and via sharing. This type of information circulation makes verification even more difficult.

Literature on the analytical kind of journalistic instruction, such as best practice guides (e.g., Bill & Rosenstiel, 2014) and technology analysts (Firth, 2016) state that there is no existing simple mathematic formula (algorithm) to the overall journalistic process of collecting, vetting and reporting information.

The Associated Press has been using a cloud-based tool, *Verify* by Google that combines Artificial Intelligence with editorial expertise to source and verify user-generated content. AP’s business editor, Lisa Gibb states in an interview given to Journalism.co.uk (George, 2018) that the same editorial standards apply towards AI technology adding that AI will augment, but never replace the world’s journalists. Only a few verification mechanisms are currently available to news editors, and nor are they integrated into newsroom production tools or browsers. However, automated deception detection techniques have proved to be feasible since around 2008, and will likely – with time and further research and development – complement and enhance the notoriously poor human abilities to discern truth from deception, both in the consumption and production of news (Rubin et al., 2015).

As opposed to what one might have expected, instead of ushering in a new era of truth-telling, the information age allows lies to spread in what “techies” call ‘digital wildfires’. By the time a fact-checker has caught a lie, thousands more have been created, and the sheer volume of ‘disinformation cascades’ makes unreality unstoppable. All that matters is that the lie is clickable,
and what determines the latter is how it feeds into people’s existing prejudices. Algorithms developed by companies such as Google and Facebook are based around previous searches and clicks, so with every search and each click you find your own biases confirmed. Social media, now the primary news source for most Americans, leads us into echo chambers of similar-minded people, feeding us only the things that make us feel better, whether they are true or not (Pomerantsev, 2016).

The human quality of work is difficult to approximate with the help of binary codes. Yet, with the scale and varieties of digital deception, trained journalists can only verify a drop in the ocean of information, and news editors are ill-equipped or hard-pressed for time to carry out in-depth verification themselves. This situation requires a comprehensive system to support the work of professional content providers for the ultimate benefit of information users and the transparency of reporting (Rubin et al., 2015).

Automated Fact-Checking (AFC) initiatives and research generally focus on one or more of three overlapping objectives: to spot false or questionable claims circulating online and in other media; to authoritatively verify claims or stories that are dubious, or to facilitate their verification by journalists and members of the public; and to deliver corrections instantaneously, across different media, to audiences exposed to misinformation. End-to-end systems aim to address all three elements – identification, verification, and correction.

A number of fact-checking outlets around the world have begun relying on software to help spot claims and check suspicious claims. In the US, for instance, the Duke Reporters Lab recently deployed a tool that uses ClaimBuster to deliver potentially intriguing claims to fact-checkers at PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, The Washington Post, and the Associated Press. However, so far these systems have only been able to identify simple declarative statements, missing implied claims or
claims embedded in complex sentences, which humans recognize easily. Graves (2018) points out that this is a particular challenge with regard to conversational sources, like discussion programmes, in which people often use pronouns and refer back to earlier points. He deems it important to note that the ‘ground truth’ (p. 3) established by training algorithms on human work is neither universal nor permanent.

Victoria L. Rubin and her colleagues at the Language and Information Technology Research Lab, University of Western Ontario, Canada offer a conceptual basis and vision of system elements towards automated fact-checking in news production, curation, and consumption. In Figure 5, Rubin proposes technological interventions for news content verification at the 3 stages of the workflow: sources, content producers, content producers, news readers, and in social media channels. This design offers discrete measurements along textual and networking parameters – such as novelty, negativity, veracity, presence of satire, bias, conflict, and promotional material.

As far as the conceptual basis of the news verification suite is concerned, fact-checking only applies to the narrow definition of verifiably false news; it does not address the wider concerns about the quality of online news. Fact-checkers can signal suspicious content to editors, who review "flagged" content and possibly remove it or mark it as potentially false news. Pennycook and Rand (2017) conducted five experiments to test the effectiveness of attaching warnings to news stories that have been disputed by third-party fact-checkers. They found that while warnings led to a modest reduction in perceived accuracy of fake news relative to a control condition, there was also an implied truth effect: the presence of warnings caused untagged stories to be seen as more accurate than in the control batch. Fact-checking becomes ineffective when confirmation and
Social desirability bias refers to the fact that in self-reports, people will often report inaccurately on sensitive topics in order to present themselves in the best possible light (Fischer, 1993).

Another problem with this flagging strategy is that it can take a considerable amount of time to carry out the flagging, compared with the duration of an average news cycle that usually does not exceed 48h (Tan et al., 2016) and possibly much shorter for the bulk of sharing on social media websites (Martens et al., 2018).

Apart from the already mentioned tools and algorithms, Facebook’s homegrown framework called Caffe2 also needs attention. This framework has already been adopted by academia and researchers, and soon another deep learning framework, for instance PyTorch 1.0, is expected to be used in content production. It is one of the few frameworks to span desktops, mobiles, and even browser (Janakiram MSV, 2019).

However much the potential of Artificial Intelligence in fact-checking and human efforts in verification are evident, it seems more and more difficult to keep pace with the recurring torrent of fake news and, therefore, an effective counterweight needs to be provided. Neither journalists nor education or technology in themselves are able to provide a satisfactory solution to prevent journalists, journalism students, news consumers, and ultimately, democracy from being exposed to fake news and its consequences.

The European Commission’s High Level Expert Group (HLEG) has suggested several policy initiatives. Its report (2018a) on fake news recommends five lines of action:

- “enhance the transparency of online news, involving an adequate and privacy-compliant sharing of data about the systems that enable their circulation online;
- promote media and information literacy to counter disinformation and help users navigate the digital media environment;
- develop tools for empowering users and journalists to tackle disinformation and foster a positive engagement with fast-evolving information technologies;
- safeguard the diversity and sustainability of the European news media ecosystem, and
- promote continued research on the impact of disinformation in Europe to evaluate the measures taken by different actors and constantly adjust the necessary responses.”

The European Commission’s document titled Communication on Tackling Online Disinformation (2018b) proposed several steps including:

- “swift action by online platforms to protect users from disinformation including facilitating user assessment of the sources and quality of content;
- rebalancing of the relation between the media and online platforms;
- facilitating cooperation between independent fact-checkers;
- fostering media literacy;
- harnessing new technologies such as artificial intelligence to tackle disinformation;
- support given quality journalism via State Aid by Member States to the media sector.”
These recommendations do not involve new regulatory policy initiatives; they build on existing policy instruments such as the General Data Protection Regulation, the Audio-visual Media Services Directive and State Aid mechanisms. They are soft ways of improving the environment in which news platforms operate and nudge them to take the necessary steps to improve trust, transparency and accountability (Martens et al., 2018).

**Adaptation in Teaching**

Summarizing the arguments and issues listed above, one might assume that a journalism student will be lost in the intricate procedure of verification due to the limits of automated verification and fact-checking and the time pressure that the competition entails in the news industry. Nonetheless, disinformation is an old story, fuelled by new technology. Mobilizing and manipulating information was a feature of history long before modern journalism established the standards which define news as a genre based on particular rules of integrity (Ireton & Posetti, 2018).

Even though in higher education and journalism schools “journalism studies” are split into different curricula (such as theories, ethics, practice, data journalism, news editing, etc.), the problems and risks outlined above demand professional vigilance, commitment to ethics, high standards of reporting and verification (including collaborative verification methods) of both information and sources, along with active debunking (Ireton & Posetti, 2018).

In short, the curriculum pertaining to journalism studies needs to be complemented with the knowledge of Artificial Intelligence as well as combining teaching journalism with Artificial Intelligence learning modules. Downloading and setting up the applicable browser extensions and features provided by algorithms are just about adequate technological “gadgets”. In addition, collaboratively assessing the material, researching the origins of the information and the context of the erroneous reporting, discussing the possible causes of the incident (paying attention to structural factors like recent newsroom downsizing, and the role of social media platforms) are also to be made integral parts of journalism education.

Teaching journalism, therefore, means equipping participants both with traditional skills in journalism AND the technology of Artificial Intelligence. There are also other essential elements to be provided, such as applying the technique of critical thinking, unpacking the underlying narrative, along with the framing, selection and packaging of the news items.

Gaining information about Artificial Intelligence, algorithms and machine learning are not obstacles getting in the way of students that have not taken IT courses previously; instead, they are to be a compulsory amendment to the already existing curriculum. Therefore, journalism studies are to be complemented with media and information literacy. If a journalist’s fundamental duties are to hold the powerful accountable and serve the public interest, then it is exactly Artificial Intelligence and its application that can help both students and journalists to fully meet their obligations. As stated in the title of this paper, Artificial Intelligence is a journalist’s best friend – but only if AI is fully integrated into each and every class, course and semester.
Conclusions

This paper discussed how Artificial Intelligence including the use of algorithms and machine learning provides various technological tools in the process of verification and fact-checking that should be integrated into teaching journalism. As much as Artificial Intelligence is able to evaluate and measure user credibility on social media platforms in the news-flow, the conventional method of verification is to be coupled with AI technology in teaching. Taking into account the rapid development of AI, journalism courses should continuously be updated to follow the latest technological improvements.

The paper examined the importance of gaining integrated knowledge in journalism studies not only to help would-be journalists meet their professional obligations, but essentially to further equip journalism students with ample armory provided by AI to safeguard democracy.

About the Author

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Media Literacy Versus Fake News: Critical Thinking, Resilience and Civic Engagement

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Abstract

This paper provides research findings to support the case for media literacy as an aid to journalists and journalism educators in a disruptive age through the fostering of resilient media engagement by young citizens. It posits that encouraging media literacy in news consuming publics facilitates a more critically engaged civic society. Focused on trust, it shares the outcomes of a project funded by the US Embassy in London, which brought together leading researchers from the United States and UK with a range of key stakeholders, including journalists. Their collective aim: to devise a practical strategy for harnessing media literacy to develop young people’s understanding of and ability to withstand ‘fake news’.

Introduction

‘Truth was fake, fake was true. And that’s when the problem suddenly snapped into focus’ (Rusbridger, 2018, p.x).

The essence of the disruptive age is summarised by the former editor of The Guardian newspaper, Alan Rusbridger in the opening pages of his recent treatise on the broken state of news and news consumption. Once again, journalists are presented as facing the challenge of restoring trust in themselves and their journalism. However, this time they are drinking in a different type of last-chance saloon - the problem is not self-inflicted but largely external: the media is ‘the opposition’, disinformation is rife, virtually everything is PR (Pomerantsev, 2015).

This paper will consider how media literacy can help journalists and journalism educators in tackling the age of disinformation through building resilience in young citizens. It posits that encouraging media literacy in news consuming publics, specifically young people, can facilitate a more engaged and critically aware civic society. It shares the findings of a project funded by the US Embassy in London, which brought together leading media literacy researchers from the United States and UK with educators, librarians, journalists, digital media producers and young people to devise a ‘toolkit’ for building resilience. In March 2019, these key stakeholders took part in a series of workshops in London in which they shared perspectives, working to a collective aim – a practical strategy for harnessing media literacy to develop young people’s understanding of and ability to withstand ‘fake news’, with a focus on case studies from both the UK and the US. Working collaboratively in this way, bringing together academic research, news providers and the new generation of media users, the project set out to listen to the voices of young citizens to help us to help them in the age of disinformation and disruption.
The research team captured the raw material for a toolkit for media literacy resilience which will be available online (July 2019) as an open access resource for use by journalists, journalism educators, media producers, teachers and academics, amongst others. The project team started out from our colleague Monica Bulger’s research findings from her work in the US with the Data and Society Research Institute, arguing that media education needs to “develop a coherent understanding of the media environment, improve cross-disciplinary collaboration, leverage the current media crisis to consolidate stakeholders and develop curricula for addressing action in addition to interpretation” (Bulger and Davison, 2018, p.4). Clearly this project emanates from the leverage described and is concerned with such dialogue between both disciplines and professions. In the UK, media literacy academics working with the Media Education Association, the professional association in the field, have called for a more ‘joined up’ approach to media literacy in the context of disinformation, saying that:

Issues of bias, truth and falsehood in news are well-established topics for media education. However, fake news is largely a manifestation of much broader problems, which apply to ‘real’ news as well. We need a more systematic conceptual approach; and while media literacy may provide part of the solution, we should beware of oversimplifying the problem, and underestimating the difficulty of the task. (Buckingham, 2019).

In line with this, the project applied the key conceptual and pedagogical approaches of critical media literacy, through which we understand all media as representation, as well as involving other stakeholders in the media and in civil society. The project’s objectives were tackled by:

• using participative dialogic methods to develop new insights into the experiences of young UK citizens with regard to fake news and civic engagement with media,

• applying the existing research findings from the academic experts to the insights from the young people,

• working with teachers, trainers, librarians and young people to pilot and evaluate a toolkit for critical media literacy and resilience to disinformation,

• leaving behind open access resources which can continue to be re-purposed beyond the life of the project,

• enabling the voices of young citizens to inform policy planning and development with regard to media literacy and civic media.

It is hoped that the online toolkit will make a small but important contribution to tackling this complex problem, by supporting the development of curricula to help build resilience.

The question of trust constituted one of the key themes of the project and provides a focus for this paper. Journalists like Alan Rusbridger are bemused as to why journalism is not the answer to fake news, since journalism is historically seen as an effective means to distinguish the true from the untrue. Yet, he argues, journalism was ill-prepared to cope because it is not itself trusted: ‘If only people trusted journalism more, society would have a system in place for dealing with fake news’ (Rusbridger, 2018, p.373). Atmospherics that have intensified since 2016 and the election of
Donald Trump as US President and the Brexit debacle in the UK (even though there were many differences between the two events) have enabled fear narratives to hold sway: The outcome? A decline in trust and a rise in scepticism. This is not to say that a healthy dose of scepticism is a bad thing – indeed, critical evaluation of all information is crucial to robust discourse in a democratic society (Buckingham, 2019), but many observers now see truth (and reason) as an endangered species (Kakutani, 2018). In this ‘post-truth’ context, trust levels spiral, indifference and lack of awareness hold sway (Sopel, 2017).

Fake News

*We have always experienced propaganda and politically-aligned bias, which purports to be news, but this activity has taken on new forms and has been hugely magnified by information technology and the ubiquity of social media. In this environment, people are able to accept and give credence to information that reinforces their views, no matter how distorted or inaccurate, while dismissing content with which they do not agree as ‘fake news’*

Disinformation and ‘Fake News’ Final Report, House of Commons Digital, Culture Media and Sport Committee, 18 February 2019

In its analysis of disinformation and the ‘fake news’ phenomenon, the UK government – commissioned report published in February 2019 concluded that the polarising effect of fake news was unlikely to recede and placed responsibility for moves towards greater transparency with the big tech companies. It emphasised the importance of a plurality of voices and human agency, concluding ‘we must make sure that people stay in charge of the machines’ (p.6). Questions of agency threaded through the workshop conversations for the Media Literacy vs Fake News project. The status of ‘fake news’ is always discursively framed for the purposes of its articulation. These examples from 2018 provide further useful illustration:

- The European Commission’s assessment of news organisations’ engagement with verification and trust-enhancing techniques published in a report from a high-level policy forum: “Print press organisations and broadcasters are in the process of intensifying their efforts to enforce certain trust enhancing practices”. This involves working with academia, amongst others, to develop media literacy approaches and investing in verification tools to ensure ethical compliance and trustworthiness (European Commission, 2018, p. 41).

  i) Insider narratives from journalists ruminating on the place of journalism in society that conclude “on both sides of an increasingly scratchy debate about media, politics, and democracy, there is a hesitancy about whether there is any longer a common idea of what journalism is and why it matters” (Rusbridger, 2018, p. 360).

  ii) A searing critique from the academy that places journalism itself and its elitist tendencies at the heart of the ‘post truth’ problem - a “journalism self-
appointed with a false respectability, a ‘liberal’ journalism that claims to challenge corporate state power but, in reality, courts and protects it” (Edwards and Cromwell, 2018, p. xii).

‘Fake news’ is a problematic term, used often as a ‘catch all’ or as a disclaimer, but its distinction from ‘real news’ is characterised by the intention to mislead, for political reasons, to undermine stability or for economic purpose, for example as ‘clickbait’ for financial return from advertising or through the monetisation of data, most notoriously through Facebook. A challenge for media literacy’s response is the confusion, at the level of legislation, over the status of search engines and social media platforms – are they providers (of media content) or merely technology companies offering services for other parties to share media? For this reason, regulatory discussions impact on both the political / legal reaction – as attempted by the House of Commons committee – and the academy.

David Buckingham pinpoints these contextual risks for our project in his blog (2017), fashioning fake news as symptomatic of a broader trend: “People (and not just children) may be inclined to believe it for quite complex reasons. And we can’t stop them believing it just by encouraging them to check the facts or think rationally about the issues” (Buckingham, 2017). As he points out, this poses significant pedagogical questions – rather than working on the assumption that we are involved in a rational process it is vital, as educators to ask why people might believe ‘fake news’, since “by no means all media use is rational. Where we decide to place our trust is as much to do with fantasy, emotion and desire, as with rational calculation” (ibid, 2017).

According to Paul Bradshaw (2018), fake news must be considered in the context of ‘mobile-first’ publishing and he offers three key sites of conflict – commercial, political and cultural. Fake news has clearly disrupted the optimism for mobile media to increase diversity and plurality, but the mobile consumption of news has taken traditional news organisations into a commercial battle that is forcing them to ‘adapt to survive’. The political battle occurs around a growing consensus that alleged Russian activity relating to other nations’ elections constitutes a new form of international conflict in which, according to research findings from New Knowledge (RiResta et al, 2018), the giant technology corporations were slow in response, even complicit, with Russia’s influence spanning across platforms from YouTube, to Instagram and Twitter to Google and Facebook. This, according to Bradshaw (2018), makes verification the concern of everyone, not just journalists. The cultural battleground hosts the war for attention and professional journalism’s stake in news agendas in the era of ‘Post-Truth’. This is where media literacy (and journalism education) has a role to play. Following this thread, Fowler-Watt (2019) calls for a radical rethink to consider whether “re-imagining journalism education [could] provide a starting point for a re-imagined journalism practice that prioritises the human aspect of journalism as a craft?” (forthcoming, 2019).

In December 2018, a panel convened in Oxford by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism debated a newly-published European Commission action plan on disinformation. The Institute’s Director, Rasmus Kleis Nielsen underlined the challenge of positioning ‘real’ journalism as the solution to the problems of political disinformation and ‘bottom up’ dissemination of false ‘facts’ when the industry itself is in crisis: “There’s nothing less than a war on journalism taking place
across the world.” The panel agreed that “fighting back is mission central”, in the form of a robust re-booting of professional and ethical values and practices within the industry, putting its faith in media literacy education in schools to teach young people how to distinguish between fake news and false facts, to understand and to value the concept of ‘verifiable information in the public interest’.

**Wider Contexts**

*Fake has become an omnipresent feature of both our daily lives and a globalized, ultra-connected culture: it is in the way we dwell and break free from spaces and ideas. (Excursions journal 9.1, call for articles, 2018).*

Bolstered by the sense that ‘Media and Information Literacy’ (MIL) could assume an important role in damage limitation, whilst avoiding solutionism, the project team were acutely aware of wider contexts, of a sense of helplessness in the face of omnipresent fakery. Douglas Rushkoff (2018) laments the loss of “our ability to think constructively, connect meaningfully, or act purposefully. It feels as if civilization itself were on the brink, and that we lack the collective willpower and coordination necessary to address issues of vital importance to the very survival of our species” (Rushkoff, 2018, p. 3). To combat the sense of powerlessness McIntyre (2018) calls for a deep-rooted study of the conditions for ‘post-truth’ - “If our tools are being used as weapons, let’s take them back” (McIntyre, 2018, p.122). Reflecting on his experience of editing a print newspaper, as the digital age dawned, Rusbridger (2018) was also alarmed, not only by “information chaos” but by the realisation that “the chaos was enabled, shaped and distributed by a handful of gargantuan corporations, which – in that same blink of an eye – had become the most powerful organisations the world had ever seen” (Rusbridger, 2018, pp. xviii- xix).

The shattering impact of the economic crash in 2008 is a significant context, if not a direct cause of the ‘fake news’ phenomenon. The failed response of neoliberal politics to economic meltdown and the simultaneous dismantling of traditional notions of the ‘public sphere’ arguably provided ripe conditions for ‘post truth’ to grow and flourish. One important aspect of all this is that we no longer have a shared view, however contested it might have been, of the role of journalism, the concept of ‘public interest’, ‘holding power to account’, ‘power and responsibility’. According to Bridle (2018), whether analysing Brexit or Trump “it is ultimately impossible to tell who is doing what, or what their motives and intentions are,” this means that “it’s futile to attempt to discern between what’s algorithmically generated nonsense or carefully crafted fake news” (Bridle, 2018: ch. 9, para 51).

**Media Literacy**

International research has led to the development of a number of frameworks for media literacy, most notably provided by UNESCO and the European Union (see McDougall et al, 2018), with the following shared key competences:
• **Access:** the ability to find and use media skilfully and to share suitable and valuable information with others (including browsing, searching, filtering and managing data, information and digital content).

• **Analysis and evaluation:** the capacity to comprehend messages and use critical thinking and understanding to analyse their quality, veracity, credibility and point of view, while considering their potential effects or consequences.

• **Creation:** the capacity to create media content and confidently express oneself with an awareness of purpose, audience and composition techniques.

• **Reflection:** the capacity to apply social responsibility and ethical principles to one’s own identity, communication and conduct, to develop an awareness of and to manage one’s media life.

• **Action/agency:** the capacity to act and engage in citizenship through media, to become political agents in a democratic society.

In the US context, another of the project team, Paul Mihailidis (2018) observes a more optimistic ‘state of the art’ for an activist, participatory, civic form of media literacy, so that a project such as this should help to “....re-imagine media literacies as guided by a set of value constructs that support being in the world with others, and that advocates for social reform, change, and justice” (Mihailidis, 2018, p.xi).

Media literacy is not understood here merely as educational resilience building but instead, there is a competing, less visible and more agentive / dynamic use of media literacy (Potter and McDougall, 2017) by young people that can be potentially harnessed by education, or – if we are to re-imagine educational approaches - that education can learn from these forms of engagement.

**Media Literacy vs Fake News:**

**The event:**

The project team hosted 2 days of activities in London at the Olympic Park to bring together the various stakeholders in a public event (Day 1) with presentations and a panel comprised of the US and UK academics involved in the funded project and invite-only workshops with librarians, journalists, media educators and students (Day 2). The participants were invited through our networks, so represent a purposive sample, rotating through 3 workshops each of 45’ duration in mixed groups: *Testing the Wheel* gathered views on online resources for media literacy that are already available, *Fake news and issues around disinformation* sought to assess why fake news matters and *A Question of Trust* asked, ‘what is trust?’ ‘What is its function in society?’ ‘How can trust be developed and maintained?’ The event concluded with reflections from each group of stakeholders. The theme of trust ran as a red thread through our conversations and due to the limited space available for a conference paper, only the findings from the workshop on trust are shared here.
It is important to note that trust is a key discursive marker in the societal challenge around media literacy – a loaded term that is fraught with assumptions (LSE, 2019; Buckingham, 2019b). On this topic, media educators, mainly, presented arguments for combining new resources for deconstructing media to locate its biases and / or its distorting properties, but also a cautious approach to both putting ‘trust’ at the centre of this debate. Their concern: that this constituted an opportunity for self-validation, placing media literacy in a solutionist discourse with its attendant neoliberal impulse to position citizens as responsible entirely for their own ‘uses of media literacy’. Journalists talk about trust in a different way and – in the workshops - shared clear definitions of terms, notions of building trust with audiences through transparency and verification. The tension around engaging with questions of trust was clearly articulated at the public event on day 1, so this mood music infused the workshop environment. As co-authors of this paper, one a media literacy specialist (Julian), the other a former journalist (Karen), we are situated at the intersection between media education and journalism practice, seeking to present a balanced assessment of the workshop outcomes as we take a deep dive into the question of trust.

**Workshop: A question of trust**

- **Trust refers to a relationship**
- **Trust is an action (in a process)**
- **Trust needs preconditions**
- **Trust is limited (to a subject, specific matter)**
  (Blobaum, 2014)

Working with this definition of trust, the participants in each of the 3 rotations engaged with the following format:

**Case study discussion**: The Migrant Caravan [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-45951102](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-45951102)

This example of the Migrant Caravan – and the BBC’s report deconstructing the various ways in which the story was framed in the winter of 2018 - was used to illustrate how media reporting can encourage us to be distrustful, how ‘fear narratives’ can be propagated and the dangers of stereotype and stigma. These atmospherics lead to a decline in trust and rising scepticism. The case study also provided an illustration of an ‘explainer’, created by a publicly funded news organisation to ‘debunk’ fakery and offered a point of reference to ground the discussion.

The **workshop aims** were threefold:
- to draw up a checklist of factors that contribute to building trust
- to devise an overarching statement on trust and news
- to make an innovative contribution to the toolkit as a group

The participants engaged with these aims through:

- **defining** trust/distrust in relation to news sources – what is a trusted/distrusted source for news?
- asking **why** we trust/distrust these sources?
- questioning **how** we can trust/distrust them?
- engaging in **critical evaluation of news values** in relation to trust in news e.g. impartiality
The workshop concluded with each group devising an overarching statement on trust to add to their checklist, for example: “in order to trust news media we need …” OR “Trust in news means …”. These would help the project team in designing the online ‘toolkit’.

Contributions:

There is an inherent tendency for people to believe things that aren’t true, so can we change human nature? (media educator)

As our field review had indicated, drawing up a checklist of factors that contribute to building trust was going to be challenging – even with an engaged group of key stakeholders, the climate of ‘ennui’ and helplessness permeated our discussions. ‘Where does that leave you?’ asked David Buckingham ‘It’s a really difficult question if you don’t trust anybody or anything.’ One student offered a counterpoint, that being young means being powerless so there is no choice but to listen and that is a good thing because it’s good to consume diverse opinions on social media. Trust in the media required validation – whether from media itself or from a personal approach (echo chamber).

• Sources of news and trustworthiness

The checklist shaped around sources that have no hidden agenda, where stories have documented sources, quotes. A range of sources inspired trust, because ‘You can piece together your own trust from different perspectives on Twitter’ (media educator); ‘you can piece together trust from different sources’ (student). One student saw social media as a trustworthy source, but another disagreed saying that ‘people only trust it more because they use it more’ and ‘social media sensationalises’ (media educator); ‘social media keeps everyone in their own echo chamber’ (media educator). There was more of a consensus around trust being based on personal relationships – the participants were inclined to trust a news source that was recommended by a close friend or relative: Likewise, journalists who they ‘knew’ were more likely to be trusted, even if their views differed: ‘when I know where that person is coming from, I can engage with it’ (media educator); ‘I think less about the organisation and more about who is doing the writing’, (media educator). They were also more likely to trust individuals who were ‘verifiable as a primary source’ (student). However, one student sought to avoid reading the tabloids, that his parents read, ‘because I know they are trying to influence my belief’. A librarian said I don’t think I trust anything’. She would form her own opinion from looking at all angles, but ‘I would only do that for something I was interested in’ and felt that she was more sceptical now than ever before. Another librarian reads ‘extreme views from both sides and the truth is somewhere in the middle’. Confirmation - bias was generally acknowledged: One student goes with his own instincts and beliefs, a media educator noted that ‘I normally read things that align with my opinions’ and, consequently, avoids TV news. Another media educator agreed, noting that he tries to ‘maintain a critical faculty. Something that I need to do perhaps more than 10 years’ ago’. The journalists in the groups, the producers of news underlined the importance of trust between journalist and source(s), a freelance journalist emphasised the imperative of going to the primary source, as ‘people will re-write other people’s reports and not correctly source. So, find the original and cross-verify’. One journalist highlighted the importance of transparency and acknowledging mistakes to build a relationship of trust between news producers and news consumers. But that can lead to ‘over validation and over-emphasising – like a pushy teacher at the beginning of class!’
Another journalist felt that ‘I want to know how they [the news organisation] got to that point’.

Trust in media is highly personal, this may be partially because verification – or ‘finding the kernel of truth’ as one librarian described the fact-checking process - is hard work. This sense was clearly evident in all 3 iterations of the trust workshop, and – as a result - individuals are generally inclined to engage in careful source and fact-checking on an ad hoc basis, since ‘no one really has the time to check multiple sources’ (media educator). Ultimately even cross-checking leads to an assessment based on personal opinion ‘and whether you believe it yourself’ (media educator).

- **Media literacy education**

Media education was critiqued by some participants for failing to prepare students adequately for the disruptive age, ‘for the realities that [they] are going to face’ (librarian). There was general agreement on this point and some of the students felt that teaching was constrained by the curriculum, with the scope for critical debate being limited as a result: ‘No, we aren’t discussing that, it’s not for the exam’ (student). This was seen as an obstacle to building a wider understanding of news sources in relation to trustworthiness and a constraint on developing critical thinking. One media educator felt that the quality of her own teaching was constrained by questions around the veracity of news sources stemming from an abundance of poor journalism ‘I cannot stand up in front of my class and say, ‘it’s quality journalism’.

- **Does impartiality help or hinder building trust?**

A brief critical evaluation of news values, notably impartiality and whether these can bolster trustworthy journalism elicited mixed views. Journalists largely took an organisational view: understanding ownership helps us understand news values (e.g. RT, Fox). Impartiality means different things to different people: ‘Every news source I go to has a bias or agenda. Cross-referencing is crucial to get different viewpoints’ (media educator); ‘They can have their own biases as long as what they have reported is factual’ (student); ‘if we have a concern with objectivity, then I choose a balanced mix of views rather than, just [for example] The Guardian’ (librarian).

- **Building a checklist:**

A drive to engage with a multiplicity of sources in order to trust news, transparency and accountability from news organisations and journalists, individual, personalised approaches to verification and a frustration with the current provision and focus of media education that fails to prioritise critical thinking characterised the checklist that shaped the final over-arching statements produced by each group:

‘**In Order to Trust News Media, We Need…**’

- Education that looks for the fuller picture as a creator as well as an observer. You need to first trust yourself and equip yourself to get as close to the truth as possible (i.e. develop critical awareness). (Rotation 3)
• Access to multiple sources. Transparency so that we know where the information is coming from and who owns it. To be our own verifiers, we need critical thinking and self-reflexivity to be informed by a wider range of sources. (Rotation 1)

• Transparency and critical education in tandem. It is a matter of balance and a dual responsibility’ (Rotation 2)

Reflections

Finally, each stakeholder group convened to discuss ‘take-aways’. For the purposes of this paper, we have focused on the journalists’ reflections on the workshops. They noticed that there was little agreement between media professionals and media educators pointing to the tension that was apparent at the outset. The journalists felt that they can define and decipher fake news. The closest other group were library professionals, described more in terms of information literacy as checking sources. Students and teachers were generally either more skeptical about the term ‘fake news’ or less inclined to see a distinction between fake and real.

When asked what educators need to do in order to train media makers of the future with the requisite tools, the journalists responded:

• To equip them with skills such as critical thinking and build on that foundation This basis appears to be missing.

• Appreciate good journalism: Make students understand good journalism is expensive and valuing it leads to more being done. Don’t just criticize. The knowledge surrounding journalism architecture and values are missing.

Conclusions

Trust in media is seen as the lifeblood of journalism’s role in and contribution to people’s sense making. Most of us cannot be everywhere, account for ourselves or understand the complexities of society (Brants, 2013, p.17).

Trust is problematic. Brants’ (2013) ‘top down’ view of journalism as soothsayer is no longer viable: Journalism cannot provide the solution to the fake news crisis because it has lost trust and is in crisis itself (Rusbridger, 2018); media literacy education is not providing the critical thinking skills that we need to verify, and fact check for ourselves. Yet both journalism and education are crucial to sense making in the crowded, noisy digital world, where everyone has a voice, but nobody is listening and/or feels overwhelmed by the ‘information chaos’ discerned by Rusbridger (2018). The resilience toolkit devised as an output from our Media Literacy vs Fake News project does not seek to offer solutions but mines a path through the – albeit often healthy – scepticism to provide resources that can be drawn on to develop critical thinking through engagement and so build resilience. Its design was informed by an emerging new manifesto for media literacy education (McDougall, 2019):
• Rather than producing competence frameworks for media literacy, as though it is a neutral set of skills for citizens, media education needs to enable students to apply the critical legacies of media literacy education on the contemporary media ecosystem.

• Educators need to adopt a dynamic approach to media literacy and increase the experiential, reflexive aspects of media practice in the curriculum. Resilience to representation is enhanced by expertise in representing.

• The critical exploration of social media, algorithms and big data form crucial aspects of the curriculum, accompanied by applied practical learning in the uses of them for social justice, as opposed to training the next generation in the use of these for even further commercial and political exploitation of one another.

At the outset, we stated that we hope the online toolkit will make a small but important contribution to tackling the complex problem of ‘fake news’, by supporting the development of curricula to help build resilience. This should, in turn equip the next generation of journalists and media consumers to engage in a dynamic way with the challenges of fake news, whilst helping those journalists (and journalism educators) currently immersed in the quest to re-imagine journalism practice and actively re-engage news consumers.

About the Authors

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**Julian McDougall** is Professor in Media and Education and Head of the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice at Bournemouth University, UK. He is editor of Media Practice and Education and leads a doctoral programme for media educators. He has published a wide range of books, journal articles, chapters and reports and conducted research projects for research councils, charities, governments, the European Commission, NGOs and industry in the fields of media, literacy and education. His new book, Fake News vs Media Studies: Travels in a False Binary is published by Palgrave MacMillan in September 2019.

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“To be a Journalist in the Post-Truth Era: What Role, What Expectations?”

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Abstract

The objective of this communication is to question the role of journalists in the post-truth era, as it emerges from the recent fake news debate. We are interested in the way fake news is discussed, and we would like to shed light to the narratives that structure the debate. We focus our attention on a micro-corpus coming from the mainstream French press: from the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States on November 8, 2016, until his inauguration on January 20, 2017.

Introduction

Disinformation is not just a problem of our times (Bloch, 1999; Huyghe, 2016; Ploux, 2001). Long before the recent emergence and propagation of fake news on social media, questions related to “trapped” contents (propaganda, rumors, hoaxes, trolls, etc.) had caught the attention of scholars (Dauphin, 2002; Froissart, 2002, 2004; Lebre, 2014). However, since the United States presidential election of November 2016, the issue is regularly discussed in the traditional offline and online media as well as on social networks. In France, debating fake news in public arenas became a “discursive moment”, according to the expression forged by Sophie Moirand (2007), giving rise to spaces and practices of expression by different actors (media representatives, politicians, ordinary citizens, etc.). Starting from this observation, our thesis in this article is based on the following hypothesis: the debate on fake news conveys narratives about the role of journalists in the post-truth era. As to explore this hypothesis, we will focus on a micro-corpus coming from the mainstream French press: from the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States on November 8, 2016, until his inauguration on January 20, 2017. Even though fake news was part of the public agenda long before that time (e.g. Brexit), it abundantly occupied the media arena in the aftermath of the American presidential election.

Therefore, in this article, we will not analyze the process of the production, circulation and reception of fake news – topics on which academic literature already exists (e.g. Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Berger and Milman, 2012; Zubiaga et al., 2016). We will not explore the relation of modern media with virality, nor will we denounce the phenomenon of disinformation adopting a socio-critical approach – even though disinformation is indeed reprehensible. The objective of our approach is to identify the topical repertoires, the underlying schemas, which occur when using this expression, as emblematic signs of common doxa. To put it shortly, we are interested in the way fake news is discussed, and we would like to shed light to the narratives that structure the debate. We will focus our attention on a micro-corpus coming from the mainstream French press: from the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States on November 8, 2016, until his inauguration on January 20, 2017. Even though fake news was part of the public agenda long before that time (e.g. Brexit), it abundantly occupied the media arena in the aftermath of the American presidential election.
It is commonly understood that fake news emanates from various motivations and can espouse
different formats: humoristic pastiches, inaccurate information, sensationalist topics seeking to
reach a large public, etc. Defining fake news is certainly an issue of major importance and several
analyses have tried to discern the inherent characteristics of the concept, as well as its nuances in
comparison to other terms similarly employed (hoaxes, rumors, etc.). However, undertaking such
an operation entails confronting serious epistemological and long debated questions related to the
meaning of truth – and the “fundamental tension that inhabits it” (Ricœur, 1955: 156) –, objectivity,
newness, and counterfeit (Post, 2014). Having in mind that our interest lies in the narratives of the
fake news debate¹ and not in the fakeness of the news themselves, these questions go beyond the
scope of this paper.

Public Narratives Mirror Society

This work adopts the archaeological approach advocated by Marc Angenot. This author, through a
situated analysis of specific discourses, seeks to identify the eventual topoi which characterize
public doxa. Narration is at the center of Angenot’s concerns. In a synthesis of his work put forward
in 2006, the author explains that his goal is to “identify the eventual discursive invariants, the
common premises, the dominances and the recurrences, the homologies and the regulations hidden
behind the apparent discursive diversity and cacophony” (Angenot, 2006: 3).

The author does not dissociate the “content” and the “form”, i.e. what is said and the way it is said.
His approach echoes the theories about the “myths” (Barthes, 1957), the “frames” (Goffman,
1991), the social representations (Abric, 1994; Moliner, 1996), etc., which are often used in the
study of media and political discourses. But it goes beyond these postures by adopting a
“gnoseological” perspective, which aims at shedding knowledge on the ways the world can be
narratively schematized on linguistic materials at a certain moment.

For Marc Angenot (1978), this schematization is not only the result of the internal functions of the
text. The author argues that the narrative cement of a discursive production lies in – and reveals –
its underlying ideological maxims (Provenzano 2006). In this sense, it constitutes a reflection of a
“state of society” as social praxis. Indeed, far from sticking to a formalistic or a structural-
functionalist approach, Marc Angenot is interested in the social dimension of discourses. One can
note here a certain proximity to Michel Foucault’s concept of “discursive formation” (1969: 56),
but also to the Critical Discourse Analysis stand (Van Dijk, 1977; Wodak, 1989), as well as to
To put it in a nutshell, Angenot focuses on discourses as communication phenomena. The latter are
understood as representations – symptomatic of a specific era –, as performative productions, but
also as topoi embedded in time and space. This is the conceptual frame that has guided our work.

¹ A longer version of this paper is published in The IAFOR Journal of Arts and Humanities (Monnier, 2018). The
present communication benefits from a grant within the research project “Fil Info” (News Feed), funded by the
Regional Program CPER Ariane, http://cper-ariane.univ-lorraine.fr/
On the Empirical Study

Our focus concerned the three French titles that traditionally represent the main political areas: Le Figaro (right), Le Monde (center), Libération (left). Both printed and online versions of these three newspapers were included in the analysis. Our research protocol used the key words “false information(s)” [fausse(s) informations] and “false news” [fausse(s) nouvelles] (singular and plural), which are the French equivalent for “fake news” – even though the term “fake news” was ever since established as such in the French public sphere. As explained before, our investigation was circumscribed within the period starting from the American presidential election (November 8th, 2016) until the inauguration of President Donald Trump (January 20th, 2017), i.e. 2,5 months. It turned out that only thirty articles corresponded to the criteria initially set, forming the corpus of our analysis. Sixteen journalists signed their articles (next to nine unsigned articles), each of whom accounting for up to three publications. The full list of the texts with the details of the publication (date, name of the newspaper, newspaper section, journalists’ names when mentioned) is provided in the appendix.

As figure 1 reveals, Le Monde, mostly in its online version, published half of the articles produced in the period under review. Libération devoted the least amount of space to the topic, but in a balanced way between the printed and the online version. Le Figaro is positioned between the two, with a clear prevalence of the online publications.

![Figure 1](image)

Figure 1. The distribution of the fake news debate in three French mainstream newspapers, from the American presidential election (November 8th, 2016) to the inauguration of President Donald Trump (January 20th, 2017).

Given the limited extent of the data analyzed, this work should be apprehended only as an exploratory research. Its goal is to identify the narratives of the fake news debate within the French mainstream media arena: the underlying symbolic schemas, the actors involved and their roles. Our approach entailed different operations: a thematic content analysis was conducted, and texts were

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2. All figures included in this article are produced by the author.
classified based on semantic criteria; the chronology of their publication was established in relation to the hosting newspapers; relevant semantic occurrences were located; narrative universes were identified; underlying ideological maxims were, in an interpretative process, explored. Far from claiming that discourse represents “reality”, our assumption is that it at least reveals human thought: visions of the world, which, through their performative effect, can lead to the construction of this reality.

**Brief Chronology of the Fake News Debate**

In the corpus examined, the first articles related to fake news appeared approximately a week after the election of Donald Trump, on November 15th, 2016, in LeMonde.fr. Two of them referred to the role of Facebook in the American election and its impact on the readers’ behavior in a broader way; the third concerned the use of false information in the Syrian war. The question of the measures taken by Google and Facebook to fight against the production and dissemination of fake news occupied LeFigaro.fr, the following day (16/11/2017). The printed version of Le Monde raised the same issue a day after, on 17/11/2017. The topic remained in the news with at least one publication (and up to three) every two to seven days.

A second series of articles appeared at the end of November 2016. It focused on specific cases of fake news (the stock market impact of false information disseminated about the Vinci group, a building and civil engineering company in France; comments erroneously attributed to Marine LePen, President of the National Rally political party – previously named National Front). At the same time, some articles opted for a more distanced, analytical approach (“Do fake news harm democracy?”, LeMonde.fr, 26/11/2016, republished, with a different title, “On democracy by algorithms”, two days later, in Le Monde, printed version).

At the beginning of December 2016, the subject was back in the news with the Pizzagate scandal, an online rumor associating a small neighborhood restaurant with presumed activities by the Democrat candidate Hilary Clinton (published on LeFigaro.fr, LeMonde.fr), but also other cases of “brainwashing” [intox] disseminated on the web (treated on Liberation.fr, and LeMonde.fr). The second half of December was again occupied by the measures undertaken by Facebook, and the aftermaths of the Vinci case, but also provided a more distanced analysis on the “information war” (Libération).

In January 2017, Le Figaro recounted Donald Trump’s counter-attacks about fake news, and then probed Facebook’s social responsibility, through an interview (published simultaneously on Le Figaro’s web and printed versions) with Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook’s Chief Operating Officer. Le Monde (online and printed) and Libération offered reflexive articles on the information process in contemporary societies.

**Brief Typology of the Fake News Debate**

The attribution of the articles (figure 1) reveals the importance that the issue took in the newsrooms of Le Monde. This newspaper (online and printed version) accounts for 16 articles in total, more
than those published in *Le Figaro* (10 articles) and much more than those of *Libération* (4 articles). The texts’ distribution also highlights the importance of the Internet in this debate, which hosted most articles that came out (22 out of 30). What are the articles about fake news talk about specifically? An initially manual thematic analysis, supported and verified by Tropes software⁴, revealed three referents (figure 2).

![Figure 2. The typology of the fake news debate in three French mainstream newspapers, from the American presidential election (November 8th, 2016) to the inauguration of President Donald Trump (January 20th, 2017).](image)

A first series of articles, rather significant (14), recounts incidents and discourses due to the circulation of erroneous information. These are descriptive texts related to the uses of fake news (e.g. “the attack against Vinci” or the “Pizza Gate”) that present the course as well as the immediate and tangible effects of an online rumor, of a malicious information, etc. Two of the articles come from *Libération*’s fact-checking section named “Désintox” and aim at debunking erroneous information. In general, incidents are mostly posted online. A second series of texts (9) focus on the measures taken by the media to combat false news. Here, facts prevail as well but the overall approach is linked to an underlying question about the regulation of the media system. Texts refer to social networks, mainly Facebook, as well as other giants of the Internet, such as Google. Incident and measures are often published in the newspapers’ economic column. Finally, a final series of articles, notably published by *Le Monde*, provides reflexive approaches to the phenomenon, its causes and especially its repercussions for contemporary societies. The angle here is more distanced and the tone speculative. However, no definition of the expression “fake news” is provided in these texts.

The three referential axes of the media coverage of the fake news phenomenon correspond to the three levels of information ethics advocated by Daniel Cornu (1994: 116 sq., following Otfrid Höffe’s typology of justice, Höffe, 1991: 133). The first is descriptive and concerns practices. The second is normative oriented because it refers to the deontology and the regulation of practices.

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⁴ A language processing and semantic classification software: https://www.semantic-knowledge.com/tropes.htm
The third is positioned on a more abstract level and has a reflexive dimension. Drawing on this author’s theses, we propose the following categorization of the coverage of fake news (table 1).

### Table 1. The coverage of the fake news debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of coverage</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>Incidents and discourses due to the circulation of erroneous information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>Actions to undertake (measures), regulation of practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive</td>
<td>Perspectives, analyses, reflections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It comes perhaps as no surprise to find that descriptive articles (incidents and measures) occupy the largest part of the corpus (figure 2). Indeed, as it has so often been highlighted, “information” is first about “reporting the facts”: “what happens or what has happened” (Charaudeau, 2005: 121 sq., see also Esquenazi, 2002). Here are the facts reported:

Texts related to the 2nd and 3rd categories (measures, analyses) are also very present in the media discourse. For these two categories, the study of the frequently associated topoi discloses the contents dealt with and the questions raised (table 2).

### Table 2. Relations between references (more than 2 occurrences)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category &quot;Analyses&quot;</th>
<th>Category &quot;Measures&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>democracy-algorithm</td>
<td>arbitrator-truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook-election</td>
<td>fight-false information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook-maker</td>
<td>Facebook-arbitrator</td>
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<tr>
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**Narrative Universes of the Fake News Debate**

It has been shown that most of the articles examined are of factual nature: they recount facts related to past events, as well actions to be taken (categories “Incidents” and “Measures”). The reflexive analyses of the phenomenon (category “Analyses”), which began, as was pointed out above, at the end of November, remain a minority. Nevertheless, these discourses attract our attention, because they reveal the interpretive angle through which the fake news phenomenon is understood.

Figure 3. The reference fields of the analyses of the fake news phenomenon, as registered in three French mainstream newspapers, from the American presidential election (November 8th, 2016) to the inauguration of President Donald Trump (January 20th, 2017).

Like any narrative (Holstein and Gubrium, 2012), the symbolic construction of a social phenomenon – especially of a public problem – leads to the designation of actors endorsing positive or negative roles and forging the reality discussed (Palma, 1980). What are the actors involved in the narrative universe generated by the phenomenon of fake news? It is primarily the media, especially social networks (Facebook), but also the technological platforms in a broader way (Google), that emerge as actors “despite of their will”. They determine the emergence and proliferation of fake news, because of their technical characteristics (the principle of algorithms and the subsequent amplification of “filter bubbles”) but also the economic logics that underpin them. The question of whether social networks constitute media organisms, in the traditional sense of the word, i.e. subject to editorial logics and therefore responsible for the content they publish, is at the core of the debate. Analyses also point to the malicious role of those who make fake news as well as those who profit from their spread. The latter can be actors “from above”, notably politicians aiming to discredit their opponents. Donald Trump or the extreme right are mentioned here. Fake news makers are also actors “from below”, anonymous people, such as young
Macedonians or Georgians, who seek to profit financially by creating and disseminating erroneous information that is likely to generate clicks. Finally, the users of the media themselves contribute to the expansion of the phenomenon by their incredulity, their irresponsibility or their indifference. Despite their often-good intentions, the emotional approach through which they approach reality and information, as well as the search for self-promotion and empowerment, restrict their horizons instead of enlarging them.

The first observation in the light of these elements is that the phenomenon of fake news concerns all the instances of the traditional communication scheme: transmitters (those “from above” but also those “from below”), receivers and, of course, channels. The communication process, as the foundation of democratic societies, is thus disrupted. Second observation: all the actors mentioned so far turn out to be “opponents” (in the actantial sense of the term, Greimas, 1966) to this process: politicians who spread false information for ideological purposes, anonymous people who make them up based on pecuniary motivations, publics who consume them in credulity or indifference, media organisms which by their logics and characteristics let them happen. Last but not least: the only actors to be able to remedy the problems generated by fake news – or at least fight against them – are journalists and, to a lesser extent, the online social media. The duty of the first to promote a quality investigative journalism is underlined.

In other words, although several actors are responsible for the production and dissemination of fake news, solutions can apparently only be found in the media world (journalists, social networks). It is upon this discursive configuration that the metanarrative (Lyotard, 1979) of fake news builds, giving rise to two utopias in regard to information.

From Narratives to Metanarratives: On Journalism and Media Power

Beyond the democratic ideal in which the fake news debate is inscribed, its analysis within an actantial narrative framework (Greimas, 1966) – seeking to identify the “actants”, and their roles – leads to two observations. The latter crystallize common perceptions, utopias of the informational process – which the narratives highlighted here merely consolidate.

The first perception is linked to the role of journalists and the margins provided by their working conditions. As if operating outside the media system, journalists are supposed to be the guarantors of truth and objectivity, without being seriously affected by the dysfunctions of the production and the circulation of information. The injunctions concerning their duty to fight against misinformation – even though they do fall within the ethical framework of the journalistic practice (Cornu, 1994) – also reproduce fantasies in regard to investigative journalism as the remedy to the evils of Society and the deficiencies of the media system (Hunter, 1997). On a more realistic level though, the working conditions of journalists, marked by precariousness, compartmentalization, the need for immediacy, and of course the race for audiences and profits, make investigation at least difficult, if not impossible. It is not our purpose here to excuse or defend media professionals, but to remind the multiple parameters that shape the media system and the constraints in which journalists evolve (Mercier, 2006; Neveu, 2013); and to note, in passing, that it is not certain that the emphasis put on the promises of investigative journalism serve the image of journalists themselves, often considered not to live up to their mission.
The second perception concerns the media power. Subject to considerable debates for decades, the paradigm of media’s superpower tends to obscure the role of people in the communication process. From the “Two-step flow of communication” (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955), the “Uses and Gratifications Theory” (Katz et al. 1973-74) and the “Spiral of silence” (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), to the more recent understandings of the information and communications technology uses (Jauréguiberry and Proulx, 2011), several works highlight the limits of media power. However, although the latter constitute established epistemological acceptations (Maigret, 2003), public narratives seem to reproduce the linear information model. A fundamental question is often skipped or at least less explored when evoked: why people fall for fake news?

The ease with which “hoaxes” circulate raises indeed questions about the numerical transformations of the political debate. But it is not proscribed to wonder about the reasons why millions of Americans wanted to believe in it and elected Donald Trump. If the “hoax” and “post” campaigns in favor of the Republican candidate were of no interest to anyone, Facebook’s algorithm would probably have given them less importance: is Facebook responsible if its users consciously share lies intended to discredit the candidates they do not like, and which comfort their own vision of the world? (Michaël Szadkowski, Damien Leloup, Le Monde, 15 November 2016).

The impact of this doxa is threefold. First, it forwards a certain vision of journalism – whose professional perimeter seems, by the way, already uneasy to circumscribe (Ruellan, 1992) –, based on fact-checking, naively considered to be the solution to the post-truth problem (Vargo et al., 2017). Second, on an epistemological level, it seems to bring back into the agenda the concept of “masses”, long ago abandoned. For Patrick Chastenet (2017), “this is doubtless a difficult reality to admit: public opinion needs propaganda, because in an increasingly complex and anxiogenic world, propaganda orders, simplifies and reassures by designating the camp of good and that of evil”. Third, from a political standpoint, the rhetoric on media’s superpower is far from promoting the democratic enhancement of societies. By blaming journalists and the dysfunctions of certain media for the flaws of the information environment, we forget to take thorough interest in the reasons that lead people to fall prey to fake news; and by doing so, we also reproduce a moralizing attitude towards individuals who, in this context, feel despised by a dominant discourse that they do not understand, and whose anger only serves the interests of extremist political currents.

Indeed, as Pascal Froissart (2002, 2004) has underlined, the success of trapped contents and misinformation has also a lot to do with people’s emotional and cognitive dispositions: when the latter really wish for something to exist, it ends up “real”, at least in the eyes of the observers concerned. Other analysts also insist on misinformation’s resonance with people’s fears and hopes (Lecoq and Lisarelli, 2011). As sociologist Gerald Bronner pointed out

there are four categories of the actors who circulate false information: those who do it knowing that information is fake, just to put a mess in the system; those who do so by ideological militancy as to serve their cause; those who do so to promote political, economic or even personal interests; finally, those who do it believing information is true, and it is about them that the question of “post-truth” arises (Bronner, quoted in Hirschhorn, 2017, see also Bronner, 2013).

It is for this reason that Gerald Bronner doubts the efficiency of devices destined to help users identify the least reliable information, which are only “just a drop in the ocean” (Bronner, quoted
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in Hirschhorn, 2017). Empirical analysis on the effectiveness of warning messages as a means to contain the circulation of fake news seems to support these doubts (Ross et al., 2018).

In other words, by implying the centrality of the journalists’ power in establishing truths, common discourses may promote a rather simplistic vision of news, enhance shortcuts and impoverish reality from its inherent complexity. In this sense, they fail to reinforce individual empowerment as one’s capacity to be aware of one’s own responsibility to keep a critical eye on public discourses.

Conclusion

In this paper, it has been argued that the narratives proposed in regard to the dysfunctions of the contemporary information landscape convey a utopian vision of the role of journalists as remedies to the problem. We have discussed the limits of this perception and the pitfalls it induces. Of course, it would be wrong to forget that these results fall within the given spatiotemporal – and certainly limited – framework of the present study: the mainstream press French, during the first weeks of President Donald Trump’s election. Are there other underlying framings of the fake news phenomenon? Debates on public issues are struggles over meaning (Angenot, 2006) that depend on the public arena in which they are carried out. Analysis of social media could, for example, reveal how ordinary people understand and comment on the fake news phenomenon. Voices coming mainly from academia progressively shift the focus of the fake news debate. The latter insist on the complexity of the phenomenon, the role of people’s cognitive attitudes (Bronner, 2013; Pennycook and Rand, 2017) as well as the economic dimensions of it (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017). Even “Decoders”, Le Monde’s fact-checking section5 has revised its policy: except for extreme cases, it is ultimately for the readers to exercise their critical capacity to evaluate the reliability of an information and thus regulate the cognitive market. However, the problem remains unsolved: by putting into broader perspective our relation to truth and reality (Pouivet, 2017), don’t we end up corroborating the constructivist postulate that fuelled fake news in the first place? The debate is more open than ever.

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References


Mapping the HE News Literacy Landscape in the UK

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Abstract

‘News literacy’ is a relatively well-established term in some parts of the world, notably the USA. It has risen to prominence in the UK more recently with debates at government level around a need for digital literacy education as a response to concerns around online mis- and dis-information. One voice largely absent from this debate is that of journalism educators. With this in mind, the authors set out to map news literacy initiatives across HE journalism courses in the UK. Primary research was conducted between September 2018 and May 2019 using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. This paper will include details of our findings and conclude with a critical analysis of existing news literacy initiatives within UK journalism teaching and reflections on the development of an educators’ network and/or suite of resources.

Introduction

News literacy, despite being a contested term, has made the UK headlines in recent months. Last year’s report into disinformation and ‘fake news’ from the Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport Committee called for digital literacy to be the fourth pillar of education, alongside reading, writing and maths, while the Cairncross Report of February 2019 called on the government to develop a media literacy strategy.

In this context, and amid a febrile atmosphere generated by fallout from the 2016 US election and Brexit referendum, a range of organisations - news industry players, charities and educational bodies - have established news literacy initiatives of differing scale and with divergent priorities. Attempts are being made to cohere and map what is a fragmented news literacy landscape.

A number of these organisations, including the Guardian Foundation, BBC, Economist, National Literacy Trust and Association of Citizenship Teachers, formed the News Literacy Network in the Summer of 2018 and Ofcom, the national broadcast regulator, has identified a need to map educational initiatives as part of its remit to promote digital literacy.

This activity is focused almost exclusively on school-age children. However, it is in this context that university journalism departments are charged with educating the UK’s next generation of journalists.

These are young people with the same basic need as all young (and indeed older) media consumers for education in the basics of digital literacy, but also with a specialist imperative to understand concepts such as fact-checking; verification; mis- and disinformation; sourcing; bias and filter
bubbles and the industrial socio-economic context in which such practices of news production occur.

In the USA, where the debate - and the academic literature - around news literacy is more developed than in the UK, the teaching of news literacy at HE level has been the focus of significant study. Journalism educators on that side of the Atlantic have the advantage of open-access resources that are more suitable for university-level news literacy teaching than almost anything that is currently on offer in the UK. American resources include the Stony Brook Center for News Literacy’s digital resource center, and The Sift, a weekly email from the News Literacy Project, as well as the support of subject-specific membership organisations such as the National Association of Media Literacy Educators (NAMLE).

The authors, who both teach news literacy at their respective UK universities, set out in this study to establish who is doing likewise in this country. By surveying the relevant heads of department, course convenors and interested researchers at a wide range of higher education institutions, we have attempted to map the range of news literacy education the UK’s journalism students are getting. This work is intended to complement ongoing work by the authors and others to interrogate news literacy initiatives at schools level. Our second research objective was to assess the viability of a network of HE news literacy educators in the UK, echoing the DCMS committee’s suggestion that there is pedagogical advantage to be drawn from working together in this area. Our findings suggest that there is appetite among journalism academics for some form of resource to support news literacy teaching.

News Literacy – Literature Review

The term news literacy has origins in the academy and in journalism itself. The standalone body of literature on news literacy is relatively young and it has sprung both from the more established theoretical traditions of media literacy as well as from the less academically-minded priorities and initiatives driven by the news industry and journalists themselves.

Before examining its development as an academic discipline, its parallel growth as a method of teaching – often led by journalism educators or news providers – will be scrutinised.

This approach advocates or delivers what might be described as a pragmatic or skills-based approach to news literacy, with a focus on evaluating news outputs and differentiating ‘legitimate’ journalism from other forms of information.

It was pioneered by Howard Schneider, the executive director of the Center for News Literacy at Stony Brook University in the US and Alan Miller, the founder and CEO of the philanthropically funded News Literacy Project in the US.

The Stony Brook Center for News Literacy was founded in 2006 with multi-million dollar funding from the Knight Foundation and set out to deliver a 14-week news literacy programme to thousands of students majoring in journalism and a range of other subjects.
Its stated aim is “to help students understand how journalism works and why information is such a powerful force for good and ill in modern societies”, and the Center has built a network of US and overseas partner institutions that deliver part or all of its course.

The News Literacy Project, founded in 2008 by Miller, a former Los Angeles Times investigative reporter, has a similar aim. It is funded by a growing array of philanthropists and tech platforms including Apple, Facebook and the Knight Foundation, and in its mission statement declares that the News Literacy Project “empowers educators to teach children the skills they need to become smart, active consumers of news and information and engaged, informed participants in our democracy”. Part of their outreach work includes a weekly email to educators entitled ‘The Sift’, which suggests ways in which that week’s news agenda could be deployed in the teaching of news literacy concepts.

Initiatives such as the NLP and Stony Brook have an emphasis on distinguishing what they perceive as legitimate, established news norms from all else, and use practising journalists in their resources. The UK’s newly-formed News Literacy Network, whose members are primarily educators and representatives of the news media, has adopted the definition used by Stony Brook University, that news literacy is: “The ability to use critical thinking to judge the reliability and credibility of information, whether it comes via print, television or the internet.”

This, arguably, could encompass material far beyond the boundaries of what could be categorised as news. Indeed globally, the news literacy movement is primarily concerned with enabling citizens to distinguish news online from other content such as mis- and dis-information and propaganda alongside initiatives to rebuild public trust in news. Kenya’s fact-checking platform Pesacheck and Cuny’s News Integrity Initiative are prominent examples of such projects.

Given that news literacy as a method of teaching is relatively new, it is perhaps unsurprising that its research and theoretical underpinnings are also in their infancy. Indeed, as Fleming (2014) notes, the “literature on news literacy specifically is limited given the label news literacy is relatively new”. However, news literacy as an academic discipline is best understood as a subset of media literacy - a term that itself “means many different things to different people” (Potter, 2010).

Maksl, Ashley and Craft (2015) explicitly link the motivations behind the news literacy movement with the financial crisis facing the news industry: “For professional journalism, improving news literacy is partly a matter of economic survival, a way of sustaining demand for the type of content professional journalists provide, but also of fulfilling its role to help citizens be adequately informed to participate in democratic life.”

Meanwhile, the media literacy scholar Renee Hobbs (2010) wrote of the ‘problematic practice’ of teaching about news “exclusively from a journalist’s point of view… telling war stories about the good ol’ days does not inherently work to develop critical thinking and communication skills among students”.

She also warned that to “focus on the ideals of journalism is mere propaganda if it is blind to the realities of contemporary journalism, where partisan politics and smear-fests are the surest way to
build audiences”. Some programmes, Hobbs argues, should be termed news appreciation rather than news literacy, with their narrow and focused aim: to increase people’s positive regard and appreciation for journalism (2010).

Prominent critical media literacy scholars such as Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share argue that any readings of the news should incorporate theories of political economy of the media and cultural theories around audiences (2007).

This critique of practical news literacy programmes offered by Stony Brook, the NLP and others gained more currency when, as Klein, Nielsen and Graves note, the flow of misinformation around the 2016 US presidential election put the problem of “fake news” on the agenda all over the world” (2017).

In the US over the following year, the media literacy movement quickly became ‘a center of gravity for countering “fake news” with a “steady stream of announcements about media literacy” as educators, legislators, philanthropists and technologists raced to push resources towards media literacy programmes (Bulger and Davison: 2018).

In the UK context, both news literacy education and the literature surrounding it are significantly less well developed than in the US. However, there are signs that a similar debate around the funding and priorities of news literacy are beginning to develop.

As David Buckingham highlighted in a March 2019 blog post: “In the wake of growing concerns over ‘fake news’ and disinformation, many media organisations [in the UK] are getting involved in teaching what they call ‘news literacy’.”

There are a growing number of voices in academic (Livingstone 2018) and policy (DCMS) circles that argue that the current, piecemeal offer is inadequate and that digital literacy must be somehow embedded in the schools curriculum.

In the current absence of this, however, university journalism departments are welcoming students who for the most part have had little or no explicit news literacy education.

These teenagers are exposed to the same “extraordinary landscape of information abundance” and enormous “literacy burden” as other citizens, as noted by McDougall and Pereira in their UK country report for the European Literacy Network (2017).

As long ago as 1999, Reece called - in a US context - for journalism departments to create not just trainee journalists but a news literate public. Schneider’s central idea in establishing the Center for News Literacy was that by teaching these skills, journalism departments could go from being the providers of professional journalism training, peripheral to their wider institutions, to having an essential role in equipping the wider student body to deal with communications revolution. This was and is an enormous ambition, and there are those at the other end of the spectrum who believe that news literacy has no place on a journalism degree. This study hopes to fill a gap in the literature by shining some light on the views of journalism academics in the UK.


Study and Method

The purpose of the survey was to gain the widest possible picture of the current state of news literacy teaching on journalism courses at UK universities. This was a qualitative research project involving an online survey followed by a series of semi-structured interviews with a sample of those who completed that survey. The aim of the interviews, which are ongoing at the time of writing, is to enrich the survey data with in-depth questioning of selected academics about their news literacy teaching. Our key research questions were:

1) To what extent is news literacy being taught on undergraduate journalism programmes in the UK?
2) How much appetite is there within the journalism academy to increase the amount of news literacy that is taught and, to the extent that there is appetite, what resources would be helpful in making this happen?

Context

The researchers created an online survey, administered using the Qualtrics programme and distributed to prospective respondents via personalised links sent to their institutional email addresses via this programme.

The inclusion criteria for the survey sample were heads of journalism departments and journalism course convenors at recognised HE institutions that were included in the 2018 (most recent) Guardian league table for undergraduate degrees in journalism, or similar programmes including a strong element of journalism, in the UK.

Participants

Publicly available email addresses were found using university websites. Respondents were invited to complete the survey, but also given the option of forwarding their personalised link to another member of their journalism department who might have more appropriate knowledge of the news literacy taught at that institution.

The Qualtrics software enabled the researchers to ensure that no more than one response was obtained from any one institution.

The original email containing a link to the survey was sent to 55 BA journalism programme convenors on March 20 2019. A subsequent four reminder emails were sent, the last on April 17 2019.

The survey was kept intentionally brief, in order to maximise response rate, and was pilot tested on a small convenience sample of colleagues before being circulated. It asked for basic factual details such as whether news literacy is taught on the journalism course and at what level, as well as for the respondent’s own definition of news literacy and a breakdown of the concepts they teach that could be considered news literacy (for example, mis- and dis-information). The survey also
asked respondents to indicate whether they would be interested in introducing more news literacy teaching, which resources if any would support that teaching (e.g. a website featuring open-access resources, or an e-newsletter), and what they already knew about pre-existing news literacy resources.

A total of 32 academic members of staff participated, although three who started the survey did not complete it.

**Data collection**

There were 29 valid responses from a sample size of 55, giving a response rate of 53 per cent. Three surveys were started and not finished, hence for all surveys started, there was a 91 per cent completion rate. Those that started the survey but did not complete it answered only question one (Have you heard of the term news literacy before?).

The data from the survey is presented here in anonymised form. It should be noted that the researchers’ own institutions, where in both cases news literacy is taught at Level 4 (first year undergraduate) as a standalone subject (although in differing levels of detail), do not feature in the survey data.

Survey respondents were asked to submit their email address if they would be willing to be contacted by the researchers in relation to the second phase of the project. Of the 29 survey respondents, 16 submitted email addresses. The interviewing of these respondents is ongoing and forms the next stage of our research.

**Findings**

Participants demonstrated a strong awareness of the term news literacy. Of the 32 respondents to question one (Have you heard of the term news literacy?) only one responded in the negative. (see appendices, Table 1).

Participants who answered the above question in the positive were then asked to define, using a free text box, what they understood by ‘news literacy’. There were 23 responses to this question, indicating that, including the three participants who stopped the survey after question one, a further two left this field blank.

The responses demonstrated a broad understanding of the term, with answers ranging from “the ability to read and consume news in a critically effective way” to “understanding the language of news” or simply “understanding news”.

Others saw news literacy as teaching how to “sift fact from fiction”, “spot fake news” and the ability to “distinguish news that is based on reliable fact from propaganda and fake news”.

The next question asked whether participants taught news literacy as a stand-alone subject on the programmes they convened or work on. Of the 28 eligible to respond to this question, two answered yes while 26 said no.
The participants were then presented with a list of concepts that could fall under the subject ‘news literacy’ and asked to indicate which, if any, they teach on their courses. The table below (see appendices, Table 2) shows the concepts offered and the response rates. Responses indicated that all the listed concepts are widely taught with the most popular, fake news and mis-information, selected by 27 respondents.

The next question sought to establish any appetite among participants for introducing stand-alone news literacy workshops, or modules, on to their programmes.

This elicited a strong response, with 19 responding in the affirmative (nine answered definitely yes, four answered probably yes and six answered might or might not). Three participants replied “probably not” and five said they were already doing so.

For those who responded in the negative to the above question, a follow-up question asked why. Responses were again varied but a theme that emerged is summed up by this answer: “We already do – but not as a stand-alone subject. It underpins a good deal of our teaching.”

Participants were asked whether they were aware of, or working with, any external organisations offering news literacy training or teaching and of the 21 respondents five replied yes while 16 said no. Of these, when prompted to list these organisations, one respondent cited the Media Diversity Institute, another listed Google News Labs and the BBC.


Finally, participants were asked what kind of resources for news literacy teaching they would be interested in and were able to tick all four of the options provided, and/or specify others using a free text box. Of the four, a public website featuring downloadable resources for news literacy teaching was the most popular with 17 of the respondents selecting it as an option.

**Discussion/Conclusion**

This study explored the term news literacy and how it is understood by academics working on, and in most cases leading, over half the undergraduate journalism courses taught at widely recognised higher education institutions in the UK. It asked what the appetite might be for any shared resources and sought to survey awareness of the broader news literacy movement in the UK.

The key finding from this sample is that a standalone subject explicitly defined as ‘news literacy’ features [almost] nowhere outside of the researchers’ own institutions, Liverpool John Moores and Goldsmiths, which do not feature in the survey statistics. At LJMU, news literacy is taught as a series of 10 one-hour workshops within a Level 4, semester one module called Studying as Journalists. At Goldsmiths, news literacy workshops are embedded in the term one Level 4 module Introduction to Multimedia Journalism.

However, as outlined above, a large majority of respondents stated that they teach most or all of the concepts that the researchers highlighted as potential constituents of a news literacy syllabus.
In short, there is a good deal of what might reasonably be considered ‘news literacy’ teaching going on within the UK’s undergraduate journalism programmes, but rarely is it thought of - or described to students - in those terms.

One reason for this might be that a notable feature of the nascent news literacy movement in the UK, which has seen multiple actors from the media industry and third sector establish educational initiatives of varying scale and focus, is that news literacy itself a contested term with different definitions that reflect the priorities and perspectives of those different actors.

The News Literacy Network, established in August 2018 as a forum for educators, news platforms and literacy advocates, adopted a definition employed by the Stony Brook Center for News Literacy in New York, that news literacy is the “ability to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports, whether they come via print, television, the internet or social media”.

However, what this means in practice differs significantly even between member organisations of the NLN. Our survey indicates that this divergence is present with the journalism academy.

As noted above, when asked to define news literacy, the survey participants offered a range of answers, some more closely aligned to the Stony Brook definition than others.

Of the 23 recorded responses to this question, five replied broadly that news literacy was about how to sift or identify news as distinct from other content (be it opinion, propaganda or advertising). One respondent replied: “The ability to sift fact from fiction in contemporary communication”. Of the 18 other responses, the majority were concerned with news literacy as a close reading of the news, best encapsulated by this response: “News literacy is the ability to critically read and interpret the news.”

This divergence in responses speaks to the broader arguments outlined above as to what news literacy is or should be in the pre-university setting. Bulger and Davison (2018) note that media literacy in the US has become the centre of gravity for countering fake news.

This is also the case in the UK, where the news industry is often offered as part of the solution to countering the problems of ‘fake news’.

For example the DCMS’ interim report on fake news (July 24 2018) states, in a section discussing news literacy initiatives in the UK, how “The Times and The Sunday Times have recently launched a media literacy scheme in schools, to help pupils how to spot ‘fake news’. The scheme will be available for pupils in secondary schools, colleges and sixth form. The programme is in partnership with News UK’s News Academy”.

Further, Dame Frances Cairncross in her February 2019 review into the future of journalism calls for the government “to develop a media literacy strategy working with Ofcom, the online platforms and news publishers and broadcaster”.

The authors do not reject the potential for the news media industry to play a useful role in the development of news literacy education. However, the findings of this survey indicate that HE
journalism educators would argue that any comprehensive news literacy initiative must include scrutiny of our news platforms and providers themselves. For citizens - and particularly trainee journalism students - to be truly news literate, the microscope must be held over the mainstream news production process as well as over the purveyors of mis- and dis-information known to be acting both in the UK and globally.

As one respondent said: “News literacy is being able to understand the processes and attitudes which lead to an event becoming a news report, including bias, ownerships, propaganda, the limitations of newsgathering, reporting techniques and traditions.”

As noted above, some 70 per cent of participants when asked whether they would be interested in introducing this to their own journalism courses as a standalone subject said that they would definitely or might be interested.

Of this group, all had stated they already teach at least six of the [eight] news literacy concepts that might be expected to feature within a so-defined news literacy syllabus.

It is worth noting that the concept most respondents said they taught was that of so-called fake news, or mis- and dis-information. This is perhaps not surprising given the UK context as set out above, but the answer does not allow at this stage for further unpicking of how it is taught and in what context.

This indicates that there is some level of interest within the journalism academy in the idea of introducing news literacy as a discrete subject. It should be noted, however, that early interview data for the next phase of research indicates resistance from some quarters to the idea of ring-fencing news literacy as a separate and finite portion of a journalism course. One survey respondent who said he ‘probably would’ be interested in introducing a standalone news literacy element commented during interview that on reflection he had decided against the idea because, in effect, his entire degree programme is in some senses news literacy, and that journalism educators should not be teaching those skills in isolation from their wider courses.

This echoes a sentiment shared by other interviewees; a journalism course inherently teaches news literacy and therefore there is little need to explicitly teach it.

The researchers do not reject this. However, having introduced clearly defined news literacy teaching to both our degree courses, we argue that there is merit in at least exploring the pedagogic value of drawing together the various concepts and practical, critical skills that constitute basic news literacy under the umbrella of one module. We question whether the majority of incoming students possess the meta-cognitive skills necessary to understand that what they are learning are news and digital literacy skills unless point that is made explicit. We argue that there is potential value in students being aware that they are learning these skills, and in having their importance explained rather than left implicit. We furthermore argue that students should be encouraged to develop and use their news literacy skills in their function as news consumers and citizens, as well as in their capacity as students and content creators.

There was an interest from participants in the creation of some shared teaching resources around news literacy, with a website hosting exercises being the most popular choice (as noted above).
However, during interviews for the second phase of this project several respondents expressed doubt they would have the time to engage properly with the content and indicated they were more comfortable using their own examples.

There were only five positive answers (out of 21) to the question: “Are you aware of, or working with, any external organisation(s) who offer news literacy training or teaching?”

Of those mentioned (outlined above in the findings section) institutions such as the Frontline Club and the NCTJ are not, to our knowledge, carrying out explicit news literacy initiatives though are working in closely related fields such as fact checking and verification – once again pointing to the diverging definitions of news literacy that abound.

Further, given the multiplicity of news literacy initiatives that have launched in the UK over the past two years, and the attention given to the subject in reports by Dame Francis Cairncross (2019) and the DCMS Committee, (2018,9) it is interesting that journalism academics do not appear to have registered in detail the various projects that have launched. This might reflect the fact that most of the activity is directed at schools level.

It might too reflect that the majority of journalism educators surveyed for this article are more concerned with teaching students how to perform critical readings of the news in order for them to become news literate. As discussed, many of the news literacy initiatives mentioned above are more concerned with setting “quality news” apart from other forms of online information.

The researchers believe therefore that these findings indicate a gulf between policy makers, industry and journalism academics that could usefully be bridged in the interests of developing the coherent and unified approach to news/ critical digital literacy called for by parliamentarians.

An approach which, rather than leaving the work of news literacy to the news providers, scrutinises their output too.

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Appendices

Table 1

Has you heard of the term news literacy before?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Have you heard of the term news literacy before?</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Q7 - Do you teach any of the following concepts on your programme? Please tick all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current literature</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of historical events of advertising industry</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different types of advertising and their impact</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages/Disadvantages of different types of advertising</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages/Disadvantages of using advertising to promote a brand</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages/Disadvantages of using advertising to improve sales</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages/Disadvantages of using advertising to influence consumer</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the different roles and responsibilities of marketers</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the different roles and responsibilities of salespeople</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the different roles and responsibilities of advertisers</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of current events</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of current events and their impact</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the different roles and responsibilities of marketers</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the different roles and responsibilities of salespeople</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the different roles and responsibilities of advertisers</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Journalism Education in the Era Beyond Digitalization: The Impact of Fact-Checking and Verification Techniques Upon Journalism Students

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Abstract

Fact checking and verification techniques have been called to tackle disinformation (Silverman, 2014) as a significant problem for journalists and news organizations around the world. A thorough understanding of how to include these practices in media education and also to measure their impact on journalism students’ daily practice is a major challenge. This paper aims to examine the effectiveness of fact checking and verification training through a qualitative study based on two focus groups of journalism students that have been trained in implementing such techniques in Greece and Cyprus. Our intention is to examine the extent to which these groups can implement and evaluate such tools in their daily practices. As such, the method used is focus group interviews to assess attitudes toward fact checking techniques. Through our analysis we aim to document several important challenges in introducing these courses. To this end, this study presents the most in-depth examination of journalism students’ attitudes towards fact checking to date and of its effects on students’ factual knowledge and implementation. Overall, this paper reports on the lessons learned by introducing fact checking and verification in teaching journalism curricula in an era beyond digitalization.

Key words: Disinformation, fact checking, journalism, education.

Introduction

The introduction of internet services 30 years ago has considerably changed the journalistic profession. Traditional media channels (print, radio and TV) were set aside and a variety of new channels, based on the internet, were introduced. Among them social media, part of the web 2.0 era, now play a very important role in news dissemination practices. News today is produced 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, disseminating immediately after they are produced (Cushion & Sambrook, 2016). Media organizations employ various publishing channels in a cross-media manner, in order to reach different groups of users that consume news through different sources (Veglis, 2012). Thus, journalists today are obliged to produce content without focusing on a particular media channel, while, at the same time, this content has to be accessible through different digital devices in linear and/or nonlinear form (Maniou & Veglis, 2016), as expected in hybrid media systems (Chadwick, 2017).
One of the main challenges of journalism that became very prominent in this era beyond digitalization is ‘fake news’ and the wider phenomenon of disinformation. Fueled by the increased production of content on social media by known and unknown sources, the reliance on algorithms that decide which news are suitable for individual internet users, based on his/her profile, and of course on the continuously increased reliance on social networking services in order to stay informed (Ananny & Crawford, 2016), this phenomenon has taken news organizations and the audience by surprise. To this end, fact checking and verification techniques have been called to tackle disinformation (Silverman, 2014) as a significant problem for journalists and news organizations around the world. As thus, a thorough understanding of how to include these practices and content in media education and also to measure their impact on journalism students’ daily practice is a major challenge.

This paper attempts to examine the effectiveness of fact checking and verification training through a focus group study of journalism students that have been trained in implementing such techniques. The target of the research is to report on the first experimental estimates on the effects of exposure to fact checking courses in order to document several important challenges in introducing these courses largely incorporated in journalism curricula around the world during recent years.

The article is organized as follows: the first part analyzes the theoretical background regarding the implementation of ICT skills, the challenges and problems of this process in the era beyond digitalization. In the methodological part, method, RQs and scopes of the study are presented, followed by finding and discussion. Finally, in the last part the conclusions, limitations and future steps of this project are described.

Theoretical Background

Journalism has always been closely related to technology (Veglis, 2013). Radio, television and information and communication technologies (ICTs) have expanded their influence and also created new opportunities in receiving and consuming, but also in creating and disseminating news (Chung et al., 2007). ICTs are considered the latest challenge (but certainly not the last) with which journalists must contend. It is obvious that a parameter that may have a huge impact on how journalists cope with these challenges is journalism education. Veglis and Bratsas (2017) proposed six categories for the required ICT skills that journalists should possess in order to be able to cope with today’s work demands: i) basic skills ii) web publishing skills, iii) Web 2.0 skills, iv) webcasting skills, v) data journalism skills and vi) Web 3.0 skills.

The problem is that since 2016 the media landscape has been transformed significantly with the rapid dissemination of fake news, seriously impacting the credibility of traditional media organizations (Veglis & Panagiotou, 2017). The spread of fake news is mainly facilitated by social media and, more specifically, social networking and microblogging services (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). Social media sites are important as both journalistic sources and as platforms to disseminate journalistic work (Veglis & Panagiotou, 2018). They have become a standard, if not indispensable, tool for newsgathering as many studies suggest (Ahmad, 2010; Cozma & Chen, 2013; Sheffer & Schultz, 2010). Another parameter that must be considered is the fact that young to middle age journalists and also journalism students are millennials (born from the early 1980s until the early 2000s (Strauss & Howe, 2000). A study by the Pew Research (2015) found that millennials tend to get their news from social media and thus they are more exposed to
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misinformation (Farmer, 2017). Stoddard, Dotson & Das (2016) reported that there is a relationship between millennials’ online behavior and their opinions for online reviews. In other words, the more millennials use the internet, the more probable it is they accept what they read as trustworthy.

Thus, the verification of the content that journalists gather through social media has become an important parameter in the journalistic work process (Veglis & Panagiotou, 2018). This process is mainly done with the help of techniques that rely almost entirely on ICTs (Katsaounidou, Dimoulas, & Veglis, 2018). Thus, it is quite natural that the previous mentioned categories of ICT skills must be supplemental with an additional category that will be devoted to verification skills.

Although the introduction of the information and communication technologies, along with the internet, has transformed journalism considerably, the basic values of verification remain about the same (Silverman & Tsubaki, 2015; Veglis & Panagiotou, 2018). The journalist should always verify his/her information by asking the 5Ws (Who, What, Where, When, Why) questions (Kolodzy, 2013). In the era of the internet a significant number of the 5Ws questions can be answered with the help of online tools, which allow journalists to verify content remotely (Veglis & Panagiotou, 2017). Veglis and Panagiotou (2018) proposed the organization of these tools into seven categories, namely: effective web searching, image verification, location verification, time verification, video verification, multimedia content verification, and social verification.

Nowadays, social media publish important information for journalists, but they also disseminate rumors and invalid information. Shortly after the appearance of a news story on social media it is very important for the journalist to be able to validate its truthfulness. This includes a detailed check of the social history of the account that published the news story (Veglis & Panagiotou, 2017). This process is very time consuming and not easy to implement. Thus, special tools that perform social media account analysis are now available. TruthNest, one such tool developed by ATC (Athens Technology Center - http://www.atc.gr), offers a holistic analysis including a plethora of social dimensions, automatic controls and metrics in order to enable media organizations and journalists to: i) identify early signals of events, ii) verify authenticity of information posted, iii) locate possible credible sources of information, iv) monitor the social ecosystem effectively by creating smart, semantically meaningful, context-aware, dynamic, cross-network streams (Jaho, Tzoannos, Papadopoulos & Sarris, 2014).

Studies have indicated that the technological changes within the journalism profession have resulted into significant changes in the hiring practices of American news media organizations (Wenger & Owens, 2010). The problem is that although journalism departments educate future journalists, by the time they become professional journalists, ICTs are expected to have changed considerably and additional ICT skills will have become a necessity. To confront this problem certain actions are being taken to ensure the continuous update of journalists’ ICT skills. Journalism education must be continuous and must be focused on learning and adapting to new tools and platforms. There is no need to teach the use of specific tools when it is almost inevitable that by the time that future journalists will have to use them in the field, those tools will have been replaced with newer versions with added or altered features, or with tools from other vendors with new interfaces (Veglis & Pomportsis, 2014).
Method

Overall, this paper reports on the lessons learned by introducing fact checking and verification techniques in journalism curricula in the era beyond digitalization. This era brings forward several challenges for journalists and journalism students, since technology is evolving faster than it can be described and analysed while future technological trends cannot be easily predicted (Maniou & Seitanidis, 2018). The study attempts to examine the effectiveness of fact checking and verification training through a focus group study of journalism students that have been trained in implementing such techniques. The findings of the research report the first experimental estimates on the effects of fact checking courses on journalism students. The study documents several important challenges in introducing these courses as they become incorporated into journalism curricula around the world.

Measuring the impact and effectiveness of this kind of courses, although critical, is difficult since there is no objective measuring method for the students’ factual knowledge and implementation degree in their everyday professional practices. As such, the main target of the research is to examine students’ experiences from implementing such tools. Accordingly, this study initiated from the following RQs:

RQ1) Which elements of social media news (variables) are most useful as identifying markers of disinformation when using fact checking and verification applications

RQ2) Which criteria do journalism students use to assess the effectiveness of fact-checking applications in their daily journalistic practices?

To survey these questions two groups of journalism students were formed, in Cyprus and in Greece. Participants in the study were journalism students (studying in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Department of Journalism, Frederick University, Cyprus). Each group consisted of 20 participants (11 women and 9 men in Greece, and 11 men and 9 women in Cyprus). In recent years, fact checking and verification techniques have been introduced in the journalism curricula in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication of the Aristotle University (Greece) and in the Department of Journalism, Communication and Mass Media at Frederick University (Cyprus). Teaching is based on blended learning techniques and utilizes various algorithmic tools employed by students to verify various real-life scenarios. Similar courses have been widely developed in many journalistic schools around the world due to the necessities arising from recent political developments and events. In this perspective, each group for this study comprised of 20 participants that were attending – at the time of the research – two similar courses regarding fact checking and news content verification techniques.

Focus group interviews were used to investigate how students cope with fact checking and content verification techniques and document their experiences using the relevant applications. According to Krueger (1998), a focus group comprises a number of individuals who interact with each other on specific topic(s), having mutual interests and frequently common characteristics. The interaction is regulated by a moderator, a researcher who utilizes the team and its interactions in order to exact conclusions regarding the topic(s) under discussion (p. 18). The prerogatives of the moderator include the capacity to lead the discussion towards essential or fundamental elements of particular
interest to their research, confining it to specific issue(s) and activating all the members of the
group (Barbour, 2008). Liamputtong (2011) emphasizes the importance of universal participation
in focus groups pertaining to the social sciences, stressing that they do not constitute mere group
interviews, but that their value derives from the interaction (Photiou & Maniou, 2019). Therefore,
focus group interviews are used as an effective method of gaining an in-depth understanding of
people’s perceptions—a user-assessment method—based on qualitative data collected through a
semi-structured questionnaire (Rabiee, 2004).

All participants were asked to examine, within a period of time (ten days) near the end of the course
being attended (January 2019), the Twitter accounts of the 28 leaders of EU member states, using
the TruthNest application for content verification, a free and open-access application at the time
this study was conducted. Each participant was allocated two specific leaders in random order,
based on the alphabetical list of the EU member states as well as the alphabetical list of the students.

Participants were then asked to join a discussion with a moderator (their course instructor) and to
engage in an interactive discussion based on a specific list of variables (modes) regarding content
authenticity. The list of variables (modes) included: posting frequency, hours of posting, weekly
activity, hashtags used, users mentioned, users retweeted, tweet content, websites mentioned,
network size, frequency of updates, important followers, suspicious followers, retweets received
and similar name profiles.

Findings and Discussion

The two group discussions took place in Nicosia (Cyprus) and Thessaloniki (Greece) as soon as
each course was completed (after 13 weeks of lectures in the second week of January 2019) and
students had submitted their written assignments regarding the use of the TruthNest application.

All participants stated that their experience with TruthNest was very satisfying and characterized
the application as ‘effective’, ‘trustworthy’ and ‘reliable’. The main advantages are that ‘it is simple
to use’ (K.B., male, 22 years old from Greece), ‘it does not require [me] to be a professional while
it is very user-friendly, it provides essential information for Twitter accounts that are assessed by
journalists many times as sources of news’ (M.A., female, 24 years old from Greece). However,
all participants expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the potential of having to pay to use this
application, or any other similar one, to verify news content. For example, E.G. (male, 23 years old
from Cyprus) stated ‘if I had to pay in order to use the application, I would have chosen a different
one, a free application’. ‘I do not believe that journalists can deal with the cost of any application
in order to verify news content’, stated A.N. (female, 22 years old from Cyprus). All participants
expressed their total agreement with the above statements. Indeed, young people tend to prefer
web-based news because they are cost- free and convenient to read (Casero-Ripollés, 2012), and,
as such, this preference towards cost-free applications seems to be embedded into their daily
journalistic practices as well.

Regarding the mode of posting frequency, although related to the participatory culture that tends
to characterize younger generations who are constantly online and in favor of posting and sharing
techniques (Berkup, 2014), all participants mentioned that while it is an important factor that can
help detect ‘fake’ content, it is not the most important one. ‘Posting frequency cannot be considered
the most important factor that can determine indices of ‘fakeness’ in Twitter accounts’, mentioned T.S (male, 24 years old from Cyprus). Most of the participants (17 out of 20) stated that when the percentage of posting frequency is low the content is less likely to be ‘fake’. ‘I believe that when posting frequency is low then there is only a slight percentage that content is fake’, stated S.L. (male, 24 years old from Cyprus). ‘The very high posting rate may indicate that the account is bot, an alerting element for the journalist’, said I.A. (female, 23 years old from Greece).

Regarding the mode of hours of posting, all participants agreed this refers to a very important variable in order to detect indices of disinformation. ‘Keeping in mind time differentiation around Europe, posting hours should be more or less around the working hours, from morning until late in the afternoon’, mentioned A.N. (female, 22 years old from Cyprus). ‘Although there are expected differentiation in posting hours, a post in the early morning hours – before 7.00 o’clock – or after 01.00 I strongly believe it can be ‘suspicious’, stated J.K. (female, 22 years old from Cyprus).

Weekly activity was deemed important for detecting disinformation by all participants since this variable can present either proportionate or disproportionate behavior for each account examined. ‘When weekly activity looks proportionate for a certain period of time, for me it seems as fake content’, mentioned T.S (male, 24 years old from Cyprus). ‘I can understand that a country leader can probably use his/her twitter account more often than most of us since it offers him/her a platform for direct communication with citizens of the country; however, when weekly activity appears to be more or less the same for continuous weeks, this is definitely disinformation for me’, stated B.K (male, 25 years old from Cyprus).

Equally important by all participants was deemed to be the hashtags used regarding the content posted. ‘TruthNest offers an important mode called ‘hashtags spamming’, which helps detecting disinformation by examining the hashtags used’, mentioned B.L. (female, 22 years old from Cyprus). To this end, A.K. (male, 24 years old from Cyprus) stated: ‘Even the absence of hashtag(s) in a post is a significant indication for ‘fake’ news’. Seventeen out of 20 participants in Cyprus agreed that the existence of hashtags in the posts, as well as the exact hashtags used, is a significant sign of disinformation. Hashtags are terms added to social media posts to provide context, so those seeking to learn more about a given topic or event can search for posts containing related hashtags (VanDam, 2019). The hashtags used in relation to the tweets posted ‘can help in detecting spam or bot accounts’, stated M. A. (female, 23 years old from Greece) while ‘the absence of hashtag(s) in tweets especially when they refer to a popular topic can be an indication that should suspect journalists’, stated N.A. (female, 21 years old from Greece). Indeed, due to the information overload, this generation of internet users experience every day in the era of big data (Veglis & Maniou, 2018), they tend to be selective and may often ignore messages or articles which are text heavy. Consequently, contemporary internet users seem to have developed a different way of reading in digital formats based on the consumption of short and direct information (Wiedmer, 2015). They can locate needed information very fast, paying little attention when reading an entire message and/or post, by scrolling on their social media timelines and reading the headlines since they want quick and frequent news production (Costera Meijer, 2007).

Users mentioned in posted content was not deemed as an equally important mode in the process of detecting disinformation. Although, all participants agree that this mode offers valuable insights in verifying posted content, it was not assessed of equally significant importance as the previous
modes. ‘The higher the number of mentioned users in the content posted, the less credible the content is’, stated A.N. (female, 22 years old from Cyprus).

On the other hand, the mode of retweeted users and retweets received were evaluated as of high significance by the two thirds of the participants. ‘It is logical that content posted by a well-known personality (celebrity, politician, etc.) is considered as more likely to be retweeted; however, although high numbers of retweets are expected, if these numbers seem proportionate on a daily and/or weekly basis, this is suspicious’, mentioned J.K. (female, 22 years old from Cyprus). ‘For me, it is not only the number of retweeted users that matters but also whether these users refer to real or fake accounts; the higher the numbers of retweeted users, the more likely is that some of them are bots’, stated S.L. (male, 24 years old from Cyprus). Mentions of the tweets ‘increase the credibility of the account, according to A.B. (female, 38 years old from Greece), especially ‘when there are retweets from other twitter accounts that are reliable, it is a strong indication for us’ (I.B., female, 38 years from old Greece). All these could be attributed to the way the younger generation of journalists interacts with the content they consume and share it with their community and, as Jenkins et al. (2009, p.5) state, sharing of digital content is a form of participatory culture; for them, it is ‘a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creation’.

The modes of suspicious followers and similar name profiles were characterized by all participants as ‘expected’, ‘obvious’ and ‘evident’ indices of disinformation. ‘The first element we always examine in order to detect fake news is the number of suspicious followers; however, we cannot assume that a high number of suspicious followers is a significant evidence of fake content’, stated G.K (female, 23 years old from Cyprus). ‘Similar names profiles may refer to fake content, although it seems very obvious so as not to expect it’, mentioned A.K. (male, 24 years old from Cyprus). Five participants from Greece indicated that ‘the number of followers and thus a high number of suspicious followers can be another indication in various cases of a bot account with bot-followers’.

On the other hand, all participants agreed that the number of important followers, the frequency of updates and the websites mentioned were deemed as the most important factors that can essentially present indices of disinformation. ‘If I had to choose the most important mode Truthnest has to offer for detecting fake content, that would be the frequency of updates, especially when characterized by irregularity, since it shows that this account is not bot’, stated J.K. (female, 22 years old from Cyprus). ‘If an account is followed by a large number of important followers, I can be fairly sure that it does not post fake content, especially when it refers to specific websites’, mentioned L.K. (male, 24 years old from Cyprus).

Finally, tweet content is deemed of significant importance for all participants as well as the network size. ‘As journalism students we have been taught that content is the king; when you post important and interesting content it is only logical that your network will grow; it is only a matter of time’, said S.L. (male, 24 years old from Cyprus).

Conclusions, Limitations, Further research

This paper has studied journalism education in the era beyond digitalization. Specifically, it has focused on the impact of fact checking and validation techniques in young journalists and
journalism students. The paper investigated the effectiveness of fact checking and verification training with the help of the TruthNest tool, through a qualitative study based on two focus groups of journalism students that have been trained in implementing such techniques in Greece and Cyprus. The results of the study indicate that the majority of the students in both countries agree on the efficiency of the tool and they have identified certain parameters of TruthNest that are considered to be important in the verification process.

It is worth noting that TruthNest is described as an analytic tool that can also be employed for verification purposes (https://www.truthnest.com). Thus, it is quite natural to also include characteristics that are not usable in the case of a verification (Veglis & Panagiotou, 2018). The majority of the metrics that TruthNest provides can also be measured with traditional methods (observation and reporting) but that would require significant amount of time. As a consequence, such methods cannot be employed in a verification process, where time is very restricted. Currently the authors of this study are not aware of the availability of another similar but free tool that can offer similar features.

Future extension of this work would include a more rigorous survey on a variety of tools and methods that are being taught in university courses related to verification of web content. Those surveys can be conducted on a greater scale, which can provide more concrete results that can be used in fine tuning journalism education on fact checking. The survey could also include professional journalists that are taught similar disciplines as part of lifelong educational programs, a process that is considered to be very crucial in order to cover the need for new ICT skills that can help journalists cope with the continuously changing demands of the profession (Veglis, 2013).

About the Authors

Andreas Veglis is a Professor of media technology, and head of the Media Informatics Lab at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He has served as an editor, and also as a member of scientific boards and reviewer in various academic journals. Prof. Veglis has published more than 150 peer-reviewed papers on media, technology and journalism. Specifically, he is the author and co-author of 12 books, he has published 74 papers on scientific journals and he has presented 125 papers in international and national Conferences. Prof. Veglis has been involved in 30 national and international research projects. His research interests include information technology in journalism, new media, data journalism, big data, social media, open data and fake news - verification.

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References


Legacy Media Versus Social Media: The Collisions and the Dissection of Fake News

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Abstract

Despite the strong base of legacy media, the explosion of social media now defines the media ecosystem across the world and underlines the main ideas behind the disruptive innovative technologies. The Disruptive innovation perspective proves to be a useful analytical tool for understanding how technological innovations have played important roles in reshaping how people receive information and participate in the discursive sphere. In many countries, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp have become major sources of information creation and sharing—a function that was predominantly the preserve of the legacy media. In Nigeria for instance, there are over 26 million active Facebook users, with WhatsApp increasingly becoming one of the most popular information sharing platforms. Added to that, is the democratisation of information sharing created by the diffusion of smartphones with highly developed apps that access internet contents. This raises the question of unfiltered news versus the gate-keeping process of news production which legacy media prides itself on. On the other hand, social media is variously held culprit for the spread of fake news, which is associated with a lot of negative attributes, some of which include the potentials to create panic, fear and violence. The negative outcomes of fake news have provoked recent global industry action to control the spread. This global trend has seen many technology companies like Google, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp pioneering the fight. Google set the pace by committing over 300 million dollars to fight fake news, while Facebook has taken out about 583 million fake accounts and Twitter 70 million. WhatsApp has also come out with software to detect fake news. Despite these efforts, the spread of fake news goes on unabated. Studies show that fake news is not a new phenomenon. It has been there as far back as 1925 (See Harpers’ Fake news and the public, 1925) and gained popularity during the US presidential elections in 2016. The significant point about fake news today is the speed at which it is diffused among the people. Research suggests that social media is more diffused among young people and thus, may be more susceptible to the negative effects associated with social media and fake news. Added to the above concern, is the lack of unanimity as to what constitutes fake news and how fake news could be identified. This has also raised the question of whether fake news peddlers do it deliberately or they are ignorant information disseminators? Or more importantly, to what extent can media education bridge the gap in understanding the debates on fake news? This and more are the questions that are yet to be answered. To understand these issues, this study adopts a focus group study of young adults in a city in Nigeria and examine them on the following objectives: (i) identify the factors that predict young adults’ understanding of fake news, (ii) evaluate the role of legacy media in the understanding of fake news, (iii) examine how young adults describe fake news peddlers: deliberate or ignorant information disseminators, (iv) analyse how legacy media education may bridge the gap in understanding the debates on fake news. Three focus group discussion (FGD) sessions were conducted among young adults. Young adults are operationalised in this study as males and females within 18-25 years of age. This choice is predicated on the findings that young adults are savvy and susceptible to social media influences. Discussants were selected based on shared characteristics—the dominant which include age category and exposure
to both social and legacy media. Data collection instrument was Focus Group Discussion Schedule/Outline. Data were captured on digital tapes, note pads and video cameras. The essence of the video camera is to document and analyse the behavioural responses of the Focus Group Discussants. The recorded discussions were transcribed and content analysed around the issues surrounding the study’s objectives with the aid of the phenomenological or theme identification technique. Themes were coded based on prior categories found in previous studies. The study contributes to an understanding of the discourse on the disruption of legacy news media model, and the collision between legacy media and social media. It provides policy with evidence based alternatives to addressing the challenges of fake news.

Introduction

The Internet, viewed as the “mother of all disruptions” (Tommy, 2014), enabled a lot of technologies which challenge and threaten the traditional legacy news values and principles. The perception of the internet as the “mother of all disruptions” stems from the perspective that it combines disruptive technologies of many component markets. Sterling (2008) notes that firms offering a variety of disruptive innovations are successfully undercutting newspaper’s traditional business model which has enabled the industry to thrive financially while investing in gathering and presenting news and information. Lucy Kung (2015) takes a similar position when she laments that the extent of disruption in legacy news is sobering. Long-established organisations have been derailed by a cascading series of interlinked technology-driven changes- starting with the internet and moving swiftly through tablets, smart phones, and the social media. However, studies (Lu & Holcomb, 2016; Pew, 2014) suggest that majority of news on the internet media are merely recycled contents from traditional legacy media. This new model of news sourcing known as aggregation has raised a lot of research interest among media scholars. In his study of the misconceptions surrounding news sourcing between new media and legacy media Diel (2017) observed that much of the content offered by blogs and other digital native publications comes from legacy news media, mostly newspapers. These technological changes introduced by the internet appear to distort the traditional revenue models of the media industry. The presence of new media, particularly the internet, has posed a challenge to conventional media, especially the printed newspaper (Kung, 2015).

Consequently, the newspaper business across the world is facing numerous challenges ranging from the changing times, changes in socio-cultural traits in different societies, demographical changes which inform new audience taste for news, economic challenges, as well as the impact of new technologies (Jones and Salter, 2012).

These challenges, which are robbing many newspapers of readership and revenues, have led to dramatic closures of many newspaper organisations and the loss of thousands of jobs by journalists. Analysts in industrial organisations and businesses are of the view that the newspaper industry is going through what may be its worst financial crisis since the great depression (Abati, 2016). More importantly, the emergence of the internet and the accompanying new media technologies is said to be disrupting the economic base of the newspaper, as many potential readers are finding alternative sources of news online (Daily Trust 2012; Jones and Salter 2012). The internet has drastically altered the idea of the business model and therefore changed its practical implications for the newspaper industry and society (Aliagan, 2016). The collision between the legacy media and the social media could be described as alarming. Westlund (2013) suggests that the rush to
the web has been accompanied by a parallel shrinking of the legacy news media, including print newspapers and broadcast news organizations guided by traditional news values and practices.

With news consumers quickly migrating to the Internet and traditional news organizations shrinking or closing, demand for original content online has outpaced supply (Diel, 2017). Meanwhile the practice of repackaging and republishing the work of others, commonly called aggregation, seems not to meet the growing need for news. However, what seems to be filling the void as studies suggest is fake news. Research suggests that fake news is really a symptom of much larger problems, including the lack of media literacy (Lagger and Magid, n.d). Added to the above concern, is the lack of unanimity as to what constitutes fake news and how fake news could be identified. This has also raised the question of whether fake news peddlers do it deliberately or they are ignorant news disseminators? It is difficult to answer this question out rightly. Perhaps a more positive way to begin this interrogation is to look at the concept of media literacy.

News demands some level of literacy for people to access, use, analyse and evaluate gainfully. Hence, researchers (Anyadike, 2018; Holton & Chyl, 2012) have expressed concern over the ability of online news consumers to make sense of what they consume in the midst of information overload. Findings show that performance or audience’s quality of decision correlates positively with the amount of information he or she receives. The emergence of digital media and social network platforms has made the mass of people media consumers as well as content providers (Anyadike, 2018). This also raises the question on media literacy required for making sense of the myriad of information available on various social media platforms. Hence, making media literacy a core part of the adaptability strategy in living in a media saturated world.

Fake news has become a major issue in international debates in recent times. Studies show that fake news is not a new phenomenon. It has been there as far back as 1925 (Baum, Lazer & Mele, 2017; See Harpers’ Fake news and the public, 1925) and gained popularity during the US presidential elections in 2016 (Silverman, 2016). The significant point about fake news today is the speed at which it is diffused among the people-a situation which has been occasioned by the internet and several social media platforms and smartphones. Research (Anyadike, Okeibunor and Odoemelam, 2013; Okoro, 2015) suggest that social media is more diffused among young people and thus, may be more susceptible to the negative effects associated with social media of which fake news is predominant.

Fake news has been associated with a lot of negative attributes, some of which include the potentials to create panic, fear and violence (Baum, Lazer & Mele, 2017). Given the negative outcomes of fake news, many countries of the world including Nigeria, have called for actions to curb it. Hence, the fight against fake news has become a global trend with many technology companies like Google, Facebook, twitter and whatsApp also involved in the global fight (Muhammed, 2018).

Fake news is any information that is deliberately meant to be wholly or largely false or that is meant to mislead. As Gallagher and Magid (2017) observed, motivations for creating fake news include intention to cause harm, unrest. However when mild, it is usually used as a prank. Others do it for financial gains-by getting people to click on sites so they are exposed to adverts or to persuade others to take action, purchase a product, or support or oppose a cause or political candidate. However, most fake news are intended to deceive. According to BBC (2018) the lack of official
information in some cases has created a vacuum which is almost readily filled by rumours. This only serves to perpetuate fake news and its effects. On the other hand, Nigeria’s Minister of information, Lai Muhammed is of the view that media campaigns are necessary to sensitise all Nigerians to the dangers posed to the peace and security, and indeed the corporate existence of Nigeria, and the fact that each and every Nigerian has a role to play in curtailing the spread of fake news”.

Many reasons have been adduced as to why fake news must be addressed seriously. There are evidences that fake news has led to confusion, state of emergency, restiveness and apprehension. The increasing case of fake news in Nigeria is alarming (Premium Times, 2018). Given the propensity of fake news to ferment trouble, there have been calls from many quarters in Nigeria to criminalize the act of spreading fake news. Part of that call was institutionalised when the Federal government of Nigeria, through the ministry of information, launched a campaign against fake news on July 11, 2018. As the ministry of information noted, though the federal government has been calling national attention to the issue of fake news, the timing of the launch was not unconnected to the role of fake news in aggravating the various crises in the country as well as the need to check the menace of fake news ahead of the 2019 elections.” (NAN, July 13, 2018).

With the 2019 General elections in Nigeria barely six months away, the Nigerian body language should spell zero tolerance for fake news. However, curbing or eradicating fake news seems to be an impossible task with the growing diffusion of the social media among the polity, especially among teenagers and young adults which has led to an increase in calls for greater regulation of social media platforms (Anyadike, Okeibunor and Odoemelam, 2012).

Research suggests that fake news is really a symptom of much larger problems, including the lack of media literacy (Lagger and Magid, n.d). Added to the above concern, is the lack of unanimity as to what constitutes fake news and how fake news could be identified. This has also raised the question of whether fake news peddlers do it deliberately or they are ignorant news disseminators? It is difficult to answer this question out rightly. Perhaps a more positive way to begin this interrogation is to look at the concept of media literacy.

Media literacy is the ability to think critically about the information we consume and create. It includes ability to distinguish facts from opinion and to understand how media can sometimes be used to persuade people. Media literacy is important because it is the basis for being informed and critical thinker in a world where technology and media are ubiquitous, helping to immunize people against undue persuasion and false information (Gallagher & Magid, n.d; Duggan, 2013).

Media literacy also entails equipping one with the skill to analyse and evaluate messages for accuracy (Anyadike, 2018). It is also the ability to effectively comprehend and utilize any form of Mass Communication. In sum, it presupposes that media consumers need to possess the skill for better interpretation of media contexts. Baran (2004) enumerates attributes associated with media literacy:

1. The ability and willingness to make an effort to understand content, to pay attention, and filter noise
2. An understanding of and respect for the power of media messages.
3. The ability to distinguish emotional from reasoned reactions when responding to content and to act accordingly.
4. Development of heightened expectations of media content
5. A knowledge of genre conventions and the ability to recognise when they are being mixed
6. The ability to think critically above media messages, no matter how credible their sources.
7. A knowledge of the internal language of various media and the ability to understand its effects, no matter how complex.

News demands some level of literacy for people to access, use, analyse and evaluate gainfully for the purpose of decision making. We argue in this paper that, making media literacy a core part of the adoptability strategy in living in the contemporary news and information saturated world, might mitigate the influence of fake news and half truths on social media. Hence, due to the growing cases of fake news and the social challenges associated with fake news peddling, this paper examines the potentials of media literacy as part of the strategy to address the issue of eradicating fake news. Specifically, the study focuses on using media literacy as a check against the effect and influence of fake news.

**Statement of Problem**

Legacy media, which is reknown for credibility is faced with the challenge of extinction while social media potential to grow increases by the day. The advent of social media has also introduced in greater proportion, the challenge fake news. The spread of fake news and rumours has been associated with restiveness, panic, ethnic and religious conflicts with some resulting in the destruction of lives and property (Muhammed, 2018). Given this scenario there has been a global response to address the spread of fake news. The Federal government of Nigeria in 2017, called on the global community, particularly the UN, to assist her to fight fake news (News Agency of Nigeria (NAN, 2017).

There has recently been a global industry action to control the spread of fake news. Google set the pace of this action by committing over 300 million dollars to fight fake news (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC, 2017). Facebook has taken out about 583 million fake accounts and twitter 70 million and WhatsApp has also come out with software to detect fake news. Despite these efforts, the spread of fake news goes on unabated. Perhaps there is more to be done. It is possible that these efforts had only treated the symptoms and not the causative factors.

A study by Pew (2016) showed that fake news influence and effect is associated with lack of media literacy, with those who are not media literate among the defaulters and culprits. The study further averred that most media users are unable to differentiate between what is fake news and real news. Other aspects of media illiteracy are the inability to tell whether a photograph accompanying a piece of information was manipulated or real and whether a piece of information is an advertisement or objective news. Due to the lack of the ability to know what constitutes fake news, some social media users have shared or posted fake news items without ascertaining their veracity; while others who knew, did it with the intention to mislead populace.
It is clear that the diffusion of social media technology and the corresponding social ills accruing from this phenomenon require an inquiry into how to address the challenges. However, despite the academic discussions on the eradication of fake news and half truths, there is still a gap in ascertaining the potency of media literacy in fighting fake news and how media literacy moderates understanding and approach to fake news and half truths.

Given this backdrop, this study examined media literacy among young adults who are active on social media and how this literacy or lack of it moderates their understanding and approach to fake news.

**Objectives of the Study**

This paper was guided by the following objectives:

- To ascertain young adults’ understanding of media literacy,
- Analyse the influence of media literacy in the understanding of fake news among young adults,
- To examine whether young adults are aware that social media diffusion has led to the spread of fake news
- Ascertain whether young adults know the implications of fake news

**Theoretical Framework**

Two theories are adopted in discussing the phenomenon under study and they are: Social Constructivism Theory and the Disruptive Innovation (Technology) Theory. The perspectives that these theories espouse are germane to the issues in this study.

*The social constructivism theory*

The social constructivism theory supports the notion of media literacy, from which this paper argues that media literacy could solve the social problems introduced by fake news and misinformation. Understanding fake news and half truths as products of information society and how media literacy moderates the approach to information and news is part of arguments contained in the constructivists’ world view. On the other hand the disruptive innovation (technology) theory supports the argument that advances in communication technology has disrupted the media ecosystem such that the credibility of news and their sources are part of the challenges of the internet or technology age. The next few paragraphs discuss the main arguments of these theories.

The social construction theory is associated with Piaget 1962. The theory argues that learning is a social construction. According to the model, real learning can only occur when learners code, process and construct their unique understanding based on their previous experiences. In this way, learners can improve their cognitive ability continuously. Thus, knowledge is the social construction of individuals and others. Most adherents of the social construction viewpoint see
news as a social construction. For instance, Tuchman (1978), suggests that news is a social resource whose construction limits the analytic understanding of temporary life. Scholars in this school see the audiences as very active and selective in their use and interpretation of media contents. It follows that, the more the users of media understand the workings and processes of the media (both traditional and social) within the environment and are able to construct their realities, the more they will understand the repercussions of fake news and half truths.

Constructivists argue that, learners are not only active processors of information, they are also creating and constructing meaning—a pattern which we see play out among social media users who are not only active participants in the sharing and receiving of news, but are also involved in the news construction process (Tuchman, 1978). All human learning is constructed in a context where some types of mediations are used. In this regard, the mediation of the web 2.0 and other social media technologies in contemporary information construction and sharing serves as a bridge connecting localities. Hence the new concepts of social networking sites that define present media ecosystems.

To Jonassen (1991) audiences and learners are seen as active constructors of meaning since all media are constructions showing us different versions of reality. For instance, news events and stories in newspapers are selected, edited in line with the editor’s perception, designed and packaged as commodity for audience consumption. Besides, the beliefs, values and opinions of media producers and other variables such as age, gender, culture and socio-economic background influence their gate-keeping function. The theory opposes the idea that learning is passive. On the other hand, constructivism agrees that learning is initiative and positive. It tries to understand how people construct meaning out of what they consume so as to satisfy their objectives.

Developments in the society have necessitated greater emphasis on constructivism by scholars. Duffy and Jonassen (1992) argue that information age and technological capabilities have altered the conceptualisation of learning process as well as re-designing instrumental approaches. Since information is changing and rapidly too, Duffy and Jonassen (1992), also argue that education should centre on understanding and using information to solve real world problems and not storing contents. This understanding and use of information to solve the problem of the society serves one of the purposes of media literacy.

**The disruptive innovation (technology) theory (Schumpeter 1942)**

The disruptive innovation theory on the other hand, is associated with the works of several scholars (Schumpeter, 1942). However, Schumpeter ideas of innovations were first horned by Karl Max. Innovation is a concept with multiple meanings. In the most pedestrian perspective, it means something new. In the innovation literature, however, it is often separated from an invention. While an invention is a new idea or a new theoretical model, an innovation is the implementation of this invention in a market or a social setting. An innovation can be based on existing technologies and off-the-shelf products. It implies that existing knowledge is implemented in new contexts and that this opens new possibilities. One of the major contributors of theoretical insight into innovation was Joseph Schumpeter, who was influenced by Karl Marx. Schumpeter was concerned about what caused long-term economic instability. He maintained that economic change, while promoting innovation and growth, generates “gales of creative destruction”.
Disruptive innovation has proved to be a useful analytical tool for understanding how technological innovation has played an important role in shaping and reshaping the communications sphere. The term disruptive innovation as a scholarly concept has roots in the academic work and theory promulgated by Harvard School Professor Clayton Christensen in his seminal work “The Innovators Dilemma” (Christensen, 1997). Christensen coined the term to describe a process by which a product or service takes root initially in simple applications at the bottom of a market and then relentlessly moves up the market, eventually displacing established competitors. These disruptive innovations, typically create business threats and opportunities not nominally predictable from past historical experience and thus require incumbent participants to engage in strategic behaviour and organisational practices that represent a departure from past successful and familiar strategies and practices.

Christensen (2012) notes that an innovation that is disruptive allows a whole new population of consumers at the bottom of the market access to products and services that were historically only accessible to consumers with a lot of money or skill. Christensen distinguishes between Sustaining innovation and disruptive innovation. While disruptive innovation is the one that changes the basis of competition in an industry, for example mainframe computer and personal computers, sustaining innovation perpetuates the current dimensions of performance, for example, Intel developing faster and faster chip speed.

The concept of disruptive innovation shows how successful companies can be upended by new technologies that first appear as cheaper products with fewer features, but improve quickly and ultimately take over. This development is one that is common today and can be discerned in all facets of human development, especially since the emergence of technological innovation, digitization and its application to communications. From healthcare, education, banking, transportation, communications, media, commerce to social life, the disruptive impact of innovation can be felt. However common this concept might seem to be, there is no universally acceptable definition as to how distinct it is from non-disruptive (incremental) innovation. Scholars like Selhofer (2012) have however argued that any innovation is disruptive by its nature. The theories of constructivism and disruptive technological innovations as used in this study assists us in explaining how young adults understand media literacy and its influence in understanding fake news and half truths. The disruptive innovation perspective assists us to interrogate the extent to which young adults are aware that social media diffusion has led to the spread of fake news in effect, creating disruptions in the news and information production processes. And since every innovation has the positive and negative side, the theory assists us to examine whether young adults know the implications of fake news and half truths.
Methodology

To provide insights on the phenomenon under investigation, the study adopted the focus group discussion (FGD) technique, which is qualitative in nature. The use of qualitative techniques to complement the quantitative outcome data is due to the increasing importance of qualitative approaches in understanding social realities (Chilisa, 2012). Qualitative data are usually descriptive and they provide answers to certain behavioural nuances which may not be ascertained through quantitative methods.

A total of three focus group discussion (FGD) sessions were conducted among young adults in Okada. Young adults were operationalised as males and females within 18-25 years of age. Studies show that teenagers and young adults are more savvy and susceptible to social media (Anyadike, Okeibunor & Odoemelam, 2013; Okoro, Obayi & Odoemelam, 2015). Discussants were selected based on shared characteristics - the dominant which were age category and exposure to both social and mass media. Focus group participants were recruited by snowball sampling via word of mouth based on young adult criterion irrespective of gender. Odoemelam (2015) used this method to recruit a sample of 60 men in a focus group discussion study. Each FGD session was made up of 9-12 discussants. Three facilitators guided the discussions based on the paper’s research questions as were represented in the items in the FGD schedule.

The study area consisted of discussants residing in different locations in Okada, Edo state. The cluster sampling technique was adopted in categorising participants in to various locations. These consisted of those at the male hostels, female hostels, court road, and farm settlements. The population consisted of young adults of either male or female gender. A total of 33 discussants participated in the discussions.

The focused group participants were a total of 33 participants and were classified as young adults only, with each group consisting of 9-12 participants in each of the selected study areas. The size of each focus group is supported by Ayubu (2012) who suggested a smaller number of participants comprising a focus group session as against a larger group, due to the need for participants to adequately air their views within the limited time which may be difficult with a larger group. Studies (Okonkwo, 2018; Odoemelam, 2015; Griffith, 2011; Hussain, 2003; Agdajanian, 2002) have used the focus group technique to generate corpus and reliable data.

Data was collected with the aid of an FGD discussion schedule and outline. These data were captured on tape and note pads. The tapes were transcribed and produced in textual format. The transcribed tapes were content analysed qualitatively around the issues surrounding media literacy, hate speech and free speech. In addition, focused group discussants were asked to describe what they thought were their understanding of hate speech and free speech. Focus group discussion outlines were adopted from qualitative evidences found in previous literature. The responses to the outlines in this study were transcribed and coded. Patterns of responses were identified based on themes as were found in previous literature and were placed according to the categories of their codes. Opinions and views which could not be categorized were placed under a new category named: emergent views.

Analysis was based on the phenomenological or theme identification technique which depended on groups which are the units of analysis other than the individual participant. To determine the
outcomes in the focus group with regard to the research questions, the theme identification technique was used to categorize and code participants’ responses based on their frequency or repetitions. Each identified theme represented a category into which other similar themes were aligned. Themes were coded based on prior categories found in previous studies (Umoiyoho & Inyang-Etoh 2012).

In theme identification, the researcher looked for particular patterns, themes, concerns or responses which are posed repeatedly by the focus-group respondents (Rubin and Rubin, 2004). For instance, when constructing tables to classify data or identify themes, particular understanding of media literacy is listed in the table if it is mentioned by a group; no matter how many times respondents in a particular group mentioned it. The number of groups, not the number of individuals, is used as the denominator.

Data presentation and discussion of findings

The data gathered from the discussion groups is presented and the findings discussed in four sections based on the four objectives of the study. Each section is made up of a title and question items.

Understanding of Media Literacy

How media literate are the discussants?

(Participants in group A) we know about them. Like television it helps us to know about reigning things like Big Brother Nigeria, FIFA world Cup. For Whatsapp you can make new friends, while Facebook, you can meet old friends and relations

(Participant in group B) Yes! The information are usually crossed checked especially for punctuation marks, correct spelling, to make it clear and they will rearrange some statement.

(Participant in group C) In my opinion before a news get(sic) to the audience, it must be verified, by knowing the source of the news, and the editors double check before it can be sent for printing or broadcasting. Every organization, they have codes that guide their activities. If the news does not follow those procedures I don’t think such information will be given out.

(Participant in group A) the information goes through different stages. It begins with gathering the information, after which the information will be processed. It is during this period that the gatekeepers (editor) perform their role. Actually media literacy is all about giving out information.

(Participant in group B) before any information goes to the public it always pass through a process. Like for instance if one is having doubt about particular information on social media, you can cross check for accuracy by looking at other media enterprise. If you cannot find the information on other media platforms, then know that the information is not genuine and factual.
Do discussants think about credibility when they hear or read information on media or when they share information from their mobile phones?

(Participant in group A) There is a difference between opinion and fact, debate view etc. most of what the media report are opinions and not news. But yes, I do raise the question of credibility.

(Participant in group B) I do raise the issue of credibility whenever I hear any information especially on social media.

(Participant in group C) in the mainstream media, you will realize that they usually inform people that a particular information is not confirmed, that is if the information has not yet been confirmed by the station or media outlet like BBC. Most times credibility has to do with the source and reporter handling the issue.

(Participant in group B) of course I do consider the credibility of information on social media. When I see some I laugh. While some like heath and politics I ask questions from people that have more knowledge on the subject matter to ensure that the information is reliable and credible.

The issues discussed in this segment were: how media literate discussants were and whether discussants thought about credibility when they hear or read information on media or when they share information from their mobile phones. The first issue was meant to know how much the discussants knew about the media. For example the processes involved in news dissemination; the ability to differentiate between an advertisement and a real news item. The data points to the fact that the discussants are media literate. These variables could be seen in their description of news trajectory. Media literacy is key in determining the level of our understanding of what constitutes news, rumour or outright fake news. According to the social construction theory, news is a social resource whose construction limits the analytic understanding of our life. Hence, constructivists see audiences as very active and selective in their use and interpretation of media contents.

Conversely, Anyadike (2018) suggests that understanding media is associated with understanding how and why people engage with news. It also tries to understand how people construct meaning out of what they consume so as to satisfy their objective. It is concerned with how individuals are influenced by their own news consumption. Literature suggests that media literacy has positive effects on media knowledge, criticism, perceived realism, influence, behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, and self-efficacy (Jeong, Cho and Hwang, 2012; Hobb and Frog, 2003). Jeong et al (2012) suggest that media literacy is a key intervention strategy to protect against media effect.
Influence of Media Literacy in the Understanding of Fake News Among Young Adults

Do discussants believe all news on social media?

(Participant in group A) We do not believe everything we hear or see or read

(Participant in group B) NO! Some of the information are blasphemous, some are not real, some are meant to extort money. Political parties can also use it against each other. And they use it very well during campaign and some of the things they say are not true.

(Participant in group C) it is not possible to believe every news on social media

(Participant in group A) I cant just believe everything I see on social media. It is impossible to do.

(Participant in group C) I feel some of these writers on social media are attention seekers. They can just come up with anything just to get attention to themselves

Are discussants not bothered with unverified information on social media?

(Participant A) No. bothered at all

(Participant B) Not bothered at all (collective response)

(Participant C) NO! Like when they said the new VC of our school wants to stop summer, we almost died oooo. Then we later found out that it was not true. Then the case of the mass slaughter at the Lagos – Ore road which was also later confirmed to be false. They even brought out a picture of one massacre that took place some years back and added another write-up and added voice note as well that it was happening meanwhile it was fake news.

(Participant A) social media has no control, people can come out and post anything like terms of spelling, language and the likes. It is usually garbage in and garbage out. Although one can get real information from the social media but that does not remove the fact that it lacks credibility.

(Participant B) yes! Sincerely, am bothered about information on social media. We are fortunate to be educated to know the dangers of social media but some persons who are not so educated may not know that some information on social media are not true. It is truly a thing to bother about.

(Participant C) am bothered because most of the fake news we hear today all emanated from the social media. Also a lot of unverified news are been spread through social media. Some people take the information they get on social media very seriously which should create concern. Although they are also credible news but the fake supersedes the credible once.

(Participant) - in just the word fake news came as a result of social media.
How do discussants differentiate between fake news and credible news?

(Participant A) well you will realize that most of the information on social media are like love stories. But sincerely it is difficult to differentiate between fake news and credible news because they are all news.

(Participant) well to me I feel it is easy to differentiate fake news from credible news. Fake news usually do not have credible sources. You will realize that the writer just write every thing from his or her head. Meanwhile one of the basic requirements of a news article is a credible source. Which most fake news do not contain. I often ensure that there are attributed sources in the information. Once the sources of the information are not attributed, I know immediately that something is wrong somewhere.

(Participant B) and other ways to differentiate between fake news and credible news is the text. When you check some of this fake news, you will see a lot of typographical errors in the person’s write-up.

(Participant A) IT depends on the source. That is if it is coming from a 
(Participant) it is hard to differentiate between fake news and accurate news.

How does knowledge of how media operate help in handling fake news?

(Participant A) knowledge is power; if you are not knowledgeable about something it will be difficult to protect yourself from the dangers associated with such a thing. And so when you are enlightened and informed about fake news, you can protect yourself against it.

(Participant B) knowledge is very key when it comes to handling or approaching fake news on social media. And my knowledge of how the media operate has gone a long way in helping to determine what is fake and what is true.

(Participant C) for to be able to know what is right and what is wrong, you need to have knowledge about that thing. Same applies to fake news. The knowledge of how media operate is one of the step by which we can tackle fake news.

(Participants) Yes we know how media operate and it has helped us in knowing which news is fake or reliable.

The concern of this segment of the discussion included whether discussants believe all news on social media, and whether discussants are not bothered with unverified information on social media. The discussion also addressed how discussants differentiate between fake news and credible news and how knowledge of how media operates help discussants in handling fake news. First, it was apparent that discussants do not believe everything they read, hear or see on social media. Perhaps it might be the case that the discussants level of media literacy moderated their experience. This is more so since audience level of education is associated with their uses of and gratification from media items including news. Unverified information on social media is a factor to be concerned with but the discussants are not bothered about it because their prior knowledge of fake news on social media serves as a gate-keeper. The gate-keeping theory by Kurt Lewin (1947) suggests that their are factors that serve as criteria in the news selection process. Again, it is obvious that detecting fake news is not so easy. This agrees with Metzger et al., (2010), the fact that misinformation is mixed with other content and that many stories get little attention from people
means that traditional measures of quality cannot distinguish misinformation from truth. This requires some level of media literacy.

**Social Media Diffusion and the Spread of Fake News**

The spread of fake news is made easier by the diffusion of social media, especially through smartphones. In this segment of the discussion, the discussants were allowed to express their views as to their awareness of the phenomenon. Discussants were expected to share their experiences on any news on social media that has turned out to be fake news.

**Are there information on social media that you once believed that turned out to be fake?**

(Participant in group A) yes we have. For example during the Ebola time when people were asked to bathe with salt and hot water and people were dying.

(Participant in group B) YES! There was a time they said that government will be monitoring social media and that they should share the information across the country which was not true. Also there was a time when information was spread across that people should not sleep with their phone on their bed by 12am a light will flash across Nigeria that might cause radiation and this was later confirmed to be false.

(Participant C) YES! I have. There was a case of mass massacre along Lagos – Ore road that people were been killed and in the message there was a picture, a voice not as well as text to accompany the message. I was touched when I saw this information only to discover that this information was fake.

(Participant D)- there was also the case of the invasion of the former DSS boss’s house and office where millions of naira was discovered. This information was accompanied by motion picture that is videos. At the end of the day it turned out to be a lie.

**Are discussants aware that fake news has become predominant in the era of social media?**

(Participant in group A) YES it is true. Fake news has rapidly spread especially in this era of social media.

(Participant in group B) Yes! Even worse because it is easier to spread information now. Anybody from anywhere can decide to spread any information which sometimes are not true and the cut across the young and the old. Group chats are created every day which aid the spreading of such information.

(Participant in group C)- To me it is not strong. It is always prominent during election period. It is predonant (sic) in specific period of time, like during crisis, festive period. But in normal situation I don’t think fake news is predominant.

(Participant)- well if you ask me, fake news has become predominant in the era of social media. In the sense that if you go back through history when social media was not prominent or spread across the globe, the issue of fake news was not there. But in this era of social media, fake news has become the order of the day. To the extends (sic) that the mainstream media now are falling victims of fake news propagation.

(Participant)- Even in television and newspapers will have fake news but there is know immediate feedback to counter such fake news. Government can give fake news. Like if they spent 50 million in a project, they can come up and say they spent 100 million in the project.
(Participant) even though there was fake news then, it was less compared to now that there is social media. What is fake news, it is reporting something that is false and has the capacity to cause misinformation. And any information that is not verifiable is fake news.

The discussions on social media diffusion and the spread of fake news, bothered on two issues: the experience of having heard a news item on social media that turned out to be false and the knowledge that the spread of social media had created the preponderance of fake news. The trend of discussion among the different discussion groups suggests an understanding that social media is implicated in the spread of fake news-suggesting a disruption of the social order. This holds true with regard to the theory of disruptive innovation in which the social media play very critical role. The disruptive innovation perspective is a useful analytical tool for understanding how technological innovation has played an important role in shaping and reshaping the communications sphere. For instance, Christensen (2012) notes that an innovation that is disruptive allows a whole new population of consumers at the bottom of the market access to products and services that were historically only accessible to consumers with a lot of money or skill. The is axiomatic in analysing the mainstream media which was once the exclusive reserve of a select few, and the social media which has democratised information and communication.

The Implications of Fake News

Evidences abound that suggest that fake news impacts negatively on the society. In this segment of the discussion, participants are given the opportunity analyse the effects with personal experiences and evidences.

Can you share your experiences of the possible negative effects of fake news on persons and the society?

(Participant in group A) Depression, panic, phobia, sometimes death.

(Participant in group B) it can lead to premature death. Like the case of Ebola when people were asked to bathe with salt. It led to many deaths. It can create fear and panic.

(Participant in group C) fake news can create hatred in the mind of one group against another which in turn can lead to conflict.

(Participant in group D) fake news has more negative effect than any other effect you can think about. It breeds disagreement and misinformation which can have health implications, economic implications as well as social implication.

(Participant): Hmmm! people really like fake news ooooo... the topic sometimes are very interesting. For example if somebody should post information now that there will be no school today because of Eclipse of the Sun and Moon, everybody will be happy. And when parent come and take their children home because of the spread of the information that the Oba of Benin is looking for seven Heads to bury the former Oba. Such information usually come with all seriousness and at the end of the day you will discover that it was not true.

The finding with regard to knowing the implications or consequences of fake news is striking. The discussants are quite aware of the consequences. For instance, the experience of a member of one
of the discussion groups in Ebola stands out. It clearly shows that young people know the personal harm that fake news causes. The reason behind why some engage in it is not clear in the literature. According to Lazer et al (2017) majority of people who engage in propagating fake news deliberately do it for selfish and unethical gains. However, Gallagher and Magid (2017) are of the view that not everything that is inaccurate is necessary a deliberate lie. Gallagher and Magid warn that without intent to deceive, falsehood should not be considered fake news. This suggests that the intention to cause harm may be lacking in such instances and that ignorance is implicated instead. Perhaps this understanding underlines the need for policy to emphasise media literacy across all levels.

Conclusions

The social media have various ways that make them more acceptable than old media when it comes to opportunities for meeting news needs of consumers because social media is not gate-kept by content verification constraints for which legacy media are known. Just as the computer and Microsoft word displaced the typewriter, social media will displace legacy media even if not as fast as speculations conclude, it is inevitable. The depressing reality pales into insignificance if compared to a more real treat-the threat of fake news that the social media is associated with.

This paper examined how the explosion of social media have defined the present media ecosystem across the world, where in many countries, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and whatsapp have become major sources of information creation and sharing. In Nigeria, the experience is that there are over 26 million active Facebook users, with Whatsapp increasingly becoming one of the most popular means of interpersonal information sharing platform. Added to this, is the rapid growth of smartphones that has resulted in the quick and easy spread of rumour on social media.

It was also pointed out that fake news is mostly predominant in times of increased political activities. An example in Nigeria is the 2019 General elections in Nigeria, which is barely six months away where the risk of fake news to define the whole election process highly exists. To say that the Nigerian body language should spell zero tolerance for fake news in the light of its consequences might be stating the obvious.

However, eradicating fake news might continue to be an impossible task as social media use continues to diffuse among the polity, especially among teenagers and young adults. Media literacy seems to be a more innovative approach to the fight. Fake news is really a symptom of much larger problems, including the lack of media literacy. While industry effort at combating fake news has been quite commendable, there are critical other issues that ought to be incorporated in the overall fight. Our study has shown the importance of media literacy in the fight against fake news. For now, the ball seems to find itself again in the court of the mainstream media and communication educators. But their effort may not be significant without a determined will of policy to match words with action by creating an atmosphere where there is media education.

Though our study provides a picture of the circumstances that surround how social media continue to disrupt patterns of news sources and dissemination with the resulting credibility issues that define the trajectory of social media, the picture is not all exhaustive. The study is still presented with certain limitations that may not allow for the generalisation of the findings. For instance, the study is particularly limited in the use of focus group research design to determine how young
people understand legacy media as well as how this understanding mediate their understanding of fake news and its effect. At most, what the study achieves is the descriptive interpretation of what the situation represents. A more pragmatic approach would have been to combine the focus group design with a quantitative design to provide a more evidence based alternative to understanding the challenges of fake news. However, to the extent of these limitations, the study shades understanding on the topic of the disruption of legacy news media model, and the collision between legacy media and social media and how social media reinvent the social problem of old fake news.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations draw from the discussions:

- A sustained effort to create user education in terms of media literacy has become very desirable to match the effects of the disruptive innovations in social media fake news. This education will form a baseline policy approach to the understanding of the media, news and information among social media users, especially among young adults.

- One of the ways to improve literacy of the media, is to ensure that the mainstream media of introduce intense media literacy as part of their broadcast programming as a social responsibility.

- Given that fake news peddlers are more active during times of political activities, the 2019 general elections in Nigeria is an opportunity which could be seized by the voter education unit of Nigeria’s Independent Electoral Commission to embark on intensive media literacy campaigns.

**About the Author**

**Chinedu Christian Odoemelam** teaches communication and media studies at the Igbinedion University, Okada, Nigeria. He holds a Ph.D in Mass Communication from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. His areas of teaching and research strength includes: health communication, political communication and digital media. He has published widely in local and international communication platforms. His latest interest in research is in communication intervention in irregular migration outcomes. He also engages in teaching public speaking and debating skills. He is presently the Chair of the Aristotelian Debate Congress (ADC) at the Igbinedion University.

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WHEN THE FOURTH ESTATE COLLIDES WITH THE FIFTH ESTATE
Circulation of News and Digital Media: The Conflicts Between Fourth and Fifth Estate in the Second Round of the Brazilian Presidential Elections of 2018

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Abstract:

The aim of this article is to tension the traditional Brazilian media that became known as a fourth power, in reference to the media as inspectors of the three powers governing the national government: executive, legislative and judiciary, and what William Dutton (2009) calls the fifth power/state, which is anchored on the Internet and would work precisely as a space for the supervision of traditional media. In this regard, we will use as an object of analysis the official Instagram posts of Jair Bolsonaro in the period that goes from the day after the first round until the day before the second round of the presidential elections and the featured articles of the “Jornal Nacional (Rede Globo TV)” in the same period, in order to understand the relation between traditional media and the Internet. From this new content production space, we will work on aspects of the fifth state, highlighting the Fake News. The methodology used in this article will be the Analysis of Audiovisual Materiality, proposed by Iluska Coutinho (2016), which seeks to understand the audiovisual language as a unit, observing its particularities and paratextual elements.

Keywords: Fourth power/state; Fifth power/state; Audiovisual Materiality; 2018 Presidential elections; Jair Bolsonaro.

Introduction

Currently Brazil has undergone a scenario of changes, in which while the digital television model is in the process of finalizing its implementation and the TV still occupies a central role, the Internet has grown increasingly its reach and is placed with the space outside the traditional and massive media, also transforming the modes of content consumption.

According to data from PNAD TIC 2016 (IBGE), TV is present in 70.4 million of Brazilian households, which represents an access of 97.2% of the population. However, the Internet has been growing its vastness year after year.

If the PNAD TIC 2016 pointed to 69.3% of households with Internet access, at the PNAD TIC 2017, which aimed to measure specific data from the Internet, it was found that 74.9% of Brazilian households use Internet services. Such data reveals an increase of 5.6%, which proves the growth of the number of users of the Web environment in Brazil, albeit with a distance to the television.

Another statistic that the PNAD continuous TIC 2017 revealed was the importance of mobile phones in the consumption of content. It was pointed out that 97% of Internet users in Brazil use
the network by mobile phone, and in addition, the research showed that from 2016 to 2017 increased 5% the number of people who have accessed the Internet on their televisions, since in 2016 were 11.3% and in 2017 rose to 16.3% of users.

The Conflict Between the Fourth and Fifth Power/State

Since the creation and consolidation of the media in Brazil, journalism has played a key role as a citizen's voice, eyes and ears, as well as proposing to report what was most important and relevant in society. Thus, the media called “Mass” (TV, radio, printed newspapers, magazines, etc.) began to fulfill an important function of supervising not only society, but also those who are responsible for managing the population.

In working on the diffusion of Journalism, Traquina (2005), affirms that among the several factors that helped in its expansion, we highlight the schooling of society and the process of transition from a rural to urban society, emerging as an area of knowledge in conjunction with cities.

Journalism as we know today in democratic society has its roots in the nineteenth century. It was during the nineteenth century that the development of the first mass media, the press, was verified. The dizzying expansion of newspapers in the nineteenth century allowed the creation of new jobs in them; an increasing number of people devote themselves fully to an activity that, during the decades of the nineteenth century, gained a new goal – to provide information and non-propaganda (TRAQUINA, 2005. P. 34).

In other words, as societies grew and occupied increasingly larger urban environments, journalism was more necessary in the perspective of conveying to the population everything that was not within their reach.

In addition, the achievement of fundamental rights for the citizen, as well as the emergence of democracy as a new form of government, accredited journalism to the status of fourth power or fourth state, as pointed out by Sodré (1999), insofar as that a democratic society establishes itself from the three branches of power: executive, legislative and judiciary, and with this, journalistic practice, arises and consolidate itself with the commitment to serve as a prosecutor of what has been carried out by the State organs of power, as it becomes to be the main translator of the reality of democratic societies.

From this translation of reality, in conjunction with technological advances, journalism reverberates even more its role as a fourth state. And in this sense, from its news agenda, it ends up creating its own world, the media, which is established from what the journalists themselves consider as the most important and capable of gaining space, being for more than a century one of the only sources of information for citizens, who at the time were playing the role of the receiver.

However, with technological advances, especially with the advent of the Internet, a process of modification of this traditional and hegemonic media logic has begun as the only source of information of the citizen, as well as expanding the possibilities of doing Journalism, as well as to do a non-journalism, since on the Internet the contents circulate freely, giving even space for the calls fake news, or false news, and for content without the fulfillment of the process that comprises from the journalistic assessment to the disclosure.
Willian H. Dutton (2009), suggests that with globalization and the possibility of the Internet as a means of communication outside the fourth power or state, in addition to the web environment is not characterized as a means of mass communication, but is established in a more targeted way, demanding interaction and choices on the part of the citizen, this space of the network ends up constituting what the author calls the fifth state, which is anchored mainly in the perspective of individualized information and on demand.

Dutton and Dubois (2015) define the fifth state in order to:

Refer to the ways in which the Internet is being used to increase the number of people to network with other individuals and with information, services and technical resources in ways that support social responsibility through many sectors, including business and industry, government, Politics and media (DUTTON; DUBOIS, 2015, p. 52).

From then on, fourth and fifth state are going to collide due to the particularities and potentialities that the Internet brings of free-form content disclosure, less control and especially in breaking the logic of the receiver as someone who does not interact and interferes in the productions, since in the network, the "receiver", which we can replace per “user”, not only interacts, but also becomes a producer and content player, either through likes, comments, shares, or even with the development of its own speech space, which will reach a certain layer of the web.

In this sense, one of the great possibilities of the Internet that ended up coming to fruition was the transposition and appropriation of the main mass media for the networked environment, so that, although on the web, every citizen could produce its own content, traditional and hegemonic media will end up also gaining certain protagonism in the network.

In addition to the mass media, we also have the Youtubers, bloggers and etc, who stand just as a novelty to the hegemonic media, playing an important role in the search for a language that is proper to the Internet, since the means of Mass Communication also ended up importing their formats and languages to the networked environment, only using the Internet as a potential, propagating and "viralizing" source of their contents.

Dutton (2015) states that another potentiality of this fifth state would be the provision of new options for the practice of politics, since through networks, both government and media will pay more attention to the demands of cities and the population, creating a greater bond with the citizen and being closer to them.

Members of the fifth state report independently and connect with each other in ways that enhance these powers of face-to-face communication, as with the government. Despite the potential empowerment, the focus on the role of citizens in the Fifth State network, this proposal has rarely been the approach of studies in digital policy schools or in the practice of introducing digital tools for politics (DUTTON; DUBOIS, 2015, p. 51).

For Willian H. Dutton (2015), rather than approximating the bonds between government and citizen, the Internet can be used as a space for effective participation in politics, through public opinions and online petitions that unite individualities in a common thematic, which provides
politicians more information about the demands of society or part of it. In this sense, the author proposes six examples of potential effective forms of the Fifth State networks: searches, individual creation of content, ability to establish contacts, leakage of information that can be accessible online, collective intelligence and collective observation.

However, Dutton (2015) highlights two obstacles to the full direct participation of the citizen through the Internet: the first would be the fear of this participation "undermining" the dialogue and the debate that occurs with more representative forms of democracy, and the second concerns to the shaded zones, which is the portion of the population that does not yet have access to the Internet and therefore would not be represented.

Still about the political issue, a third obstacle to the establishment of the Internet as an environment of citizen participation is the propagation of the so-called Fake News, since in the same way that the web environment poses itself as a potential for the information, it poses even more as an environment of misinformation and consumption of content in a segmented way, that is, from what you seek or is reached through the algorithms.

**Fake News**

Although the term Fake News has recently popularized, this expression refers precisely to the transmission of false content, mainly on the Internet, due to this space enabling greater freedom for users, as well as for not having any type of regulation or commitment to the criteria of calculation and verification of published material, being possible even to perform the manipulation of the visual identities of reliable sites to spread these Fake News, and we should still consider the action of hackers and crackers, which can literally invade web pages and feed them with fake content.

When investigating the term Fake News in academic articles between 2003 and 2017, Edson C. Tandoc Júnior, Zheng Wei, Lim and Richard Ling (2018) found 34 articles that used the expression with the following definitions and applications: satire of news, parody news, manufacturing, manipulation, publicity and advertising.

In this sense, it was possible to observe that besides these false news are produced in such a way as to transmit a non-truthful information, the Fake News, also presented as strategies of manipulation and even advertising of contents that are false, but that often this truthfulness is not checked, and the information passed ahead and shared via social networks.

Although the false news always existed, even before the creation of the press, it was with the Internet that they became popular, highlighting the political sphere in the 2016 presidential elections with the former candidate Donald Trump.

This popularization of the term "Fake News", with Donald Trump, is essential for understanding the tension between the Fourth State (Media) and the Fifth State (Internet), to the extent that much of his presidential campaign took place on social networks, with emphasis on Twitter, and from then on, traditional Media was repeatedly attacked by Trump for propagating false news, and the candidate himself used his social networks to post false content, even to attack his opposition, for the sake of win votes and elect President of the United States.
Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) define Fake News, as being content that is intentional and verified as false, but that are used in order to deceive users, mainly from the search for distort true information and adapt this material to deceive the citizen.

About who produces and how Fake News are made, the authors claim that these false news are created on various types of websites, and that care is taken to build websites with names similar to pages of traditional communication vehicles to ensure legitimation of these new organizations and confuse users. Other forms of production of these sites consist in the development of content that can be interpreted as factual if removed from the context and also sites that seek to merge factual content and false content with political-partisan themes, as this would guarantee a certain legitimacy on the part of the supporting groups of these political positions.

By working with the theme of Fake News in the 2016 United States presidential elections, Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) highlight the power of social networks to retransmit content without any determination and filters, verification or fact-checking and editorial judgment, fundamental concepts in the media, which has always placed itself as the Fourth State, and yet it is possible that this information reaches the same or even greater amount of people than the traditional communication vehicles, also present in the environment Web.

On the 2016 elections, the authors listed four effects of the Fake News that contributed to Donald Trump’s election:

1) 62 percent of American adults read news on Digital social media (Gottfried; Shearer, 2016); 2) The most popular fake news stories were more widely shared on Facebook than the main true news (Silverman, 2016); 3) Many people who see stories of false news report that they believe in them (Silverman; Singer-Vine, 2016); and 4) The most discussed false news stories tended to favor Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton (Silverman, 2016) (ALLCOTT; GENTZKOW, 2017, p. 212)

In this sense, we can observe a certain similarity between campaigns on social networks in the presidential elections of the United States in 2016 and of Brazil in 2018, both in relation to the proximity declared between Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro, as from the short time of TV and radio which made the PSL candidate develop a large part of his campaign on social networks, especially Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Analysis of the Audiovisual Materiality of the Second Round Of Elections for President Of Brazil

In order to analyze questions regarding the elections for the position of President of Brazil in 2018, we will use as methodology the Analysis of Audiovisual Materiality, proposed by Iluska Coutinho (2016) that seeks to investigate the particularities of the audiovisual language, without a decomposition among the most diverse elements present in the narrative, since it is possible to observe a more accurate investigation of the contents and particularities of the audiovisual.

In this way, we will take as materiality content posted in the application "Instagram" by the candidate Jair Bolsonaro (PSL) in the second round of the Brazilian presidential elections, between October 7 and 27, in which he defeated Fernando Haddad (PT) with 57, 8 Million votes (55.13%), versus 47 million votes (44.87%) for the PT candidate. The choice for Instagram was given by the
very characteristics of the application to be audiovisual, and in this sense, it has a greater potential to find audiovisual content.

The analysis becomes relevant especially if we think that the first round of elections, in which many of the candidates, including Fernando Haddad, had a longer time in traditional Media, while Jair Bolsonaro anchored his campaign from the start in the force of social networks due to its shorter free electoral program time.

For this, we built a chart with the free electoral propaganda time that each of the four best-placed candidates had the right on TV and radio, two Mass Media vehicles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CANDIDATE</th>
<th>TV and Radio Time + Number of inserts of 30 seconds each</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jair Bolsonaro (PSL)</td>
<td>8 seconds + 11 inserts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando Haddad (PT)</td>
<td>2 minutes and 23 seconds + 189 inserts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciro Gomes (PDT)</td>
<td>38 seconds + 51 inserts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geraldo Alckmin (PSDB)</td>
<td>5 minutes and 32 seconds + 434 inserts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 1: TV and radio time for each of the candidates, sorted by their percentage of votes in the first round

Another factor that should be highlighted is the episode of the stab suffered by Jair Bolsonaro, which hinted his participation in rallies, recording content, among other campaign strategies.

On September 6, 2018, the hitherto presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro (PSL) was carried on the shoulders by supporters in the city of Juiz de Fora (Minas Gerais), in another rally during his campaign, when a man approached and stabbed at the height of Bolsonaro's belly.

After this episode, the PSL candidate was taken to Santa Casa, a city hospital, and after submission of several surgeries he began to use a colostomy bag, which prevented him from going to new rallies in much of his campaign from the day 6 September onwards.

From this, the Internet became an even more important tool for Jair Bolsonaro as a place where the candidate provided news about his health status, and also as a space to promote his image as someone who suffered an attentive by propagating the "change" and still survived to continue the "march towards the presidency".

On the other hand, Bolsonaro who previously had a small TV time, ended up gaining considerable space in traditional media because of the stab episode, as the candidate did on his social networks, the news sought to update daily the health status of Jair Bolsonaro, as well as each of his movements, beyond the candidates agenda.

From the campaign strategy of Jair Bolsonaro for using the Internet and social networks as its main channel of communication with the public, either through the low time that the candidate obtained in the traditional media, and/or due to the episode of stab, a first finding is that the 2018 presidential
elections presented itself as an example of this collision between Fourth and Fifth State/Power, since even with a very lower time of free electoral propaganda in relation to its candidates, Jair Bolsonaro achieved projection precisely in this Fifth Power, showing active in his social networks, and also on the Internet to convey his message to the population and to oversee content from the traditional media.

In the period that goes from the day after the first turn (October 8), until the day before the second round election (October 27), we identified 116 posts on the official Instagram of Jair Bolsonaro.

Of the posts analyzed, we highlighted the themes related to: messages of support to Bolsonaro by famous personalities, commemoration for the gain of more followers, the agendas of security and violence, comparison between his plan of government in relation to the “Partido dos Trabalhadores” (PT), attacks to the PT and corruption and the themes of Fake News and its relation to the media.

Regarding the messages of support to Bolsonaro, they were 26 of the 116 posts, and it was observed in general that the personalities who speak in favor of the candidate are of two types, both through photos and videos: first is of people considered famous in the media, and the second is that of people who possess some stereotype of minority as a sexual option and race. In relation to the second type of support, we can infer that even by the tone of the posts, the goal is that they prove that Bolsonaro does not have any kind of prejudice, as the media approached, and that its goal is to govern for the population, not for the individual.

Another theme appears in the Bolsonaro’s posts is to commemorate more followers through an art, which represents five of the 116 publications on Instagram by Jair Bolsonaro.

The theme of security and violence, so present in its campaign in traditional media and social networks, were observed 10 posts with contents that addressed issues of incarceration, greater punishment for crimes of passion, imprisonment of minors that kills or rapes and highlighting the increased power of justice and police officers. Another form of Bolsonaro's approach was given in the form of direct accusations to the PSOL and PT to be violent, in reference to the stab that took, since according to the candidate Adélio Bispo (arrested for being the responsible for the stab), was already affiliated with the PSOL and was coordinated by the party to reach Bolsonaro, and through accusations that minorities became more attacked in the PT government, which would incited violence.

Another recurring form of use of Bolsonaro's Instagram was to make references to the PT, both in comparisons of government plans, as in direct attacks on the Partido dos Trabalhadores and its opponent and candidate for the PT Presidency, Fernando Haddad.

In this theme, it is necessary to distinguish the attacks to the PT from the attacks directed to Fernando Haddad, which has as main objective to deconstruct his rival in the dispute of the presidency, albeit with false news and without due determination and verification of legitimacy of the sources that created these contents.

Regarding the attacks directed to the PT, we observed 24 publications in the period analyzed, highlighting the accusations of PT financing dictatorships via BNDES, from PT try to play
evangelicals (protestants) and catholics against each other, criticisms of the authoritarianism of the PT, accusations of direct connection between PSOL and PT, mainly anchored in the episode of the stab in which states that Adélio Bispo has already been affiliated with PSOL and attacks on the PT being the victim of Fake News, when to Bolsonaro he is who suffered from these false news and indictment of the PT being a the corruption machine.

The other form of attack that Bolsonaro uses is destined directly to his opponent in the presidency, Fernando Haddad, candidate for the PT. For Haddad are aimed at criticism, in photos with speeches by Bolsonaro, as with arts created for publications, or by means of videos in which Fernando Haddad would be talking about controversial themes, and according to the content of the posts, placing opinions polemics.

In relation to the 14 posts about Fernando Haddad, the tone of the posts is much more indictment of corruption and money laundering and in an attempt to deconstruct the image of the PT candidate for his audience. However, in some of these posts Bolsonaro resorts to sources of traditional communication vehicles, and in others it was not possible to identify any type of source or where the material came from.

The other way that Bolsonaro uses is to reference the PT government and through comparisons between his plans of government and those of Fernando Haddad. In this sense, the PSL candidate still makes a point not only to compare the government plans, but also to attack the media and the PT of Fake News at all times.

The last theme that deserves to be highlighted among the posts by Jair Bolsonaro is that of Fake News and its relationship with the media, as they appear in 15 of 116 posts. In relation to the Fake News, we should highlight two ways used by Bolsonaro: the first of them relates to unsubstantiated posts and verification as the one that puts Haddad as a friend of a boy who in a video states that "Jesus is gay" and when he accuses Fernando Haddad to defend the loosening of criminals from the chain, and for such publications the PSL candidate uses materials in a decontextualized and edited manner.

Bolsonaro's second way in relation to the Fake News is when the candidate accuses the PT of creating false news against him and even the media, especially when comparing government proposals through the arts.

In relation to the role of the media, Bolsonaro assumes two antagonistic postures, since he uses the media as a way to reinforce and legitimize his discourse, as in the interview in which he gave the “Jornal Nacional”, which even the candidate makes another post with the link to followers access, and in the matters of “Estadão” and “Uol”, which has as background the theme of corruption associated with Fernando Haddad. And on the other hand Bolsonaro attacks the media to create Fake News about him and to seek to weaken his campaign. With this, it reveals itself favorable to the media only when it is pertinent, and when it is not sought to attack it through the fifth state, the Internet, in which self legitimizes itself as an official source, even showing contrary to the regulation and "control" of the media and the Internet , as revealed in post on October 17, 2018.
In addition to the main themes addressed, others also appeared in 27 of the 116 publications on Instagram by Jair Bolsonaro, but not so often or with tensionings regarding the Fourth and Fifth State, attacks on opposition and Fake News.

**Jair Bolsonaro According to the Coverage of the “Jornal Nacional”**

TV Globo's main television news, the Jornal Nacional (JN) premiered on September 1, 1969 and is broadcast from Monday to Saturday, at 20:30, with an average duration of 45 minutes. Currently the JN is presented by Willian Bonner and Renata Vasconcellos, who are also the editor-in-chief and the executive Publisher, respectively.

On its website, the National Journal is defined as the first news broadcast in Brazil to be transmitted in a network, and "covers the full coverage of the main reports in Brazil and worldwide. Guided by credibility, exemption and ethics, the JN is a prime-time audience leader" (JORNAL NACIONAL WEBSITE, 2019).

An important element in understanding the motives that led Jair Bolsonaro to communicate mainly through his social networks, the media also places itself as an institution to be analyzed, insofar as before the Internet gains space also as a means of communication, the Mass Media occupied fundamental space as informants of the population.

From this role that the media occupied for a long time as the only means to communicate the realities to the citizen, we also investigated the angulation that the media, so criticized by Jair Bolsonaro, covered the second round of the presidential elections of 2018, which are between 7 and 27 October 2018.

For this analysis, we chose the contents conveyed by the Jornal Nacional, the main and longest news network of Rede Globo, a broadcaster that has the highest ratings in Brazil.

The contents chosen for analysis were given from subjects that had as keyword "Bolsonaro", in order to compare the content of the official Instagram publications of Jair Bolsonaro with the contents transmitted by the Jornal Nacional.

In the period between 7 and 27 October, 23 subjects were analyzed, of which 18 were on the campaign agenda of Jair Bolsonaro. The content of these subjects was aimed at counting the day-to-day of the PSL candidate, as well as informing the population what Bolsonaro did during the second round. In addition, the same number of content was intended for the opposition candidate, Fernando Haddad (PT).

Among the subjects analyzed, they highlight the themes of security, such as when the candidate visits the BOPE (Battalion of Special Police Operations) in Rio de Janeiro, combating corruption and visits of the candidate in search of support.

Of the other five subjects investigated, two are about a live interview that Jair Bolsonaro gave the Jornal Nacional, one talking about the candidate's return to the second round, one on investigation
of the prosecutor's office of Bolsonaro for suspicion of fraud and one about novelties in the court case of the stab suffered by Jair Bolsonaro.

Final Considerations

Despite anchoring much of his presidential campaign on the Internet, more specifically on social networks, Jair Bolsonaro at all times proves the conflict between fourth and fifth State, since in many of his posts makes references to the traditional media, both positively and as a way of legitimize the candidate's assertions, as negative, in which he poses as opposed to this fourth state that would seek to weaken him.

Still on the coalition between Fourth and Fifth State, despite not being the object of analysis of this article, Jair Bolsonaro gained a significant space in the traditional media after having suffered the stab in Juiz de Fora-MG, since because it is a presidentiable, the Media repercussion was a natural factor to give Bolsonaro more space and to cover his recovery process. In this sense, the PSL candidate ends up using this larger space to promote himself in his social networks, and also to put himself in the victim's position, a fact that proves in posts in which he directly accuses the PSOL and even the PT of having "ordered" and planned the stab episode.

On the coverage of the Jornal Nacional, it is observed that there is only the coverage of the campaign agenda of Jair Bolsonaro, not bringing information about the candidate who run from the pre-campaign routine of the applicant.

In relation to the Fake News and the role of the Media, it is perceived that although the Internet allows a greater range, especially considering that with only eight seconds of TV and radio Jair Bolsonaro was first placed in the first round of the elections, she has not yet has no type of regulation and with this it is easier to manipulate and modify news, photos and even videos, just taking them out of context.

Another finding is that Bolsonaro uses unsubstantiation news to attack Fernando Haddad and the PT as a way of fouling the image of his opponent. In this sense, unlike the premise of the fourth power to hear both sides, on the Internet the audiences are more segmented and therefore consume only the content that interests them, which allows Bolsonaro to criticize without the opposition having the right to answer or of defense.

In relation to the National Journal, there is no content that deals with the theme of the Fake News and much less in relation to the posture of Jair Bolsonaro on social networks. In this sense, we observe that the Jornal Nacional adopts a posture to speak to all audiences and to remain as the main vehicle of communication nationwide.

Still on this segmentation of the public, Jair Bolsonaro uses his social networks to weave harsh criticism without any filter, as for example in a post that calls the PSOL "prostitute of the PT", in video published on October 13, 2018, and as a large part of Followers of Bolsonaro are also their supporters, these discourses end up legitimating and being propagated to other people. Thus, these new personalities of the Fifth State stand as legitimation of opinion, resembling the journalists of the Fourth State/Power.
In relation to the Jornal Nacional, which in theory speaks to all audiences, we observe a content that seeks to be neutral and that brings only basic information about the routine of candidates for the presidency at the time, Jair Bolsonaro and Fernando Haddad.

Finally, we observed that for the first time the free electoral hours on TV and radio was not decisive for the winner of the presidential elections, since Bolsonaro had a small time in the traditional media and still managed to reach first place in the elections.

On the other hand, we perceive a great rise of the Internet as a space also of politics, both with the growth of Bolsonaro via social networks, as well as through permission to boost publications on social networks by candidates.

In this sense, the coalition between Fourth and Fifth States becomes even more evident, which puts time as opposites and time as complementary, as Bolsonaro resumes the traditional media when it seeks to legitimate some discourse that is usually indictment. And on the Media side, we identified that it has sought to also look to the Internet with more attention, mainly from the posture adopted by Jair Bolsonaro to disclose and to deal with the main points of his campaign precisely through the web environment.

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References


Creating a 21st Century Mass Communication Curriculum for a New Democracy: Lessons from Bhutan

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Abstract:

The Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan was one of the last in the world to introduce mass media – television was banned until 1999 and newspaper competition didn’t arrive until 2006 – and mass communication education came even later. Now two colleges – one public and one private – have launched the first media studies and mass communication B.A. programs in the country. Like mass communication programs around the world they have to balance theory and skills, traditional media and new practices in crafting their curriculum; they need to reflect disruption and innovation in a changing field. But in Bhutan there’s an additional challenge: To create relevant educational programs for a country that has had little experience with journalism or mass communication. In addition, media education in Bhutan must align with the core principles of Gross National Happiness, the philosophy that guides the nation to seek balance and focus on the wellbeing of its citizens. This article will explore how these new degree programs could play a vital role in training the next generation of media professionals and strengthening the struggling media in the world’s youngest democracy.

Keywords: media in Bhutan, journalism education, mass communication education, Bhutan journalism, media studies in Bhutan

Introduction

The Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan was one of the last in the world to introduce mass media (Lhamo & Oyama, 2015), and mass communication education came even later. The first newspaper was started by the government in 1967 and private competitors didn’t start publishing until 2006. Television was banned in the country until 1999, when the state-supported Bhutan Broadcasting Service, which remains the only television network based in the country, began providing Bhutanese programming. Thus, today’s university students are part of the first generation of Bhutanese to grow up with mass media.

In July 2018, Royal Thimphu College (RTC), a private college near the nation’s capital, launched the first mass communication bachelor’s degree program in Bhutan. Two joint media studies programs – a B.A. English-Media Studies program and a B.A. Dzongkha-Media Studies program – started in 2012 at Sherubtse College, part of the Royal University of Bhutan.
Like many mass communication programs around the world, these programs have had to balance theory and skills, traditional media and new media practices in crafting their curricula; they need to reflect disruption and innovation in a changing field. But they have an additional challenge: to create relevant educational curricula for a country that has had little experience with journalism or mass communication. In addition, education in Bhutan is expected to be infused with the country’s unique development goal of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Media education, therefore, has a crucial role to play in delivering solutions-oriented content and creating enabling conditions to achieve the goals of GNH. Media in Bhutan is still in its infancy. Because the nation is so small and the democracy so new, these degree programs have the opportunity to profoundly impact the quality and practice of journalism and media in the country.

In this paper we will discuss the unique challenges for media and mass communication education in Bhutan and offer recommendations for the training of future journalists and other media professionals. Bhutan’s unique philosophy of GNH has made the country a global model for sustainable and carefully planned development. As a relatively new entrant to the global media ecosystem, the country has lessons to teach others about the practice of sustainable and responsible media.

**History of the Mass Media in Bhutan**

Bhutan is a small, landlocked country in the Himalayas, wedged between the giant geopolitical powers of India and China. The country was largely cut off from most of the world until the 1950s, when a succession of monarchs began an ambitious process of modernization, bringing paved roads, a national postal system (in 1962), and, eventually, modern technology to the largely agrarian nation. Bhutan joined the United Nations in 1971 and slowly began engaging in trade and cultural exchanges with countries beyond its borders. The kingdom is best known for its policy of Gross National Happiness, a concept that balances modernity with preservation of tradition and culture and emphasizes happiness and well-being of the populace over Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and wealth.

Up until the last third of the 20th century, Bhutan had no form of mass communication whatsoever. No newspapers, no radio, no magazines, no television. People who grew up in rural villages in the 1960s can still remember messengers sharing news by running from town to town or shouting announcements from the highest hillock. Television was banned until 1999, when the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, welcomed TV and the internet to the remote kingdom, opening the floodgates to media messages from around the world.

The roots of mass media in Bhutan were planted in 1967, when Bhutan’s Ministry of Information started an English-language government bulletin called *Kuensel* with the motto “that the nation shall be informed.” Over the next few months, it evolved into an eight-page newsletter published every two weeks, according to a display in the *Kuensel* headquarters that describes the newspaper’s history (The *Kuensel* Story). In 1971, the publication went weekly and in 1986 it was upgraded to a 12-page tabloid newspaper. In 1992, following a royal decree, *Kuensel* was de-linked from the civil service to become a corporation with a seven-member board of directors. In 2001, two years after the Internet was introduced in the country, the newspaper launched an online edition and in 2005, the government divested 49% of its shares to the public and the newspaper, printed in English
and the national language of Dzongkha, began publishing twice a week. In 2009 the newspaper went daily (The Kuensel Story).

Newspaper competition didn’t come to Bhutan until 2006, when King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, known as the fourth king, announced plans to shift the country from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy and called for private media to help pave the way for democracy. In announcing his intention to hand over absolute power to a democratically elected government, the king described a vision for democracy that would include multiple independent news outlets providing varying perspectives on issues (Avieson, 2015). Shortly after, two private publications, *Bhutan Times* and *Bhutan Observer*, launched, giving the state-owned Kuensel and its readers their first taste of newspaper competition. A third private newspaper, *Bhutan Today*, began publishing in 2008. These private newspapers took a more investigative approach to reporting and began shining a light on corruption and social problems. By the time the country held its first elections in 2008, a lively and sometimes critical media were there to report on the transition to democracy (Drexler, 2018).

Adopted in 2008, the constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan guarantees “freedom of expression, freedom of media, and right to information” (UNDP, 2019), and the two most recent monarchs have expressed support for a free press. During the closing of the 3rd National Assembly session on July, 30, 2009, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Media – newspapers, television, radio and the internet – must play a very important role. I appreciate that while some of the media agencies are young and lack adequate resources, they have strived to perform their duties with complete commitment. Hereafter, media will be vital in keeping people well informed and in encouraging debate and participation – key to a vibrant democracy. Therefore, I have decided that through the exercise of my Royal prerogative of Kidu, to strengthen media agencies so that they may carry out their duties, without fear or favour, in the interest of democracy” (Wangchuck, 2009).

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As the new democracy began to take shape, more news outlets sprouted. Bhutan’s first business paper, *Business Bhutan*, launched in 2009, and more general-interest newspapers arrived on the scene, *The Journalist* in 2009 and *The Bhutanese* in 2012. Four private Dzongkha newspapers also started during this time period – *Druk Neytshuel* started publishing in 2010, *Druk Yoedzer* in 2011, and *Gyalchi Sarshog* and *Druk Melong* in 2012. In the same period, a news magazine, *Drukpa*, and entertainment magazines, *Trowa* and *Yeewong*, also began publishing.

Mobile phones were introduced in 2006, and the country adopted them rapidly. By 2008, 250,000 people out of a population of 630,000 owned a mobile phone (MoIC, 2008). By 2013, this had increased to 560,000, or 92.8% of households (MoIC, 2013) and by 2018 cell phone penetration was approaching 100% (Penjor, 2018).
For many years, Bhutan was the only nation in the world that banned television. In celebration of the silver jubilee of his coronation, the Fourth King opened the door to television and the internet in 1999, and the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS), which had been providing radio programming since 1973, started to offer TV programming. It now runs two channels; BBS 1 focuses on news and current affairs, and BBS 2 offers educational and entertainment programming. BBS, which is operated and funded by the government, is the sole nationwide television network operator in the country. BBS also has two radio channels. Radio Channel 1 carries news and programs in English and in two local dialects, Tshangla and Lhotsham; Radio Channel 2 is broadcast in the national language, Dzongkha. Several other radio broadcasters, including college and community stations, provide radio programming, although most focus on music and entertainment rather than news and information.

The explosion of media in Bhutan peaked around 2012, when 12 newspapers, one television station and seven radio stations were serving the country. At that time an estimated 300 journalists, some with an investigative spirit, were covering the nation (Drexler, 2018).

But it soon became clear that this number of media outlets was not sustainable for a country of less than three-quarters of a million people. When a budget crisis hit in 2012, the government drastically cut back on advertising, and media outlets responded by reducing salaries, laying off staff and slashing other expenses. Between 2013 and 2019 six newspapers folded (Drexler, 2018; Zangpo, 2019).

Today, Bhutan has just seven newspapers – five private newspapers that publish in English, one that publishes in Dzongkha and the state-owned Kuensel publishing in English and Dzongkha – and most of those are struggling to survive (Drexler, 2018; Zangpo, 2019).

Challenges Facing News Media in Bhutan

The proliferation of media that came with the transition to democracy seemed like a good thing for a few short years but recent studies by the government (MoIC, 2013) and media organizations (JAB, 2014) suggest readership/viewership is relatively low, journalists are not well trained and media organizations are having trouble competing with citizens posting information (and sometimes misinformation) on social media. The new entrepreneurs soon had to come to grips with the practical and economic realities of running a media business in a small, developing nation and were thwarted by a host of problems, among them:

- **Too many media outlets for too small a population.** Bhutan has 735,000 residents (NSBB, 2018). The nation is simply not big enough to support more than a dozen news outlets.

- **Low literacy rate.** Though it is climbing, the literacy rate for the country in 2018 stood at 71.4%, an increase of 12 percentage points from 2005 when it was 59.5% (NSBB, 2018). While Bhutan has a strong tradition of storytelling, until recently, it was primarily oral. Sit in a cafe or ride on a bus and it’s rare to see people reading newspapers, books or magazines. Even on their mobile phones, people are more likely to be exchanging brief messages via text, audio apps like WeChat or social media like Facebook and Instagram than to be reading online books or news articles. A 2013 survey by the government found just 5% of
respondents got their news from newspapers, compared to 56% who got news from TV and 28% from radio (MoIC, 2013). Radio and podcasting seem like promising media for the country, but few radio stations offer news or documentary programming and to date podcasting has not caught on.

- **No sustainable business model.** News organizations around the world are failing with the collapse of the traditional, advertising-based model. Bhutan doesn’t even have the vestiges of a successful advertising model. There is little tradition of commercial advertising and few businesses in the small private sector have the economic capacity or inclination to buy ads. As Sonam Ongmo, publisher of the now-defunct magazine *The Raven*, said in a 2013 interview with *Columbia Journalism Review*, “There’s no advertising culture in the private sector” (Oputu, 2013).

- **Overreliance on government advertising.** Most media outlets in Bhutan primarily depend on a single source of revenue: government advertising. In 2012, government advertising began to dry up as a budget crisis forced government agencies to cut back on expenditures, including advertising (JAB, 2013). In addition, government agencies have pulled ads from private media outlets, possibly in retaliation for critical coverage. In 2012, the International Federation of Journalists revealed that the Ministry of Information and Communication had distributed a secret circular asking all government departments to withhold their advertising from the daily newspaper, *The Bhutanese*. “The government’s directive forbidding advertising to be placed in *The Bhutanese* is believed to be in retaliation for the publication of articles critical of possible abuse of power and corruption, arising from the government’s use of its discretionary powers,” the IFJ wrote (IFJ, 2012). Also that year, the Election Commission of Bhutan announced that all election-related advertising would be published only through state-owned media.

**Quality of Journalism**

Several researchers have noted that the lack of a sustainable business model and the resulting low salaries for journalists have had a negative impact on the quality of journalism in the country (Drexler, 2019; JAB, 2014). Beginning in 2013, veteran journalists began to quit in response to low pay and professional hazards, such as censorship, threats and long working hours. Today, fewer than 100 reporters and editors, most of them inexperienced, cover the entire country (Drexler, 2018). “The industry is run by young journalists,” Journalists Association of Bhutan (JAB) President Rinzin Wangchuk said in a 2017 interview with *Kuensel* (Palden, 2017). “The media managers and owners are reluctant to invest in journalism. If you don’t pay reporters or photographers, they will not go after the story. How then can we expect journalism to improve?”

In a report on the status of journalists in 2014, the Journalists Association of Bhutan wrote, “The sustainability crisis faced by media houses has had a direct bearing on the quality of journalism. Many senior journalists and editors have left the media industry, leaving the newsrooms (especially the privately owned) to a crop of young reporters without much experience and journalistic skills” (JAB, 2014). In a survey of 90 journalists working in 16 media organizations and 29 former journalists, JAB found that 71% felt that the profession had lost its attraction, 66% said it was difficult to access public information, and 58% felt “unsafe” covering critical stories, fearing reprisal. At that time 82% of working journalists were paid a monthly salary of less than Nu 21,000.
(roughly $300) and 39% made less than Nu 10,000 (less than $150). Some 40% of journalists working in private media organizations at the time of the survey reported not receiving their salaries on time. Some of them told researchers they had to borrow money from friends and relatives to support themselves while others moved in with their parents and friends (JAB, 2014).

Self-censorship and a widespread reluctance among journalists to challenge authority are frequently cited as major impediments to good journalism in Bhutan. While the Bhutanese Constitution supports freedom of speech and expression, the 1992 National Security Act has strict provisions on “words either spoken or written that undermine or attempt to undermine the security and sovereignty of Bhutan by creating or attempting to create hatred and disaffection among the people.” Offenders can be punished with imprisonment (Freedom House, 2013).

Several organizations have cited this act and other government policies, as well as over-reliance on government advertising, as obstacles to press freedom. “While there are multiple private media outlets, many depend on advertising from state bodies, and Bhutan’s media environment remained subject to a high degree of self-censorship, especially regarding criticism of the royal family. Powerful individuals can use defamation laws to retaliate against critics” (Freedom House, 2019).

Reporters Without Borders consistently cites self-censorship as a major problem in Bhutan in its annual World Press Freedom report. “The level of self-censorship continues to be very high in the land of ‘gross national happiness’ because many journalists avoid covering sensitive issues for fear of appearing to challenge the social order…. Journalists who dare to post investigative reporting or criticism are subject to online campaigns by political activists that combine disinformation and defamation with personal and sometimes racist attacks” (RSF, 2019). In a 2013 interview with Columbia Journalism Review, Sonam Ongmo who founded the short-lived publication The Raven, stated that journalists are told by the government to “keep [their] criticisms down. Learn to criticize in a way that doesn’t make everyone unhappy and dissatisfied” (Oputu, E. 2013). Namgay Zam, one of the country’s best-known journalists, told The Diplomat in 2017, “Journalists are afraid to report, imagining perceived consequences. Because it’s such a small society, you don’t know whose shoes you’re treading on” (Arora, 2017).

In the 2014 JAB survey, about 58% of working journalists and 62% of former journalists said they felt ‘unsafe’ to cover critical stories. Factors cited included fear or reprisal for writing negative stories, the difficulties of practicing journalism in a small, close-knit society, lack of adequate skills and objections from their management. At least 47% of working journalists said they had been threatened for covering critical stories. (JAB, 2014)

In 2017, the government adopted the Bhutan Information Communications and Media Act, which updated a 2006 media law. The government claimed the new law would strengthen the independence of the media and promote a free and vibrant media industry. The legislation mandated the establishment of an independent body called the Media Council, whose five members are directly appointed by the government to monitor the media and determine which content is harmful or offensive. Press freedom advocates fear that the new body will further erode press freedom and contribute to greater self-censorship (Freedom House, 2019). “This poses a major threat to media independence,” Reporters Without Borders wrote in its 2019 World Press Index Report on Bhutan (RSF, 2019).
Lack of journalism education and professional training are evident in the mainstream media. Reporting tends to be superficial. Much of the coverage in newspapers is based on government reports and few stories quote more than one or two sources, usually government officials.

Language also presents several challenges for Bhutanese media. Bhutan has as many as 23 spoken languages and dialects, but only two, Dzongkha and Lhotshamkha, have a written form (Yeshi, 2012). Since the 1960s Dzongkha has been the national language of Bhutan, but English is the language of instruction in most schools. Thus, it’s not unusual for a child to speak Tshangla at home, study in English at school and talk to their friends in Dzongkha. While it’s admirable that most Bhutanese are polyglots, few develop strong writing skills in any one language. While Dzongkha is the national language, many can’t write it and some can’t speak it well. English is taught in schools but it’s a second or third language for most residents. Bhutanese newspapers are rife with grammatical errors and awkward sentence structure, making them difficult to read.

**Competition from Social Media**

One of the greatest challenges to traditional news media in Bhutan is social media. Just as the country was transitioning to democracy, social media channels like Facebook and chat services like WeChat arrived on the scene. In the absence of strong, vibrant news media, people took to social media to discuss political and social issues. Rather than complementing and promoting mainstream news media, many observers say they have overshadowed and in some cases replaced fact-based, thoroughly reported journalism. WeChat, an app that allows people to communicate via voice messages, is particularly popular in rural areas where literacy rates are low (UNDP, 2019, p. 90).

Nearly 100% of Bhutanese households now have some access to the Internet through computers or cell phones (or both). Facebook had more than 410,000 users in Bhutan in 2019 (Hootsuite, 2019) and the Bhutan News and Forums group on Facebook had more than 180,000 members. Citizens use the forums to post photos, videos, and text messages on a range of topics, and commenting is a popular pastime. It’s not unusual for posts to get tens of thousands of views and hundreds of comments. But false information spreads as quickly as—or perhaps more quickly than—truth. Many have criticized this online discourse, which is often filled with rumor, gossip, false reports and hate speech (UNDP, 2019, p. 9).

Social media have also replaced traditional media as a place to advertise. Many Bhutanese businesses use Facebook pages and groups to promote products, events, and services rather than buying ads in newspapers, television or radio, where audiences are typically smaller and less engaged (Avieson, 2015).
The Role Mass Media Can Play in Enabling GNH

Bhutan has set itself toward middle path development guided by the philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). This philosophy was propounded by its visionary Fourth King when he took the reign of the country as a teenager from his late father. The young king boldly stated in 1970s that, “GNH is more important than GDP” (Priesner, 1998, p. 28). To materialize such an ambitious development goal, GNH is today a quantifiable model with an index to measure the happiness of the people. In fact, the idea of GNH is to measure all things left out by economic indicators of GDP. The nation conducts periodic surveys to measure the levels of happiness among its citizens, looking at indicators in nine domains: living standards, health, education, good governance, ecological diversity and resilience, time use, psychological wellbeing, cultural diversity and resilience, and community vitality (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2016).

The role of mass media is crucial to create an enlightened society by providing space for meaningful public discourse (Dorji & Pek, 2005). What is more challenging is the media’s role in addressing the social mindsets that are largely driven by the global cultures and influences against the balanced development goals. Such a challenge is compounded further by Bhutan’s transition to democracy from a monarchy with people being empowered to take matters into their own hands, especially in the development of the country. The democratic decisions must translate into good governance, which is one of the nine domains of GNH. The state ensures the infusion of GNH into development works by implementing policy screening tools of GNH for every development policy and program. All these various levels of development can be put to coherence and challenges addressed if mass media can shape a proper platform for rational discourse.

Dorji and Pek (2005) suggest Bhutanese media should provide a new model for global media:

Just as GNH is a response to globalisation and global interpretations of development, the Bhutanese media has the responsibility to resist and provide alternatives to global trends in the media. If GNH found that economic development had taken precedence over happiness as a priority in development we find that the global media too is consumed by commercialism, generating materialism as an end goal.

The practice of journalism can be skewed towards sensationalism and hype with the ultimate motive to seek profit. Bhutan’s pursuit of happiness calls for a responsible and positive practice of journalism to help create the enabling conditions for happiness. This does not mean changing the conventions of journalism but rather avoiding practices that promote vested interests and selfish motives. In other words, creating a GNH society entails practicing solution-oriented journalism where journalists don’t always look for a sensational scoop but reveal enlightening discussions on social problems through in-depth research and reporting. Kinley and Pek (2005) argue that Bhutanese media should educate and empower the public to make informed decisions (p. 85).

The rapid growth of privately owned newspapers in Bhutan beginning in 2006 paved the way for creating vibrant and active media. Pioneering print media outlets like Bhutan Times started the culture of investigative journalism to dig into the ills that were paralyzing the country’s bureaucracy and the system. Soon other newspapers followed suit in exposing the corrupt practices that endangered the very system of government that was trying to create the conditions of happiness for the people. The idea of a press staffed mostly by professional and senior media personnel in the
country was to create a healthy culture in the public sphere where debate and discourse took place for participation of the people in furthering the newly instituted democratic system of governance.

Many of the news stories focused on the ethical conduct of state apparatus for governance and public policies. The socioeconomic conditions of the people were highlighted through telling stories of how rich people got richer and how poor remained helpless in an unbalanced and unfair system of governance. The impact of such stories resulted in policy-makers devising effective strategies to better serve the poor and get them out of poverty. Today, the country is lauded for drastically reducing the poverty rate of 23% in 2007 to 8.2% in 2017 (NSBB, 2018, p. 14). The alarming rate of Bhutanese youth falling victim to substance abuse and hopelessness were captured through detailed feature stories in newspapers. These stories grabbed the attention of the public.

Journalism has played an important role in the development of GNH, but the recent downturn in the number and quality of news outlets and the decline in investigative journalism make this less possible. The country needs a well-trained, responsible press that supports the core values and vision of GNH.

**Career Opportunities in Other Media Fields**

While aspiring media professionals may find the current job market for journalists bleak, opportunities for graduates with media skills – writing, editing, interviewing, video and audio production, marketing, social media – are expanding. The number of audio/video production houses, for example, skyrocketed from 42 in 2003 to 112 in 2013 (MoIC, 2013). The number of books and publications published in Bhutan increased from 207 in 2003 to 2,832 in 2013 and the number of films made in Bhutan more than doubled from 116 in 2008 to 241 in 2013.

Government and non-governmental agencies need people with strong research, writing and media production skills. And while the private sector is small, it’s slowly growing. Graduates with media and marketing skills will be needed to research and promote new products and services.

**Academic and Professional Media Training in Bhutan**

Until recently there was little academic or professional training for current or aspiring journalists and media professionals in Bhutan. Most professionals working in Bhutanese media learned the skills on the job or by going abroad. In a 2013 survey of 96 Bhutanese journalists, Josephi (2017) found that 87.2% had a bachelor’s degree or equivalent and 11.7% had a master’s degree but only 16.1% had studied journalism, 4.3% had studied another communications field and 4.3% had studied journalism and another communications field. Many of the respondents studied in India, which has a more established system of journalism education. The 2014 survey by the Journalists Association of Bhutan reported that “18% of respondents mentioned that they are journalists by training against 82% who said they learned the job hands-on” (JAB, 2014).

Several observers of media in Bhutan have cited the need for improved education of media professionals. In its report, “Ten Years of Democracy in Bhutan,” the UNDP and the Parliament called for more training of journalists (UNDP, 2019).
The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, the Journalists Association of Bhutan and the Bhutan Media Foundation have over the past decade sponsored occasional workshops and seminars for working journalists. But clearly weekend workshops and short courses are no substitution for a focused three- or four-year degree program in a field of study.

In 2012 Sherubtse College introduced a Media Studies Department and now offers two joint media studies B.A. programs – B.A. English and Media Studies and B.A. in Dzongkha and Media Studies. The programs offered the first opportunities for aspiring journalists and media professionals to study in their own country and a number of graduates have gone on to careers in media.

**New Mass Communication Program at RTC**

In July 2018, Royal Thimphu College, a private college outside the capital city of Thimphu, launched the nation’s first mass communication program. The first cohort began with 30 students; a second cohort of 30 was expected to start the three-year program in July 2019.

According to its program handbook, the Mass Communication B.A. program at RTC “is designed to provide students with adequate knowledge and appreciation of communication theories and applications as well as hands-on content creation experience to be able to analyse, strategize, and produce quality communications in English.” Students acquire a broad understanding of mass communication as well as experience with traditional, digital, and social media. Graduates are expected to “learn how to communicate with audiences effectively by planning, creating, and delivering content in a variety of mediums” (RTC, 2018).

The three-year program includes 30 modules, or courses, taken over six semesters of full-time study. It offers students a broad mix of theory and skills modules that touch on many aspects of mass communication. Students take courses in mass communication history, theory and ethics, and get hands-on training in journalism, audio and video production, mobile media, digital graphics, digital storytelling, public relations, advertising, public speaking, layout and design, and photography. The curriculum includes instructional materials from the U.S., Europe, India and other parts of Asia since there are few resources about media in Bhutan and students are exposed to journalistic styles and media issues from around the world. English writing skills are developed continuously in nearly all the modules of the program. Students also take courses in Dzongkha, the national language that most Bhutanese can speak but few can write proficiently. The program is designed to prepare students for a wide array of careers, including teaching and research, journalism, corporate and business fields, government, radio, television, public relations, marketing, etc. (RTC, 2018).

Most media outlets in the country are headquartered in or near the capital city and the college’s close proximity to Thimphu make it easy for journalists and other media professionals to give guest lectures and for students to take field trips and do internships at media organizations. In the program’s first year, some of the nation’s most prominent current and former journalists came to campus to speak and students toured *Kuensel* and Yiga Radio, an independent radio station near Thimphu.
Also during that program’s first year RTC purchased equipment (computers, cameras, tripods, lenses, etc.) and set up a dedicated laboratory classroom for the program where students can learn a range of technical skills and become familiar with the tools of 21st century media.

In the spring of 2019, RTC Mass Communication students worked to launch the first student newspaper for the campus. Students elected two editors-in-chief, who appointed an editorial team. They came up with a Dzongkha name “Yallama Dhari,” which roughly translates in English to “Oh My God Today” or “Wow Today,” capturing their youthful enthusiasm as well as their affection for their national language. In presenting the online news publication at a launch event, Co-Editor-in-Chief Bishnu Bhakta Rai noted that the exclamation in the title could be used to respond to news that’s happy or tragic (Rai, 2019).

Conclusion: Educating the Next Generation of Media Professionals

Bhutanese college students of today are in an ideal position to train for media and communication jobs of the future. Not only are they digital natives; they are the first generation who grew up with television, advertising, newspaper competition, private media, and access to international media. These students have watched their country go from a media desert to a place with a range of news, entertainment and information options. They’ve experienced the swift rise of cell phone ownership and the eruption of social media. And they’ve witnessed the country’s first elections as Bhutan became the world’s newest democracy.

The Media Studies programs at Sherubtse College and the Mass Communication Programme at RTC offer students dreaming of careers in journalism and other media fields the first opportunities to train for such jobs in their own country. Aspiring media professionals no longer need to travel to India, Australia, Europe or the U.S. to learn their chosen trade. These programs have the power to make a huge difference in Bhutan’s future media ecosystem.

Strong mass communication and media studies programs in Bhutan will help students not only understand the development of media in their country but also the opportunities they have to impact media in the future. Students should study how media is practiced in other countries as well as their own and learn to think critically about media impacts and influences. They should learn about media as they exist today but also ponder how the media industry can improve and evolve, particularly in Bhutan where virtually all news outlets continue to struggle. Students should be taught not just media skills but entrepreneurship tools that can help them launch their own businesses and come up with new models for sustaining media. As in other countries, mass communication education in Bhutan must not shy away from the challenges media organizations face today. The problems of sustainability, self-censorship, and job insecurity are real and must be addressed.

Most of all, media students must understand the vital role media play in their country’s young democracy. As Gopilal Acharya, the founder of The Journalist, a newspaper that ran long-form, investigative stories before it folded in 2017, told American journalist Madeline Drexler, “A free press will mean that we will have what one scholar called ‘mass mediated democracy’—whether you are talking about raising public discourse on important issues, reporting without fear, giving voice to the people who are not able to speak up for themselves. That is one of the major roles that media plays in our part of the world: giving voice to the voiceless” (Drexler, 2018).
Note

Much of the research for this paper was conducted while Rachele Kanigel was a Fulbright Specialist at Royal Thimphu College from February to April 2019. She thanks the Fulbright Program for enabling this cultural exchange.

About the Authors

Rachele Kanigel is a professor of journalism at San Francisco State University. In 2019 she served as a Fulbright Specialist in Bhutan, teaching and training faculty in the new mass communication program at Royal Thimphu College for 10 weeks. She holds a master’s degree from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and worked as a daily newspaper reporter for 15 years. She is the author of The Diversity Style Guide (Wiley, 2019) and editor of the online resource of the same name (http://diversitystyleguide.com). She also wrote The Student Newspaper Survival Guide (Wiley, 2011). She lives in Oakland, California.

Khampa is the CEO of Bhutan Cable Services Pvt. Ltd. taking charge of digitizing the television industry in Bhutan. Prior to his current profession, Khampa was an educator, media professional and business consultant. He began his career as a journalist and a writer. He has worked with various clients in government and the private sector in Bhutan, and with international organizations in areas such as research, management, branding and marketing, content development and publications, information technology, audio-visual media, project development, and business strategies. He holds a BA in English Literature and MA in Communication Arts.

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The Kuensel Story, display at Kuensel office, Thimphu, Bhutan.


YouTube and Conspiracy: Using Videos in News Literacy Pedagogy

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Abstract:
This exploratory study examined comments associated with YouTube conspiracy videos posted days after the Las Vegas shooting. Overall, the study found that those posting the videos used traditional elements of journalism and that commenters rarely challenged how the social media platform was being used. This exploratory study suggests that the more democratic news-creation process that takes place on social media calls for more critical, discerning analysis from the audiences that consume that information. It also discusses pedagogical implications for news literacy courses.

Introduction
Within hours of the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history, YouTube began displaying dozens of conspiracy videos. In the comment sections beneath the videos, the audience began judging the information they were seeing, adding to it, responding to the producers with praise and/or condemnation, and generally taking part in what appeared to be a rather traditional news ecosystem (Gillmor, 2010).

This exploratory study examines comments associated with conspiracy videos posted to YouTube within a week of the October 1, 2017, shooting in Las Vegas. The study also considers the nature of the platform, which is most commonly referred to as social media. In the U.S., 93% of adults get at least some news online (Digital News Fact Sheet, 2018). The video-sharing site YouTube is now used by nearly three-quarters of U.S. adults and 94% of 18- to 24-year-olds. The purpose of the study was to add to a slim but growing body of literature exploring news literacy as a subset of the more well-known media literacy movement. By examining the comments and how the audience interacted with the information presented to it, the authors sought to help inform discussions on the emerging concept of news literacy as an important subfield of mass communication research and pedagogy. Further, the authors used the example of the conspiracy theories involving the shooting as a means of proposing ways to teach the concepts of news literacy.

Conspiracy videos, defined as those that attack the official version of events or offer alternative theories for known facts, were chosen because they offer a unique opportunity to examine audience interaction with information presented to them during a highly salient incident. The purpose is to explore how the audience reacted to the information and whether elements of news literacy could be teased from what is seen. The intent of this work was to explore audience dialogue with the goal
of seeing how and whether audience members use the tools at their disposal – in this case YouTube as a social media platform – to advance the public debate, advocate narratives outside those offered by establishment sources, or for other purposes. By tying together elements of traditional journalism, principles of news literacy and the public sphere, the goal is to better understand important questions of how the audience reaches toward meaning in a digital age and to sketch potential areas for further study and possible implications for pedagogical approaches to news literacy.

**Theory and Literature Review**

Traditional journalism techniques and theories have become well-established and deeply studied since the founding of the first journalism schools in the United States. Journalism practice has been informed by a long tradition of critique that sought to analyze how news is defined and the forces that shape its creation (see Bagdikian, 2004; Commission, 1941; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Seldes, 1937; White, 1950). Media artifacts, such as news stories, headlines, images, and sourcing, are frequently studied for their potential audience impact but rarely have scholars questioned the fundamental techniques of enticing audiences: A headline that summarizes and teases content; leads that engage and create interest, images that offer insight or emotion into given happenings, and sources that are credible and in a position to know (Brooks et al., 2016).

Many Internet websites and social media such as YouTube and Facebook adopted without significant alteration traditional journalism presentation techniques, such as headlines, key phrasing designed to entice, images to create interest, etc. Indeed, Facebook termed its platform a “newsfeed,” directly adopting the legacy of print and broadcast with its standardized presentation. The initial digitization of information spawned optimistic assessments of democratizing the news, without challenging its fundamental definitions, allowing the audience for the first time a true say in the news as it was being reported (Papacharissi, 2002/2004). This was quickly followed by critical analysis of an increasingly polarized public using social media to shape their own news ecosystem, consuming information with which they agreed and avoiding information that challenged their worldviews (Colleoni, Rozza, & Arvidsson, 2014).

The term news literacy describes a growing field of inquiry that argues, in essence, that as traditional journalism fades, the audience is left more and more to “navigate the news” on its own (Toepfl, 2014). That means the audience sees more information that has not been vetted through professional news gatherers and editors/producers who make critical decisions on newsworthiness, credibility, play, and other vital functions of traditional journalism. News literacy suggests that the audience must take on more of the duties of journalism, which requires a specific skillset that must be taught.

News literacy is a subset of the much older and more developed media and information literacy movements. Media literacy seeks to study the forces shaping all manner of media-related, cultural artifacts, such as movies, music, television, radio, video games, and the like (Livingstone, Van Couvering, & Thumim, 2008). News literacy focuses on the much narrower field of principles related to the production of news across platforms, including legacy print and broadcast formats as well as digital and social media (Maksl, Craft, Ashley, & Miller, 2017). Malik, Cortesi, and Gasser (2013) laid out four elements of news literacy: understanding the role of news in society; the desire to seek out news; the ability to critically assess news, and the ability to create news. This
exploratory study borrows from Malik et al.’s (2013) definition to test whether news literacy principles could be applied within the context of a singular news event and whether the audience adopted traditional news techniques and values within the context of unverified or blatantly false reports.

Jurgen Habermas, in critiquing the political situation in post-World War II Germany, built on the concept of individual involvement in public affairs when he outlined his theory of the public sphere. He concluded that in order to exist, a true public sphere must have several elements present: a public space in which citizens may engage; topics of discussion that must be of general interest to all (or nearly all) citizens; an opportunity for feedback, and – most importantly, in Habermas’ view – rational discourse that ultimately seeks consensus toward meaning (Outhwaite, 1994). He argued that the creation and energetic use of the public sphere are vital for any democracy. The public sphere is the mechanism by which public opinion is formed and changed, and by which the public influences the direction of public policy through mediated agreement, or at least acknowledgement and eventual acquiescence, of definitions and outcomes, which are then carried out by political actors dependent on the public will (Habermas, 1962/1989).

Traumatic events always are difficult to examine since high emotion and natural sympathies can hamper objective inquiry. However, what may be subtle during normal times can be amplified during times of intensity and, therefore, become more visible to the researcher. Mass shootings, particularly in public areas such as schools, have been studied for a variety of purposes, including “moral panic reactions” by publics on YouTube (Lindgren, 2011), the effect of covering violence on journalism practices (Koljonen et al., 2011), and the use of mobile technology in sharing images (Sumiala, 2011). Other scholars have examined shootings for evidence of myth and sense-making (Berkowitz, 2010) as well as how the media can frame a school shooting as a social problem rather than a policy problem (Wondemaghen, 2014). Berkowitz and Liu (2016) examined coverage of the Sandy Hook school shooting within the context of social media and challenges to journalism boundaries, concluding that an increased reliance on social media on behalf of both journalism and the audience challenges professional norms.

Development of conspiracy theories, generally defined as hidden or alternative explanations for widely known events (Al-Kandari, 2010), are often tied by researchers to a desire to make sense of horrific events. Conspiracy theories have been widely studied (Stempel, Hargrove, & Stempel, 2007) not for their veracity but for their general effect on how certain audiences seek information and meaning in the public sphere. Warner and Neville-Shepherd (2014) found through a series of experiments, for instance, that audiences who stayed in their ideological media silos fueled by conspiracy theories tended to believe in those theories.

On social networking sites, “conspiracy-like pages disseminate myth narratives and controversial information, usually lacking supporting evidence and most often contradictory of the official news” (Bessi, Zollo, Del Vicario, Puliga, Scala, Caldarelli, ... & Quattrociocchi, 2016, p. 2). The spread of massive digital misinformation is difficult to fight due to a powerful effect of social reinforcement (within a network of like-minded individuals). In other words, once online users have come across a purported proof of their beliefs, contradicting views tend to be rejected. In fact, attempts to combat the proliferation of conspiracy theories can have the opposite effect. When attempts are made to debunk false claims, users become more invested in the original claims, seeing the debunking as further evidence of attempts to silence them, which then reinforce their biases.
Quattrociocchi (2016) argued that algorithmic-driven solutions – such as developing a trustworthiness score – can be used to combat false claims.

The following research questions were developed by examining the video posts and comments through the principles of news literacy:

- Did the videos show elements of a traditional journalism presentation that would imply the clips were being displayed as “news” and, if so, how?

- To what extent do the comments suggest the audience sought to use the four primary news literacy principles?

- Through what emergent themes did YouTube commenters use the videos to seek to understand the role of news in society?

- What pedagogical practices do the videos suggest?

**Context – The Shooting**

Stephen Paddock opened fire on October 1, 2017, with a modified assault weapon on a crowd of thousands gathered at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas. He killed fifty-eight people before killing himself in what has been labeled the single worst mass shooting in U.S. history. He fired the weapon for 10 minutes – from 10:05 p.m. to 10:15 p.m. – before killing himself (Pearce, 2018). Coverage of the event was global, with reports being printed, broadcast, and posted in all major mainstream news outlets. Like many such incidents, social media was immediately fraught with a mixture of reposts, original filings, photos, and videos. The first YouTube videos introducing conspiracy theories were posted within 12 hours of the shooting. Because YouTube’s algorithm at the time privileged the number of views, several of these videos were in top search results, prompting the social media platform to change the order in which it displayed videos on the shooting (Guynn, 2017).

**YouTube**

Established in 2005 as a video-sharing service, YouTube has over one billion users in more than 88 countries (Global Reach, n.d.). According to the Pew Research Center, 73% of U.S. adults use YouTube (Who uses Pinterest, Snapchat, YouTube and WhatsApp, 2018). A study found that citizens rather than news organizations uploaded 39% of most popular news videos (Pew Research Center: Journalism & Media staff, 2012).

On YouTube, positive feedback to the video is expressed through a **like**, and a **comment** is the “way in which online collective debates grow around the topic promoted by videos” (Bessi et al., 2016, p. 3). Some research has shown that, “Consumers feel more engaged with products and organizations when they are able to submit feedback” (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 361).
Methods

The authors used the key words “Vegas shooting” to conduct a search 18 days after the shooting on the social media platform YouTube. The Top 10 conspiracy videos were identified by their order of appearance on YouTube, and the comments associated with each were captured and put into a Word document. The videos were identified by headlines such as “WTH! Video of Stephen Paddock Alive AFTER Las Vegas Shooting???” and key words such as “false flag,” “conspiracy,” and “crisis actors” within the comments. The comments were kept in association with each video and examined by the authors for consistent themes (Hermida, 2011). The authors were guided by Craft, Vos and Wolfgang’s (2016) strategy and employed an inductive, iterative approach. Three researchers each studied the comments separately to identify recurring themes. The second stage of data analysis included independent analysis of the texts to refine and develop the main and subcategories. (Charmaz, 2006).

Online reader comments were operationalized as “views on a story or other online item, which users typically submit by filling in a form on the bottom of the item” (Hermida, 2011, p. 17). Instead of creating a coding scheme, this study was guided by Craft, Vos and Wolfgang’s (2016) strategy and employed an inductive, iterative approach. At the first stage of data analysis, researchers independently read and re-read collected articles and reader comments line by line to identify recurring themes. After that the researchers met to discuss and compare preliminary notes. A few common topics were detected. The second stage of data analysis included independent reading and re-reading of the texts to refine and collapse the emerged themes. A group discussion focused on the themes, and their possible connection to the research questions and the emerging themes.

Consistent with the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006), the researchers met to discuss notes and compare, clarify and categorize emergent themes. The process of multiple re-readings of the texts produced a number of different themes, reactions and types of comments as described and analyzed below.

Findings

Descriptive results

Overall, there were 9,849 comments on the ten videos related to the Las Vegas shooting. They ranged from 63 to 4,353 per video. Duration of the videos ranged from 1:28 to 23:26 and averaged 10:50. The number of views ranged from 3,605 to 584,075 and averaged 161,926. The number of “likes” ranged from 262 to 14,001 and averaged 3,676. Only those comments that had five or more “likes” were included in the final sample and analyzed. This approach allowed focusing on the most popular posts as the most visible version of the public sphere. The highest number of “likes” (n=550) were seen in association with a comment on the video mentioned above (“WTH! Video of Stephen Paddock Alive AFTER Las Vegas Shooting???”).

Qualitative assessment

The first research question asked whether the videos showed elements of basic traditional journalism presentation principles and, if so, what forms did this take? The results revealed the
videos were posted in formats and stylings consistent with the fundamentals of traditional journalism presentation. This included: Headlines and captioning intended to inform an audience; narrative script structure that included introducing topics and then explanations, and editing techniques that produced short, understandable sequences.

In regards to the second research question, which asked how the comments relate to elements of news literacy, this study found the comments highlight fundamental aspects of the news literacy concept. News literacy principles suggest four primary ways in which the audience interacts with information, all involving some level of interpretation of the news. The principles are defining the role of news in discussions and debates; seeking out news; assessing the news, and creating news. The theory of the public sphere suggests the audience consumes information and then processes it through discourse as a means of reaching toward meaning. Overall, this study found that the audience consumed information it was presented and then sought to apply meaning to the event. They did this through the concept of news and the media’s role in informing the public. New literacy principles suggest that merely following the production conventions of traditional news is not enough, that some effort must be made to follow the professional and ethical practices as well. The results of RQ2 suggest the audience, indeed, used the conspiracy videos in largely conventional ways. Table 1 provides an overview of the categories and examples.

Table 1. Examples of elements of news literacy found in comments on the sampled Vegas shooting videos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of news</td>
<td>“All this shit is fake and designed to make guns illegal so only cops and military have guns”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking out news</td>
<td>“Las Vegas Shooting was a Deep State operation you numb-minded-fools. Even Robert Downey Jr. said the same thing; this was a False Flag operation perpetrated by the Deep State. The shooter had a long relationship with Lockheed Martin, one of America's largest and most nefarious weapons contractors in the world (look up &quot;Skunkworks&quot;).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess news</td>
<td>“The official story doesn't add up, one only has to take a look at the Las Vegas Sheriff at one of his news briefings that man is close to a mental breakdown, while the FBI is literally standing beside him watching every word he tells, he knows his life is in mortal danger and can't handle the lies.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create news</td>
<td>“RT peddling the official one gunman story ..hmm ..this woman s story has been suppressed and she died &quot; of natural causes&quot; last week”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comments associated with the YouTube conspiracy videos displayed all four elements of news literacy principles. The category “role of the news” was seen in posts that suggested the news, itself, was part of an effort to manipulate public opinion and eventually public policy. This category was identified with common themes of controlling the media, hiding the truth, and misleading the public. Many of the comments suggested the media was directed by some force to conduct an ongoing disinformation campaign. One commenter wrote:

Something that seems different about this and is really disturbing to me is that they aren't even trying to hide what they're doing. No more information is coming out and I think the MSM has been told to move on to the next distraction/story and keep their collective mouths shut or else. Normally this is the kind of story they'd use ad nauseam to shove gun control legislation down our throats... but there's nothing being said about it at all.

Another comment associated with a different video, wrote; “I would NOT put it past government functionaries to have ACTUALLY killed people in order to promote their own nefarious agendas (and I base that on Northwoods, among MANY other things).” Wrote another: “Not all "conspiracy theories" are wrong, the evidence of a Jewish media and government control conspiracy is damning if you take an objective look, forget emotions, those come later.”

Seeking out news was seen in a variety of comments that sought to knit together reports from different sources. Common themes associated with this category included referencing other reports, directing the audience to sources different from the video with which the comment was associated, and requests for more information. For instance, one commenter directed the audience to a Russia Today story: “RT peddling the official one gunman story ..hmm ..this woman s story has been suppressed and she died " of natural causes" last week !..https://www.infowars.com/las-vegas-survivor-abruptly-dies-days-after-posting-eyewitness-account-of-second-shooter/”. Another in the same thread directed the audience to look into the local sheriff’s news conferences, while still another tried to steer readers to a Las Vegas Sun story that supposedly raised questions about the city’s terrorism insurance.

In regards to assessing the news common themes most prevalent were judgments directed at the quality and relevance of the video to which they were attached, whether the video producer conducted a correct analysis, and whether information was missing. Noted one commenter associated with a video purporting to show the Las Vegas shooter alive after the attack: “Not the same man, just a look a like. Check out all the facial details very closely !!!” Another suggested: “REMEMBER the Sandy Hook "dead" kids at the Super Bowl????????!!They are so notorious of flaunting their false flag participants in broad daylight in front our face for a good evil laugh!!!Look at his nose especially his nostrils!!! His pursed lips are the same too!”

One commenter dissected the report:

Pretty good video but I do have some problems here. First, we have multiple types of ammo being used. And I also have not seen the exact make and cartridge models used.
Each one has different acoustics and different drop rates. Second, an analysis of acoustics from the cab driver video are virtually impossible because the microphone is 1) moving and 2) while moving it is in and out of disruptive fields. (ie shape of building vs height) 3) cell phone microphones are terrible at retaining non-dominant sounds.

Creating the news themes were typified by commenters adding information to what other commenters had posted. In a rather direct attempt at traditional reporting, one commenter wrote: “The Coroners office in Vegas is closed to the public until January 2018. Today I had an interesting phone call with Clark County Coroner John Fudenberg who refused to answer any questions and rudely hung up on me. Research the Coroner – he’s guilty for sure.”

Noted another:

“CAUTION: The acoustic analysis assumes that the audio mic is in very close proximity to the spots where the bullets are impacting. In reality - we don't know where they are. For example: if the pavement impact spots were just 35-40 yards from the mic and in the opposite direction of the shooter, the sound waves of the shots would take at least an extra tenth of a second to travel back to the mic and give a misleading shorter lag time and therefore an erroneous conclusion that the shooter is closer than actual.”

The third question asked what emergent themes were present that suggested the audience was seeking to place the role the new information, or news, played in understanding the event and its impact on society. Overall, this study found a concrete nexus between reaching toward understanding, which argues that a specific set of ideas and skills come into play when information is presented as “news.” Three main categories of comments were identified, as well as multiple subcategories. The main categories are: Judging the Content, Applying Meaning to the Content, and Building on the Content (Table 2).

The Judging the content category included posts that disagreed, praised, condemned or expressed skepticism toward a video. Clearly, for some users the sampled Vegas shooting videos were a source of frustration and anger. For example, while commenting on a video posted by a popular magazine, a commenter wrote, “Wow. This video is so out of touch on every level, I'm at a loss for words.” Another one added, “This video would be comical if it wasn't so pathetic. Attaching all your feminist bigotry & propaganda to this tragedy makes you almost as deranged as this killer was.”

Some YouTube users attacked the sources for lack of sympathy to the victims:

You guys are idiots, using a tragedy like this just to be relevant and to further your agenda. please stick to your edgy millennial garbage and stay out of politics, you are unsympathetic and offensive to those who suffered through this tragedy. stop focusing on the shooter and if you're going to make a video make it about the event or the victims.

For other users, the videos were a source of satisfaction. For example, one commenter reacted to a blogger’s video by saying, “true journalism.” Another one added, “Dude, I can here the exhaustion in ur voice. Please keep it up. We need these vids, some more then others. We appreciate you bro.”
Interestingly, for some users, the gratification of a need for information came with the appreciation of bloggers’ efforts:

Hey man, I just started watching your channel a couple weeks ago and I gotta say, I am loving the content as well as the message. I'm subscribing today though because of this video. Love how you broke everything down, included sources, stayed on point and made it easy for people to understand. I actually live in Las Vegas and people out here seriously doubt the "official story" although I also know people that we're injured in this tragedy. Basically what I'm getting at is this, keep up the awesome work and be careful. The government is ruthless as we all know.

Another YouTube user added, “Brother I love you're work but I worry about you digging to deep, guess you just sleep with one eye open... Someone's got to do it but.”

The Applying meaning to the content category included such sub-categories as Mental illness, Race/religion, and Staged Event as part of broader pattern of conspiracy.

Careful analysis of sampled videos revealed that they might have triggered discussion of topics that were not (directly) relevant to the theme addressed in a particular video. A number of comments discussed the Vegas shooting from a mental illness angle, while others mentioned race or religion. A few comments combined both perspectives:

The murderer is a Christian. Why did not you tell the world that he is a terrorist or that you are not saying a terrorist except to Muslims? According to US media: If the murderer is not Muslim, he is undoubtedly "mentally unstable" and if he is a Muslim, he is certainly a terrorist! The American people are foolish.

As for the Staged Event subcategory, some commenters relied on their personal experience to apply meaning to content. One who described himself as a former Marine wrote:

Those rounds were coming in HOT, rounds make a very distinct noise when they are wizzing by your head, ya can basically hear the wind whistling off of them and a lot of times cracking when ricocheting … Veterans are trained in this stuff. The level of absolute horror of that sound is something you can NEVER forget. I wanted to believe it was all fake, I really did but I listened several times and positively, no way around it, those rounds were coming in, zinging and snapping.

Another individual used a comment feed to raise suspicions about the police handling of the shooting:

I'd noticed the feds standing behind the Las Vegas police chief as he does his press conferences. The way they glare at him monitoring every word he says and making sure he pushes the narrative is something I've never seen before and I'm 48 years old. I don't know what happened in Vegas but the cover up is definitely in full effect.

A conspiracy was also manifested in comments like this one: “The FBI is asking anyone with info to come forward, so they can erase their phones!”

The building on the content category included comments that mentioned other videos or stories that fit the narrative. For example, one commenter shared a “story”:
I don't know what to do with this info but I live in a small town in upstate NY and 3 days before the Vegas incident Feds in plain cloths came in to our towns gunstore and they wanted to buy a palette load of tanerite.

Another user referred to a drone video, saying:

So if, like the drone video clearly shows if anyone was hit with a high powered rifle there would be body parts all over the place like in actual war combat, yet not one photo of a mangled body anywhere to be seen, just people who have BB gun style flesh wounds?

Table 2. Content categories and examples of comments on the sampled Vegas shooting videos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judging the content:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreement</td>
<td>FAKE FAKE and more FAKE or at the very least absolutely useless as proof of anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>That is one fucking awesome post man. I love your style bro. Peace from Calgary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condemnation:</td>
<td>Too early for a conspiracy. Please take this down. You didn't even send out your thoughts to the people. Disgusting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skepticism</td>
<td>Close but no cigar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying meaning to content:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental illness</td>
<td>The only time people give a shit about mental illness is when it involves a white person smh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/religion</td>
<td>People are saying he is mentally ill but if he was a Muslim he would have been called a Terrorist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staged Event</td>
<td>Snowden warned all, of us You are being watched and played.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building on content:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointing to other videos or stories that fit the narrative</td>
<td>I forgot what floor they said but in some videos it shows gun fire from the 3-6th floor you can see the gun shots coming from those floors we will never get the truth straight up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The fourth question asked what pedagogical practices are suggested by the videos and resulting dialogue? This study found several, potentially useful concrete exercises and discussions that could help students understand news literacy principles. They are:

- Platform vs. outlet. Use the videos to discuss the fundamental differences between a platform, such as YouTube, and an outlet, such as Teen Vogue. The commentary associated with the videos suggest that the audience often makes little distinction between established news outlets and other providers.

- Producer vs. journalist. The videos largely borrow journalistic conventions, such as headlines, announcers, relatively professional production techniques, the crafting of a story arc, etc. Journalists are guided by their education, experience, and values, all of which dictate a certain allegiance to objectivity. Producers are loyal to their viewpoints and to the purpose of their production.

- Institutional news vs. informal reports. Production techniques can give a patina of legitimacy to what appears to be traditional news reports. The examples in this study allow for a discussion of how language, image, and journalistic conventions can work together to mislead and focus on a specific agenda rather than inform discussion about issues important to society in general.

**Discussion**

The results of this study suggest the importance of news literacy as a separate subset of media literacy. The two concepts are not interchangeable. Media literacy calls for the critical examination through a cultural lens of a variety of media, most often focusing on important cultural issues of racism, misogyny, and other matters essential to equality. As the results of this exploratory study show, a more fundamental approach is needed for examining news and journalism. If the news media are to populate the public sphere with information important to society that governs itself, then that information must be trustworthy to some degree. However, as social media ascends and the audience is more and more invited into the process of news through sharing, commenting, and sometimes creation, some of the traditional roles of the media (Simpson, 2017), must be assumed by the audience.

The growing field of news literacy rests on this concept, that the audience must take a greater responsibility for what is debated. But as seen in this study, news literacy principles must be applied beyond digital production conventions of scripts, video, pictures, and headlines. The videos produced and posted to YouTube were done so with the basic elements of traditional journalism, leaving the audience to make its own meaning of what they are presented.

Often the meaning reached seemed to suggest the Las Vegas shootings were part of a continuing effort by government and other, often unnamed, forces to mislead the public. The September 11 terrorist attacks and the Sandy Hook school shootings were cited as attempts by those forces to “(strip) away our freedoms and ensure there grip on power,” wrote one viewer. Others freely charged “false flag” and “government hoax,” with some pointing to a host of sinister operatives, including globalists, the CIA and Mossad Black Ops: “Like I’ve said, this shooting has all the
hallmarks of a government operation.” The mainstream media – a nebulous term that posters never defined – drew much condemnation: “They are pushing it off the front page as fast as possible.”

Skepticism, if not outright rejection of the official version of the event, was a common response. Some said the videos at least raised valid questions and deserved further investigation, and, overall, the audience of the conspiracy videos clearly pushed narratives outside of, and often at odds with, those of establishment sources. This is not to say that traditional sourcing, such as local law enforcers and government agencies such as the FBI, should not be challenged. Indeed, history is rife with examples of government abusing standards of truthful public communication (see Marro, 1985). But as the environment for news changes to include more and varied outlets as well as increasing input from the audience, applying the principles of news literacy take on added urgency.

Traditional media literacy takes a critical approach to all streams of media, music, film, theater, radio, television, and advertising (Beyerstein, 2014). The results of this exploratory study suggest news literacy that examines how news is produced, by whom, and for what purpose is deserving of its own energy and pedagogical treatment. The results show that when the audience is presented with something that appears to be news, in large measure they treat it as news. The ongoing polarization of both audience and media as well as social media’s ability to direct attention to patently false information and to create a seemingly valid news ecosystem without verifiable fact puts the importance of teaching news literacy into a stark light.

**Conclusion**

This exploratory study found evidence for the need to teach news literacy and the need for further exploration and theory development in two primary ways: First, the conspiracy theories suggested in the videos and the associated comments adopted conventions seen in traditional debate most commonly associated with the public sphere. These include those taking part in the discussion citing specifics, attaching judgment, and making arguments. Second, news literacy helps suggest new areas of pedagogy. For instance, YouTube changing its algorithm to downplay conspiracy videos indicates at least a surface understanding of how false, misleading or unsupported information becomes part of the public sphere and therefore part of the debate. Some of the more far-fetched videos in this study drew more than a half-million views and 14,000 likes, so their potential to influence the tone and direction of public dialogue was significant.

This study also suggests that greater access to media – indeed, the ability to create and distribute news on YouTube that might draw several-hundred thousand views – doesn’t necessarily lead to more informed discussion. As traditional news media outlets continue to struggle and the audience is left to navigate news on its own (Toepfl, 2014), readers and viewers appear more likely to run aground on the shoals of digital rumors, half-truths and misinformation. As Berkowitz and Liu argue in their 2016 Sandy Hook shooting study, an increased reliance on social media for news clearly challenges professional journalistic norms.

This exploratory study was limited in a variety of ways. The Vegas shooting was a highly salient event intensely covered by traditional media outlets. Further, the type of event – a mass shooting at public venue – has become a U.S. phenomenon. These two factors invite conspiracy dialogue that may not be present in other types of more routine news. In addition, the researchers did not compare the dialogue associated with the sample to comments left on traditional news outlets, such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Such a study likely would allow for a broader
examination of how commenting policies and other influences work to control or direct public comment.

Overall, this study sought evidence for the potential value of teaching news literacy, and the evidence was stark. Both the conventions associated with debate and with news were seen within the context of conspiracy theories involving a mass shooting. The results, while certainly exploratory, indicate a need for deeper exploration of news literacy principles that would seek to better inform audiences and outlets.

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References


Confirmation Bias, Selective Exposure & Motivated Reasoning: The Polarization Toolbox

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Abstract

“Fake news” is a term that worked its way into the American consciousness during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The 45th president, Donald J. Trump, defined news coverage not to his liking regardless of its truth or fiction and persisted in that approach. Fake news has become part of the toolbox of confirmation bias. As defined in psychology, this bias is a one-sided case-building process to mold selective facts to support a pre-existing belief (Nickerson, 1998). More than at any time in the history of the American republic, the dynamics in politics make citizens susceptible to confirmation bias. In view of the polarization of conservative and liberal factions and changes in the media landscape, combined with the proliferation of internet channels and websites the acceptance of unverified reports of dubious origin and partisan bolstering is alarming. When it comes to federal elections and conducting business in the U.S. Congress both the American people and their representatives are now more divided than ever by partisan channels of news content. Elections tend to be close and representatives tend to vote on legislation with their party colleagues. As the U.S. political system grew more polarized in the 1990s, cable television channels took advantage of the partisanship. Fox News and MSNBC evolved into conservative and liberal outlets tailored for the political news junkie. What has happened with political polarization and cable news is clearly in the public eye. Will the viewer put in the extra work to research all sides of the issue and weigh them carefully, or simply rely on a consonant report? By factoring in these variables, it is possible formulate a valid conclusion. But in viewing news people come to an issue in one of three contrasting ways: 1) they are lazy, or do not care, and accept the prevailing opinion, 2) they are on the fence and cannot make up their mind for various reasons, or 3) have a pre-conceived bias. All three states of mind can be manipulated by choice or unknowingly through confirmation bias.

Introduction

“Fake news” is a term that worked its way into the American consciousness during the 2016 Presidential election. The eventual winner, Republican Donald J. Trump, would label news stories not to his liking or ones he doubted as “fake news.” That aggressive and unprecedented tactic continued after he took office in January 2017. It perhaps reached a new intensity during the release in March 2019 of Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller’s report investigating the 2016 election. But the concept of fake news did not originate with President Trump. Since ancient times, propaganda including some forms of fake news have been used to frame someone or something in a false light. Only in the last century has the term fake news been commonly used. Merriam-Webster dictionary (2017) defines fake news as news (“material reported in a newspaper or news periodical or on a newscast”) that is fake (“false, counterfeit”). Fake news has become part of the toolbox of
confirmation bias. As defined in psychology, the bias is a one-sided case-building process to mold selective facts to support a pre-existing belief (Nickerson, 1998). The present dynamics in U.S. political communication make citizens more susceptible to confirmation bias than at any time in the history of the republic.

In the past twenty-five years, polarization of U.S. politics, changes in the media landscape and advancement in internet communication have combined to give new credence to the influence of fake news. When it comes to federal elections and conducting business in the U.S. Congress, Americans and their representatives appear to be split down the middle by party. Elections are more divisive, and representatives tend to vote on legislation with their party colleagues. Recent research indicates voters not belonging to one of the two major political parties usually identify with the same side in federal elections (Smidt, 2017). A voter may not register with a particular party but they tend to vote for the same party usually the Democrats or Republicans. As the U.S. political system became more polarized in the 1990s, cable television began launching new program channels to take advantage of the partisan climate. Fox News and MSNBC evolved into conservative and liberal outlets for the political news junkie. The cable channels played into what has been described as confirmation bias. The channels tend to confirm to viewers’ expectations with what they already believe. What has happened with political polarization and cable news has evolved in the public eye. What changed on the internet with the advent of more advanced search engine tools was not as obvious.

Eli Pariser coined the phrase “filter bubble” in his 2011 best-selling book of the same name. Social media platforms and search engines use algorithms to create personalized searches for everyone. These “personalizations” change every time we use internet tools. Our profiles tend to narrow and get defined with the sites, groups and individuals we feel the most comfortable with on the internet. The profiles also draw us to so-called click bait designed to tantalize our “surfing” interests. “Bot” software is used to run automated tasks on the internet helping to make this profiling possible. There are some limitations we can put on the information we are sharing. But as users we can do only so much, and we are told this is the price we pay for use of the free tools. The filter bubbles show us a world skewed to our own tastes, preferences, and political bias. Most Americans now get at least some of their news content from social media feeds. The concern is citizens will tend to be exposed to views confirming pre-existing attitudes and will not be challenged to consider opposing ideas in their decision-making process. Some of the views are fact filtered to support their existing point of view and thus could be fake news (distorted and misleading information).

Writing shortly after the 2016 election, Spohr recognized certain key elements in this process -- a combination of the confirmation bias that leads to selective exposure and the filter bubbles of social media as principal causes of fake news (Spohr, 2017). Spohr blames selective exposure more than filter bubbles for the explosion of fake news. But as Spohr himself points out, social media and the 2016 election in the U.S. plus the recent Brexit controversy in the U.K. have put the spotlight on fake news and political polarization. Adee (2016) and others ask what can be done to break free of this snare for misapprehending issues and events. Scholars, journalists and activists all have a stake in finding an answer to protect the healthy exchange of differing views on issues of the day.

When information about an issue is made available to an individual, it can be an objective process. The person can put in the work to research all sides of the issue and weigh them carefully. Then factoring in all the variables, they formulate an opinion. But people often decide an issue in one of
three ways: 1) they are lazy or do not care and just accept the prevailing opinion; 2) they sit on the fence because they cannot make up their mind for various reasons, or 3) they hold to a pre-conceived bias. All three states of mind could be manipulated unknowingly or intentionally by confirmation bias. Koehler (1991) suggested a “conditional reference frame” is created when the hypothesis is assumed to be true. He said it “affects the way the problem is perceived, how relevant evidence is interpreted, and the direction and duration of information search” (p. 502). This creation of a conditional reference frame makes it difficult to accept alternative hypotheses. By framing an issue with selective evidence or even fake news the less informed or unmotivated citizen is more likely to fall victim to the confirmation bias toolbox.

**Literature Review**

Two models developed in the 1980s help explain the cognition people experience during the persuasive process to confirm or change an attitude (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Petty and Cacioppo developed the Elaboration Likelihood model (ELM) and Chaiken created the Heuristic-Systemic Model (HSM). HSM posits two ways a person can process communication: systematically or heuristically. In the heuristic process experts deliver the messages but they are not fully processed. The receivers use less cognitive effort and rely more on non-content cues such as who delivers the message. The systematic approach is more time-consuming and analytic. The receiver considers the reliability of the message’s source and content. There are certain similarities between HSM and ELM. The primary difference is the dual path theory of ELM, which includes central and peripheral routes of persuasion. In ELM cognitive responses determine attitudes under high elaboration circumstances when message recipients have sufficient ability and motivation to process the message. Recipients study the message for clues about its validity. Messages with strong arguments persuade and those with weak arguments do not. The central route is like HSM’s systematic approach. A change in attitude could take place from a studied consideration of facts presented in support of an issue. A change in attitude tends to be long-term. If the information is weak it will likely receive negative responses (Johnson, Maio, & Smith, 2005).

The peripheral route is less logical and changes in attitude (or no change) will likely be determined by the packaging of the message and other non-content related factors. Also, motivation and the ability to evaluate the issue will be important. If lacking in motivation the fallback position will likely be the non-content variables.

Kunda’s (1990) work in psychology on motivated reasoning fits well with confirmation bias and political attitudes. Her experiments support the premise “motivation may affect reasoning through reliance on a biased set of cognitive processes—that is, strategies for accessing, constructing, and evaluating beliefs” (p. 480). The messenger is motivated to use those beliefs and certain strategies to reach a particular opinion. Her work found evidence such motivated people were more likely to arrive at their preferred conclusion. But the path to success was constrained by the ability to construct “reasonable justifications for these conclusions” (p. 480).

A decade later, Lodge and Taber (2000) followed up on Kunda’s research by focusing on two goals appearing prominently in the discussion of motivated reasoning: **accuracy** and **directional** goals. An accuracy goal is defined “as the need to maintain a correct belief about a given issue.” Like
ELM’s central route, people search for both confirming and disconfirming information, attend to issue-relevant information more carefully, invest cognitive effort in reasoning, and process the information more deeply, relying on more complex rules (Kunda 1990). Directional goals, in contrast, are defined “as needs to uphold and maintain a desirable conclusion and reject disconfirming information, which results in self-serving biases in the process of knowledge acquisition” (p. 506, Nir, 2011). Directional goals match up with ELM’s peripheral route. When motivated by directional goals, people access relevant information to support a favorable conclusion and weigh supportive evidence more heavily than disconfirming content (Kunda, 1990).

Based on these two goals, Lodge and Taber (2000) proposed a typology of motivated reasoning and political evaluation. The combination of accuracy and directional goals lead to various information-processing strategies and decision steps. As the chart below indicates, the two goals are measured by their intensity (direction: weak, strong x accuracy: weak, strong) producing four styles or “ideal types” of reasoning (Nir, 2011). Lodge and Taber label them as partisan reasoner (strong direction, weak accuracy goals), intuitive scientist (strong direction, strong accuracy), classical rationalist (weak direction, strong accuracy), and apathetic (weak direction, weak accuracy).

Source: Lodge and Taber (2000).
As a political scientist, Nir cautioned how effective motivated reasoning can be in changing minds. His recent research tested whether accuracy goals (i.e., reaching correct conclusions) and directional goals (i.e., reaching preferred conclusions) affect perceptions of majority preferences. His “results showed motivated reasoning affects overestimates of support, of both national-level opinion and modal opinion in discussion groups, even after controlling for partisan strength, demographics, new exposure, political knowledge, and interest” (p. 504).

Nir’s study shows that directional goals can be an obstacle for the messenger. As an advocate, the facts are secondary for the messenger’s mission of convincing others of their side.

This could be where there is an issue in confirmation bias. Why do directional goals tend to lead to under estimating support? Does staying within your “filter bubble,” or your preferred brand of political media play a role? Such an effect can turn the results of an election.

**Different Biases**

American scholars became concerned with media bias as evidenced in the historical analysis of D’Allesio and Allen (2000). They conducted a meta-analysis of journalism studies on campaign coverage of presidential elections since 1948, when Harry S Truman famously mocked the Chicago Tribune headline touting Thomas E. Dewey’s faux victory. Surprisingly, their analysis of news coverage of presidential elections from 59 quantitative studies concluded “on the whole, no significant biases were found,” but that applied to newspapers and newsmagazines. When the research turned to television news coverage of rival campaigns a somewhat different result appeared, “a small, measurable, but probably insubstantial coverage and statement bias” (p. 133). Americans today believe political bias in media coverage is neither small nor insubstantial (Gallup.com, 2018).

Confirmation bias measures how audiences turn to friendly channels of content to support consonant or “my-side” views about the world around them. These directional drives make citizens “vulnerable to misinformation spread by social media,” reported the *Scientific American* (2018). Interpreting the cognitive, societal and algorithmic means used to bolster personal bias through deceptive or unverifiable reports is at the core of the fake news phenomenon.

Relating to the partisan divide that took dramatic shape on cable television, Terwilleger, McCarthy, and Lamkin (2011) charted coverage of the leading cable news channels with visible editorial slants. Fox News reflected conservative business interests in covering news on the national debt, border security, and President Obama’s policies, while MSNBC appealed to more liberal inclinations in its coverage of the environment and stimulus spending. Martin and Yurukoglu (2017) measured the audience response to cable news and positively correlated a rise in partisan voting intentions with time spent viewing “slanted news” with content on Fox News and MSNBC. The two cable channels took advantage of the tendency toward confirmation bias with content satisfying opposing partisans.

News mediated political information motivates an inquiring viewer to choose one of a number of options. Gunther et al. (2012) discovered “hostile media perceptions” are produced by claims of fairness and balance but noted how “bias conditions suggest that content variables can sometimes disarm defensive processing” (p. 439). A rational viewer chooses to think objectively about issues
of news value if both the capacity and motivation for open-minded inquiry are present. Other viewers are inclined to passive compliance, where comprehension surrenders to the prevailing opinion of the content. A third type of response, the neutral condition, occurs when consumers take neither side in confronting a public controversy but instead opt to straddle the fence. While this response is less contrary to the process of rational thinking it is nonetheless unconducive to the accuracy motivation necessary for sound judgment.

This motivated reasoning typology advanced by Lodge and Taber with its emphasis on classical rationalism is relevant as the motive of accuracy serves to draw a better understanding while the directional motive prefers to support an intrinsic belief system. If viewers and readers shrug off challenging content, they also may grow antagonistic toward frustrating media channels, and accusative of bias while disregarding their own predilections.

Case in Point

As noted, we compare approaches to reasoning where some paths could lead to confirmation bias. We looked for a means to measure substantive and peripheral elements of content using Elaboration Likelihood Model’s peripheral route and the heuristics response of the Heuristic Systemic Model to look for elements in common. This study conceived of having college students share their opinions following online cable news commentaries over a partisan controversy. The central processing route or peripheral non-content variables became apparent after students clicked on to the divisive arguments presented by cable television hosts. They saw two commentaries from Fox News and MSNBC hosts with obvious contrasts.

The particular issue generating bi-polar responses was the executive order declared by President Barack Obama on behalf of children ushered into the U.S. by their parents. The president signed on June 15, 2012 his Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to alleviate their plight. What the president’s signature did was cancel certain deportation actions by the U.S. government. Immigrant high school and middle school age students arriving illegally before their sixteenth birthday could change their status by applying for a renewable two-year stay and receiving deferred action on U.S. deportation orders. Approximately 787,580 undocumented young people would then be allowed to obtain a driver’s license, enroll in college, and get a job without fear of federal intervention.

In opposition to this action, presidential candidate Trump railed against the influx of undocumented immigrants primarily from Latin America, using harsh terms to insist illegal immigration was the most pressing problem facing the nation’s security. This drama played out on television talk shows where luminaries like Tucker Carlson (Fox News) and Joy Reid (MSNBC) offered conservative and liberal arguments. Reid and her immigrant guest journalist José Antonio Vargas claimed it was beneficial to delay deporting those who came to the U.S. as minors, while Carlson pointed to the negative consequences of such a type of immigration. He emphasized how important it is for the U.S. government to protect its borders from immigrants arriving here illegally even though they might be already employed throughout the nation.

There were peripheral elements of partisan reasoning the Fox News host used by claiming Democrats were not as realistic as Republicans about enforcing border security, while Reid and
Vargas preferred the path forward offered by DACA. They argued President Trump’s decision to end DACA put the U.S. at a loss for teachers, nurses, police, and firefighters after their work permits expired, and the president’s reversal of the delayed deportation for the children of illegal immigrants failed to recognize how most of the DACA recipients would become taxpayers who support the economy as both consumers and producers.

President Obama’s DACA order, Reid on MSNBC pointed out, recognized it was not the young people’s choice to come to the U.S. but their parents, and they should be allowed to continue living here given this innocence. Countering that point was Carlson who charged allowing the children of illegal immigrants to stay in the U.S. posed a challenge to the rule of law, especially since it leads to chain migration when family members join DACA arrivals. President Trump’s order to end DACA did not close off debate since the appeals to media with opposing arguments persisted in the public sphere.

**Student Responses**

The goal of this inquiry was to check with viewers after the bi-polar commentary to see how their individual responses to the mediated opinions would give rise to confirmation bias, to peripheral or central processing, or the typology offered by motivated reasoning.

Students were asked to respond in writing to the video clips they viewed and state what they had learned from the content. At the time of the exposure, three months after President Trump ended the DACA program the students keyed on contentious claims in their responses. One student remarked after viewing the Fox News commentary, “Democrats are okay with building the wall, as long as it doesn’t work,” indicating his willingness to accept Carlson’s statement without critical thought. The same student also accepted the questionable assertion of Fox News, “Democrats don't see immigration as a way to improve the United States, but as a way to change the country to use it as their political advantage.” Such an affirmation of a broadside attack without challenge indicates confirmation bias at work in this response.

On the other hand, students resisted the Fox News commentator’s use of ad-hominem attacks to bolster his arguments. “I feel as if I would have learned more from an unbiased news source. Carlson tended to talk down on DACA and Democrats which I did not like.” Continuing on this theme another one added, “I just basically learned Tucker Carlson’s opinion on what he thought about Democrats’ opinion, nothing too much on DACA.” And another student showed their desire for accuracy and objectivity, “I prefer to learn about politics from sources that keep it neutral so I can form my own opinions.”

**Discussion**

The response of the students and the helpful explanations offered by the theories applied to this study shows the ways in which this type of social psychology helps us to understand the dynamics of selective exposure and motivated reasoning. Confirmation bias is always going to be part of the human landscape. So the question becomes how do the scholar, media professional and individual citizen expect to achieve a reasonable and rational approach to absorbing the suspect content of social media? In his 2017 study on fake news and social media
Spohr calls for changes in three spheres of the media landscape: “Firstly, there needs to be continued investigation into ideological polarization, selective exposure and algorithmic curation in depth and from every possible angle.

Secondly, technology firms like Facebook, Google and Twitter need to take more responsibility for fake news and misinformation. Recent political events have made it clear that these companies can no longer deny their hybrid role as technology firms and media companies with considerable editorial powers.

Thirdly, we as citizens need to be aware that news consumption should be an active process and that ideologically diverse, high-quality news content does not simply find us because we are constantly online and surrounded by information” (p. 157).

Spohr lays out viable goals for the media, the providers, and citizenry. But we suggest there should be moves toward a wider scale for public deliberation. Perhaps as a response to the polarization of American politics, the deliberative democracy movement has seen a boost in the early 21st century. In the U.S., states like Oregon and Colorado have taken the lead with their Citizen Initiative Review (CIR) processes (Gastil & Keith, 2005). This approach brings a cross section of citizens together to discuss public issues based on a ballot initiative. In a short period of time with the help of moderators a group of 20-30 people with various viewpoints create materials for state voters. The discussions usually lead to a recommendation for or against the ballot issue.

The CIR is a time and labor-intensive 5-day deliberative process in which a randomly selected subset of voters can deliberate and create a statement reflecting their conclusions for fellow citizens. Ideally, this statement, a single-page outcome report produced by the citizen panel, serves to both educate and reflect key information relevant to voting on the proposition (Gastil et al., 2014).

When voters make decisions they use not only the goals of their formal task (such as a CIR) but also heuristic and biased decision shortcuts that help them assess information quickly. Gastil (2014) pointed out that less-informed voters often base their decisions on partisan cues. With deliberative cues available from such a process as the one described above the less-informed voter could be influenced through the mass media to pick up on the same messages as those more informed. The final statement often leads to media coverage and public discussion of the pros and cons of the measure in question. This information could be helpful to voters beyond a typical selective exposure experience.

The CIR citizens statement is part of the Oregon Voters’ Pamphlet made available to the public through the mail, on-line, and in selected government buildings. It is common for the Oregon Voters’ Pamphlet to be at least an hundred pages in length during U.S. presidential years. The guide includes voting information, a list of candidates, political party statements, the text of the measures, statements from the campaigns for and against ballot measures, and statements about the measures analyzed that year. In addition, state and local news media outlets often cover the CIR and the final outcome of the panel’s deliberation (or deliberations, in years when more than one ballot measure is covered by a CIR panel). This media coverage helps spread the CIR citizens’ statement to an even wider audience; one study of the statement’s impact found that substantial
minorities of the Oregon electorate were aided by the citizens’ statement in making a decision on one of the two ballot measures covered that year, and even more voters reported getting useful arguments or information from the CIR statement (Gastil et al., 2014).

The work of Habermas (1989) on the logic of rational discourse contends that political decisions should be made after thoughtful deliberation among citizens. In recent years, scholars have designed practical parameters to give deliberation a specific framework; though these frameworks vary, they are generally based on fair and open discussion of public issues, with an eye toward making a decision that reflects that discussion (Burkhalter, Gastil, & Kelshaw, 2002; Carcasson & Sprain, 2016). One study argued that these parameters should include discussions with factual arguments that are balanced and from multiple sides; discussants should talk and listen with civility; arguments should be substantive and accepted only on merit and not on style or communicator identity; and all opinions held by a substantive part of the population must be heard to make the deliberations truly comprehensive (Fishkin & Luskin, 2005).

A type of deliberation process pioneered in Oregon and by others allows for the kind of political discussion Huckfeldt et al. (2004) and Habermas (1989) endorse, where participants deliberate over the course of four to five days about topics that will appear on the upcoming state ballot. Through thoughtful argumentation, citizens attempt to justify positions and win other voter-participants to their way of thinking.

**Conclusion**

Social psychologists understand that one of the biggest challenges to a healthy and productive deliberation is the human element all citizens bring to the process. Everyone begins the discussion with their own bias. People are inhibited by “bounded rationality,” or the idea decision making capacities are limited by the amount of information people can keep up with and other cognitive limitations (March & Simon, 1958).

Gastil (2014) pointed out that less-informed voters often assess information quickly and base their decisions on heuristic and biased shortcuts. With deliberative cues available from an open-ended process like a Citizen Initiative Review the less-informed voter could be influenced through the mass media to pick up on the same messages as those more informed. The release of a final public statement often leads to media coverage and public discussion of the pros and cons of the measure in question. This information could be helpful to voters beyond a typical selective exposure experience. It is important for scholars, journalists and political activists to assume roles in moving public discourse past the gridlock and polarization that is the consequence of confirmation bias that leads to selective exposure and motivated reasoning.

**About the Authors:**

**Ken Fischer** currently teaches electronic journalism media production at the University of Oklahoma. Along with his colleagues he supervises student staff and crew working on OU Nightly, a daily student-produced newscast and Sooner Sports Pad, a weekly sports magazine program done live in front of a studio audience. Both programs have won national awards. Fischer worked in the broadcasting industry for more than two decades. His career has included work in public
broadcasting, commercial production and cable television. He began teaching full-time on the Radio-Television faculty at Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 2000-2005 then the University of Central Florida in 2005-2006. He joined the faculty at the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication of the University of Oklahoma in August 2006. He is an active member of the Broadcast Education Association, Oklahoma Broadcast Education Association and Association for Education of Journalism and Mass Communication. He has served as the President of OBEA and the News and Sports Division Heads of BEA. Currently he is the Vice Head-Elect of the AEJMC Electronic News Division. In 2017 Fischer was presented the annual AEJMC Electronic News Division Edward L. Bliss Award for Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Education. He is ABD at the University of Oklahoma's Communication Department in Political Communication. Prior to his media and education careers he worked as a grocery clerk from 1971-1989. He is a retiree of United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 324, Buena Park, California, USA.

Dr. William R. (Bill) Davie is the Louisiana Board of Regents Professor of Communication, and Mass Communication/Broadcasting Coordinator for the Communication Program of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Dr. Davie served as a Fulbright Scholar in Journalism at Xi’an International Studies University in Xi’an, China (2015-16). His research work is in electronic journalism principles and First Amendment law. While in China, he was keynote speaker for World Press Day at the U.S. Embassy, and spoke on the 2016 presidential race. He also has conducted research on learner-centered models of media instruction, and reality television’s influence in cross-cultural terms. Professor Davie has produced coauthored books on communication law and ethics in Louisiana and the United States in addition to a textbook on media principles. He serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, and the journal for Electronic News and has published articles in journals along with his conference papers. In 2013, he won the Edward L. Bliss Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Educator for his lasting contribution in the field. Before his academic career, Professor Davie worked as photographer, reporter, producer and news director for 12 years in radio and television stations in Virginia, Texas, and Missouri.

References


Under ‘Con-troll’?: Online Trolling and the Philippine Media Coverage of President Rodrigo Duterte

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Abstract:

The internet provides an opportunity to strengthen free expression but with the emergence of trolling, it has become a tool to muzzle views that disagree with the messages peddled by partisan online armies. Trolls are also being used to malign and ridicule journalists and to discourage them from performing their watchdog role including scrutinizing the acts of officials and political groups. Because of social networks, it is now easy for supporters of political groups to send threats and hate messages to journalists and to encourage others to do the same. Suddenly, the Philippine press, dubbed as the freest in Asia, has to deal with threats not just from the state and interest groups but also from members of the audience who absorbed the views propagated by trolls. The study examines how online trolling affects reporters’ coverage of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, who is said to maintain a strong army of supporters on social media. It seeks to zero in on this new and ubiquitous phenomenon that remains relatively unexplored in Philippine communication studies. The research also aims to determine how presidential beat reporters deal with such pressure and how online trolling—or concern over it—influences their framing of a news event, selection of story angles, choice of words, phrasing of questions during press conferences, fact-checking of claims made by the president and his subordinates, and overall appreciation of news events that have to do with the president and his administration. While Duterte is the main news subject of presidential beat reporters, the research is not limited to the impact of his online supporters on media coverage. It also aims to determine how social media users critical of the president influence the way reporters gather, conceptualize and write stories about the government. The research also seeks to ascertain the views of reporters on the bigger impact of trolling on press freedom, journalism practice and public awareness of issues involving the government. The cognitive dissonance theory, which states that people experience psychological discomfort when they do something inconsistent with their beliefs, serves as the main basis of the study’s theoretical framework. Two offshoots of the cognitive dissonance theory are also used to understand the dynamics between the coverage of presidential beat reporters and online trolls. Self-affirmation theory states that individuals are motivated to maintain a positive self-image hence they will avoid doing anything that will tarnish such self-image. Self-concept theory, meanwhile, argues that dissonance occurs when a person acts in a way that goes against his or her sense of self. Since trolls use insults and threats to dissuade reporters from pursuing critical angles or spreading information that go against the interests of the person or groups they are supporting, it can cause a dissonance among presidential beat reporters, who are forced to choose between acting consistently with their self-image of themselves as journalists and acting inconsistently with that self-image to avoid online harassment. They may choose not to read online comments or hold back on pursuing critical leads to avoid harvesting harsh comments or labels that may affect their self-image. Data are gathered by distributing survey questionnaires and conducting field interviews with members of the Malacañang Press Corps (MPC), an
independent group of journalists accredited to cover the president. The study argues that getting 
bashed or trolled is a concern among MPC members and motivates them to be more careful in 
their reporting. Despite the risk of being lynched online by troll armies, presidential beat reporters 
make it a point to pursue the right angles, verify claims made by sources and to ask probing 
questions. While MPC members regard trolling as a threat to free expression, they do not consider 
it as a factor that will dissuade the media from publishing critical reports and monitoring and 
scrutinizing the activities of people in power.

Introduction:

Because of media’s role as an independent monitor of power (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014) an 
adversarial relationship with the government is expected. After all, “the loyalty of journalists is not 
to states but to its people. They empower people with information and their work subverts those 
whose authority relies on a lack of public information (Randall, 1996).” The media’s watchdog 
function is based on the assumption that those in power have the tendency to overstep their bounds. 
For the media to perform the role, there should be an enabling legal environment that would 
guarantee their freedom of expression. Free expression, including criticism of government policies 
and actions, is among the “key markers” of a democracy (Craft, 2010).

Despite its excesses and shortcomings, the Philippine press, often described as the freest in Asia, 
remains an independent monitor of power. Often, government had to step back, rethink and even 
modify policies put in question as a result of media’s painstaking exposés. For instance, the 
decades-old practice of allotting discretionary funds for congressional projects, popularly known 
as “pork barrel,” was declared unconstitutional by the Philippine Supreme Court in 2013 as a result 
of intense public—and media—scrutiny. Popular revolts in 1986 and 2001 that ousted two 
 Philippine presidents also owed much to media’s investigation into government excesses. Media’s 
reporting also called attention to the Duterte administration’s war on drugs, putting in question the 
effectiveness and morality of the means employed by the police.

Due to the adversarial nature of the relationship between the government and the press, it is not 
uncommon to hear about officials criticizing the media for putting too much emphasis on negative 
stories and ignoring “positive” news and accomplishments of their agencies. It is also not unusual 
to learn about journalists accusing the government of restricting access to information, suppressing 
freedom of expression and intimidating journalists who report critically. Media’s loyalty to the 
people also presupposes the obligation to provide them with the means to express their views, raise 
their concerns, and relay them to the government. These feedback mechanisms also allow the 
public to evaluate and criticize media’s coverage of key issues.

Internet revolutionized media’s relationship with the audience. American columnist Dan Gillmor 
summarized these changes when he wrote that modern communications “have become history’s 
greatest soapbox, gossip factory, and in a very real sense, spreader of genuine news (Gillmor, 
2004).” Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have democratized online discourse 
by providing the audiences with a faster way to react to news reports, call out sensationalist, 
distorted, incomplete or biased stories, question the credibility of information sources, and even 
shame reporters they believe are involved in unethical practices.
Duterte and the Media

In the Philippines, social media’s reach has become more pronounced with the assumption of President Rodrigo R. Duterte, a former mayor of the southern city of Davao whose hardline stance against illegal drugs and crime helped him beat his more moneyed rivals in the 2016 elections. Known for his irreverent and profanity-laced rhetoric, Duterte, whose victory has been tied to his popularity in social networks (Alberto-Masakayan and dela Cruz, 2016), has been the subject of a slew of negative reports especially by foreign media. His shocking and impromptu remarks about his critics as well as his frank and repetitive pronouncements on his “bloody” war on drugs have been picked up by the press and have drawn flak from civil society groups and by some foreign governments, including the Philippines’ long-time ally the United States.

Journalists who were perceived to be biased or overly critical of Duterte were subjected to online harassment by his supporters, many of whom were anonymous or were using aliases or fake names. Using their social network accounts, the faceless online haters or “trolls” called reporters paid hacks and wished harm to befall on journalists who asked the president pointed questions or wrote reports with negative angles. There were also instances wherein trolls placed journalists at risk such as the posting on social media of the photos of two news wire correspondents who wrote about Duterte’s comparison of his drug war with the Holocaust, an act condemned by a media organization (Roxas, 2016). Duterte has asked his supporters not to harass journalists (Macas, 2016) but his appeal did not stop the online attacks against journalists, especially those covering him in Malacañang.

A New Reality

Ironically, the internet, the feedback mechanism that was supposed to strengthen freedom of expression, is being used to muzzle dissenting views, malign and ridicule people with critical views and discourage journalists from scrutinizing sources and performing their watchdog role. Suddenly, the media has to contend with threats not just from the state but also from the audience, the very sector it was supposed to serve and empower.

How do journalists cope with this new reality? How do they perform their role in a democracy in the face of threats and harassment? How does the online assault by overzealous political supporters affect their reporting? This paper discusses how reporters covering Duterte handle trolling and enumerates their views on how online attacks affect their work as journalists. It touches on a new yet ubiquitous phenomenon that remains relatively unexplored at least in Philippine communication studies.

A good number of studies examined journalists’ views on online comments but the impact of trolling on the way reporters perform their jobs remains a relatively unexplored topic. Loke (2011) conducted in-depth interviews of 30 journalists in the United States and found out that over half of them are of the belief that anonymity allows people “the audacity to post comments they would not necessarily write if they had to reveal their identity.” Another study suggested that some social media users troll because they “feel sadistic glee at the distress of others (Buckels, et. al, 2014).”
The greater democratic space and opportunities offered by social media to audiences can also be detrimental to some journalists. A report commissioned by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization listed Internet trolling as one of the violence being committed against women journalists (Sreberny, 2014). Mantilla (2013) labeled the misogynist variant of trolling as “gendertrolling,” which has distinct features including the use of pejorative words like "whore" and "cunt."

Some researchers tried to link trolling to organized state programs designed to influence public opinion, silence dissent and drum up support for those in power. A report commissioned by the Center for International Media Assistance listed “public opinion guidance” as one of the ways the Chinese government is controlling the Internet, including social media (Pan, 2017). According to the report, the strategy of public opinion guidance “has evolved beyond censorship and suppression, and currently targets the receivers, as well as the senders of information.” A researcher suggested that trolling is the third way of government’s control over online public discourse after censorship and surveillance (Yoon, 2016).

**Trolling in the Philippine Setting**

Escartin (2015) discussed online trolling and anonymity in the Philippine setting and reinforced notions that the suspension of identity in computer-mediated communication “supports a venue for people to ‘unleash’ certain impulses not appropriate in face-to-face interaction.” Bradshaw and Howard (2017) mentioned the Philippines as one of the countries where social media was used to manipulate public opinion during an election campaign. According to the Oxford University-commissioned sturdy, the Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan, the political party Duterte, spent $200,000 to disseminate propaganda. The online staff of Duterte supposedly consisted of about 400 to 500 people and employed automated fake social media accounts. Duterte’s political party, through its spokesman, has denied employing trolls (Matsuzawa, 2017).

But Duterte is not the only Philippine president accused of using trolls to get back at critics. A study by Gonzales (2017) mentioned reports claiming that the administration of former president Benigno Aquino III had paid trolls to attack the mother of Mary Jane Veloso, the Filipina worker who was sentenced to death in Indonesia over drug-trafficking charges. Mary Jane’s mother Celia said the Aquino regime should not be credited for the last-minute reprieve given to her daughter.

There is a dearth of academic literature on the online threats confronting Filipino media practitioners. This paper, therefore aims to provide insights about the extent to which trolling influences the content delivered by journalists in the Philippines, dubbed as the social media capital of the world (Mateo, 2018).

**Cognitive Dissonance Theory**

This paper is anchored on the cognitive dissonance theory, which states that one feels discomfort when one’s behavior is inconsistent with his beliefs or ideals. In this case, journalists covering the Philippine president are assumed to be experiencing pressures to adopt behaviors that go against their ideals about their profession for fear of being criticized, maligned or threatened by the supporters of Duterte or his critics.
Cognitive dissonance theory, which was proposed by psychologist Leon Festinger, states that two beliefs are related either in a state of consonance or dissonance. A state of consonance is characterized by consistency: “I like my sorority and my good friend likes my sorority” while dissonance is marked by inconsistency: “I like my sorority but my good friend does not like it (Infante, et. al, 1997).” One is motivated to reduce dissonance and achieve consonance because a dissonance is “psychologically uncomfortable.” A person will also try to avoid situations and information that would likely increase the dissonance (Severin and Tankard, 2001). One of the situations that causes dissonance is forced compliance or being induced to do or say something contrary to one’s belief or values (Littlejohn, 2002).

The theory was expanded by experts who believe dissonance was not always caused by inconsistencies between two beliefs but because of the need to keep a positive image of one’s self. One of those who refined the theory was Elliot Aronson, who argued that dissonance also happens when a person acts in a way that violates his or her self-concept, that is, when a person performs a behavior inconsistent with his or her sense of self.

Another researcher who studied Festinger’s theory was Claude Steele, the proponent of the self-affirmation theory. Steele’s theory states that persons possess a motive to maintain an overall self-image of moral and adaptive adequacy. Accordingly, dissonance-induced attitude change occurs because dissonance threatens this positive self-image, which means that individuals are motivated to affirm the integrity of the self (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009).

Journalists including those covering Duterte apply a certain criteria or news values when deciding what stories they will write or what angle they will pursue. But with the emergence of social media, journalists are vulnerable to online harassment, including those that question their credibility and threaten their safety. Using vile language and threats, partisan trolls try to influence journalists’ reporting and dissuade them from pursuing stories that will hurt the reputation of the person or groups they are supporting.

If a journalist is affected by trolls, he may be hesitant to pursue critical angles or may tone down his reporting to avoid harvesting criticisms that can cast doubts on his positive self-image. Failure to perform such roles, however, may go against his image of what journalists should be, typically viewed as watchdogs of those in power and providers of timely, relevant and empowering information.

Methods

Data were gathered through quantitative online survey and qualitative field interviews. The researcher conducted an online survey of 50 out of 53 members of the Malacañang Press Corps (MPC), a group of journalists from different media organizations accredited to cover the Philippine presidential beat (three members either declined to answer the questionnaire or did not respond to the invitation to participate in the research). Of the 50 respondents, 19 are print journalists, 14 are radio reporters, 10 are online journalists and 7 are television reporters.

The survey, which was administered using Google Forms, contained 33 statements divided into three sections. The first section sought to determine whether trolling affects the respondents’
performance of daily tasks of beat reporters namely angling, choosing words in news reports, framing of questions during press conferences aired live on television and on Facebook, fact-checking of claims made by Duterte and his officials, and posting of updates on social media. The second section zeroed in on the checking of audience feedback while the third one contained questions that solicited the respondents’ views on the impact of trolling on the performance of their duties, their expectations of fellow journalists, the image of mainstream media and the media’s coverage of Duterte.

The questionnaire employed a seven-point Likert scale based on the response anchors enumerated by Vargas (2006). Statements on the tasks performed by journalists and checking audience feedback were anchored on frequency (i.e. every time; usually or in about 90% of the time; frequently or in about 70% of the time; sometimes or about 50% of the time; occasionally or about 30% of the time; rarely or in less than 10% of the time; and never) while those on the perceived impact of trolling sought to determine level of agreement (i.e. strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, undecided, somewhat disagree, disagree and strongly disagree).

Before the data-gathering, a pilot test of 30 journalists who are not covering the president was conducted to test the questionnaire’s reliability. Results of the Cronbach’s Alpha test showed that the first section of the questionnaire had a reliability quotient of .652 while the second and third sections got .750 and .833, respectively, all of which are acceptable.

Twelve MPC members were then interviewed to complement the data obtained from the survey. Respondents were asked to share their experiences on trolling, to explain their answers on the survey, discuss how they cope with online attacks, enumerate the effects, if there are any, of trolling on their reporting and articulate their views on the impact of trolling on the mainstream media’s image and credibility.

**Survey Results**

Results of the survey indicated that majority of respondents did not regard trolling as a factor that affects the way they choose angles. A total of 34 out of 50 respondents or 68% said trolling does not influence their news judgment. Majority of respondents also claimed to pursue angles, albeit in varying frequencies, that may be considered critical of the president or his policies despite the risk of being trolled. More than half or 33 of the respondents, meanwhile, said they never revised the angles of their stories for fear of being harassed online. All but eight respondents answered “every time” when asked whether they go by news values as bases of their reports despite the presence of trolls who prefer only favorable stories.

With regard to choice of words, a plurality or 18 of the respondents chose “never” when asked if they are careful with their choice of words to avoid being trolled while 12 answered “rarely.” Six respondents had the opposite view, saying they are careful with their word choices every time they write their stories because of the presence of trolls.

Data also suggested that most of the respondents preferred to fact-check the claims of sources in their stories. Nearly half or 22 out of 50 respondents claimed they point out erroneous or inconsistent claims of their sources in their stories every time but only 12 do the same in social media and only 9 do so in press conferences aired live on television and Facebook. Eleven
respondents, meanwhile, “usually” pointed out erroneous and inconsistent claims in their news stories while 10 others do so in social media. Interestingly, 12 respondents or 24% said they rarely challenge officials who make erroneous or inconsistent statements during press briefings. Fifteen respondents or 30% claimed they ask tough questions every time there is a press briefing even it could invite harassment by trolls while 9 others said they usually do the same. More than half or 28 respondents, meanwhile, said they never avoided asking tough questions during press briefings aired live on social media for fear of being trolled while 14 others rarely did so. Only two respondents admitted that they usually avoid asking tough questions because of trolls.

Majority of MPC members ignored the risk of being trolled when posting social media updates, now a must for reporters who aim to shore up their online presence to meet the demands of the changing media landscape. More than half or 28 of the respondents said they never avoided posting stories or statements that were critical of the government for fear of being trolled while ten others rarely did so. A total of 35 respondents or 70%, meanwhile, claimed they never avoided posting pro-government statements to avoid attacks by anti-Duterte trolls while nine others rarely did the same. Only one admitted to avoiding the sharing of statements that were favorable to government in social media (See Table 1).

**Table 1**

*On the perceived impact of trolling on the respondents’ performance of tasks of beat reporters*

(Figures indicate the number of respondents who selected the frequency)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Every</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometime</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Trolling or online attacks against the media influences my news judgment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I pursue angles that may be considered critical of the president or his policies even if I may be trolled for them.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am careful with my choice of words in my reports about the president or his policies to avoid being trolled.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If the president or any of his officials make erroneous or inconsistent claims, I would challenge them during press conferences</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I avoid posting stories or statements that are critical of the government for fear of being trolled.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I revised my angle in a news report at least once to avoid provoking online trolls.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regard to checking audience feedback, respondents were essentially divided on reading online comments but majority of them ignored negative reactions and avoided engaging with social media users who reacted to their stories.

Fifteen respondents read comments on social media, news sites and Facebook live broadcasts at least frequently or 70% of the time, with seven of them claiming to check online feedback every time (see ‘Methods’ section for the Likert scale definitions). Fourteen respondents said they rarely check online feedback, twice as much as the number of respondents who claimed they do so every time. A fifth of the respondents, 10 of them, said they sometimes read online comments while three said they never did so.

Majority or 34 respondents said they never answered negative comments, insults or threats on social media while a fifth or ten of the respondents rarely did so. Only three respondents said they reply to the negative comments every time. Despite the possibility of reading criticisms that go against the image of themselves as journalists, 19 respondents or 38% said they never avoided reading online comments on their reports. Ten respondents said they sometimes avoided reading the comments while only two admitted to shunning the reading of comments on their stories every time.

A total of 28 respondents or 56% said they never engaged with those who react to their stories. Seven respondents claimed they rarely engaged with those who comment on their reports, higher
than the combined number of respondents who engaged at least frequently (two each for ‘every time’ and ‘usually’ and one for ‘frequently’). On the statement ‘I do not reply to negative comments because doing so will only trigger more trolling,’ half of the respondents answered ‘every time’ while eight others said ‘usually.’ Nine respondents or 18% did not seem to be bothered by the possibility of triggering more trolls and answered ‘never’ (see Table 2 for complete results on checking audience feedback).

**Table 2**  
On the perceived impact of trolling on respondents’ checking of audience feedback  
(Figures indicate the number of respondents who selected the frequency)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Every</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometime</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. I read comments on social media, news sites and Facebook live broadcasts even if it is possible that I will find negative comments about myself.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. If I receive negative comments, insults or threats on social media, I would answer them.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I avoid reading online comments on my reports because there may be statements that go against my image of myself as a journalist.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I engage with those who react to my stories, including trolls, because it is my duty to listen to my audience.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I do not reply to negative comments because doing so will only trigger more trolling.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey results also indicated that respondents were ready to perform their roles as journalists despite the risk of being trolled. All respondents agreed albeit in varying degrees that they should do their work as journalists despite the risk of being trolled. They were also unanimous in agreeing that they’d rather be trolled than fail to perform their role as journalists. All but one respondent disagreed in varying degrees that it is okay to disregard their role as a journalist to be safe from trolling. Similar results were seen with regard to respondents’ expectation of other journalists.

Majority of the respondents agreed albeit in varying degrees that journalists should question those in power to ferret out the truth and pursue stories that promote public interest, even if they may be
trolled for doing so. A total of 45 respondents “strongly agreed” and “agreed” that a journalist should not be intimidated by his or her sources and their online supporters.

Data, however, suggested that some respondents would be willing to lower their expectations of fellow journalists if their colleagues make adjustments in the way they work to be spared from online attacks. A total of 17 respondents agreed albeit in varying degrees that a journalist could not be blamed if he / she tones down his / her reporting to avoid being trolled. The figure, however, was way lower than the 30 respondents who strongly disagreed, disagreed and somewhat disagreed with the statement. A total of 21 respondents agreed in varying degrees that a journalist who goes easy on news sources could not be faulted if he is does so to avoid attacks by trolls. A total of 25 or half of the respondents did not share the view. A total of 19 respondents, meanwhile, agreed, although in varying degrees, that a journalist may practice self-censorship to avoid being trolled. Half of the respondents somewhat disagreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement.

A huge majority of MPC members surveyed were optimistic that the mainstream media would retain its image as a reliable source of information and would withstand efforts by trolls to discredit it. But a total of 17 respondents thought labels like “biased” and “paid hacks” could diminish the credibility of the mainstream media. Twenty five respondents, meanwhile, agreed –although in varying levels – that trolling could raise doubts on the media’s image as a watchdog.

A sizable majority of the respondents, meanwhile, did not see trolling as a factor that could shape the media’s coverage of the Duterte administration. A total of 35 respondents or 70% disagreed albeit in varying levels that trolling influences the media coverage of the president and his policies. Only 12 respondents concurred, in varying levels, with the statement while three others were undecided on the matter (See Table 3 for complete results).

Table 3

On the perceived impact of trolling on respondents’ performance of their duties as journalists, their expectations of fellow journalists, image of mainstream media and media coverage of Duterte (Figures indicate the number of respondents who selected the level of agreement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Despite the risk of being trolled, I should do my work as a journalist.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I’d rather be trolled than fail to perform my role as a journalist</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I am willing to tone down on my reporting to avoid being trolled even if it goes against my image of a journalist.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
22. It is okay to disregard my role as a journalist so I will be safe from trolling 1 0 0 0 8 41
23. A journalist cannot be blamed if he / she tones down his / her reporting to avoid being trolled. 3 3 11 3 8 10 12
24. Journalists should question those in power to ferret out the truth even if this could trigger attacks from trolls 39 6 2 1 2 0 0
25. Journalists should pursue stories that promote public interest even if they can be trolled in the process 40 7 1 1 1 0 0
26. A journalist who goes easy on news sources cannot be faulted if he is does so to avoid attacks by trolls. 2 4 15 4 4 12 9
27. A journalist may practice self-censorship to avoid being trolled. 1 6 12 6 6 8 11
28. A journalist should not be intimidated by his / her sources and their online supporters 36 9 2 1 1 1 0
29. Trolls who call journalists names liked “biased” and “paid hacks (bayaran)” diminish the credibility of the mainstream media. 5 7 5 0 4 11 18
30. The image of the mainstream media as a reliable source of information will remain despite attacks by trolls. 30 10 5 2 1 1 1
31. Trolling can raise doubts on the mainstream media’s image as a watchdog who looks after the public’s interest. 5 14 7 3 3 4 14
32. The mainstream media can withstand online trolls’ efforts to discredit it. 31 12 5 1 1 0 0
33. Trolling influences the media’s coverage of the president and his policies. 1 4 7 3 6 10 19

**Interview Results**

Data obtained from interviews with 12 MPC members were grouped into four themes namely experience with trolls, attitudes toward trolling, perceived effects of trolls, and how the media should respond to trolling.
Experience with trolls

The 12 MPC members were asked to share their experiences with trolls as well as those of their colleagues. The responses were summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Experiences with trolls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences of respondents</th>
<th>Experiences of respondents’ colleagues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Name-calling (paid hacks, yellow, idiot, Duterterd)</td>
<td>- Name-calling (stupid, paid hack etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Accusations (pursuing an agenda, biased, spreading fake news, attention seeker)</td>
<td>- Ridicule (made fun of colleague’s name, made memes out of colleague’s photo, commented on their appearance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ridicule (Made memes out of respondent’s photo)</td>
<td>- Threats (posted home address, death threats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Threats (made death threats, wished them ill)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most common form of trolling was name-calling, an experience shared by all interviewees. They were called paid hacks or dilawan (pro-yellow), a pejorative term given to supporters of the opposition whose campaign color is yellow. Some respondents were also called stupid (‘bobo’), biased or smart aleck (‘nagmamarunong’).

Trolls also resorted to making accusations to attack MPC members. A reporter for a broadsheet said she was accused of pursuing an agenda for asking business-related questions during a press briefing. A radio reporter was accused of seeking attention while another was labeled a purveyor of fake news. A television reporter, meanwhile, was accused of spinning stories and fault-finding.

MPC members and their colleagues were also ridiculed by trolls by making memes out of their photos, making fun of their names and commenting on their appearance. An online reporter said some memes made it appear that she was humiliated by the president. Another meme sexualized a photo of her asking a question at a press conference: “They (trolls) made memes of my face…while my mouth was open. They made sexual connotation…like I am about to eat a dick.”

Trolls also made fun of the name of a television reporter who frequently asks questions during press briefings, according to some interviewees. One respondent said trolls commented about the appearance of a female television reporter and even accused her of undergoing a gender reassignment procedure.
Some forms of trolling can also pose threats to the safety of journalists. A female online reporter said trolls wished she would get killed by drug addicts and get raped by Abu Sayyaf terrorists. A male online reporter said someone sent him a Facebook message informing him that the sender knows his home address.

**Attitudes toward trolling**

All respondents interviewed said they ignore online attacks but cited different reasons for adopting such stance. Some claimed they are focused on performing their duties while others said their obligation is to inform their audiences, not trolls.

**Table 5**

**Attitudes toward trolling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes / Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Ignore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Sense of duty to the public (seek the truth, inform the public comply with superiors’ directives etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Pointless (e.g. ‘Nothing positive will happen if I pay attention to them’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Avoid feeding the trolls (‘I won’t give trolls time / satisfaction / ‘victory’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Trolls belittled (They don’t feed me / They are not my audience / They are paid hacks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Respondents’ traits (not sensitive, fair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- More careful with reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● More careful with word choices / writing of articles / facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● More careful with phrasing of questions / conduct additional research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Improve journalistic skills (news judgment, fact checking etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reduce social media engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Deactivated social media account / comments section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Make trolls angry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All respondents cited the need to fulfill their roles to the public such as seeking the truth, informing and educating the public, and acting as watchdogs. A radio reporter said journalists should perform their “sworn duty” despite the risks they face online. An online journalist said she would be compromising the whole reason why she became a journalist if she lets herself to be affected by trolls.
Some respondents chose to shrug off trolling because they are aware of the nature and the needs of their target audience. A reporter for a business paper said his readers are “intellectuals” unlike “low-thinking” trolls. A radio reporter said the comments of her superiors are more important than the opinions of trolls: “As long as I know that I do not hear anything from them (superiors), they’re okay with my story, I don’t care.”

Some respondents believe paying attention to trolls would not yield anything positive. A broadsheet reporter said he would not gain anything if he responds to trolls or if he blocks them in social media. Another broadsheet reporter shared a similar view: “I feel that trolling will not do me any good so why would I pay attention to them? Second, if you know it won’t do you good, why would you let it affect your job as a journalist?”

At least two interviewees opted to ignore trolls because they thought trolls were seeking attention and are trying to influence their work. A television reporter said she did not want trolls to think that she gives them time. Another television reporter said trolls would be angry if they are not acknowledged: “They don’t exist, not because I’m afraid of them but I simply don’t care.”

Some respondents who ignored online attacks belittled trolls, dismissing them as fake accounts and paid hacks whose opinions do not matter. A radio reporter said reporters should not mind trolls because they are paid to attack anyone who is against their political party. A broadsheet reporter, meanwhile, said feedback is important if they did not come from trolls, whose posts may be automated. A radio reporter thought trolls did not matter because they do not feed her.

Other reasons cited for ignoring trolls stemmed from the respondents’ qualities. A television reporter said she does not care about online attacks because she is not sensitive. An online reporter, meanwhile, said he shrugged off trolls because he knew he had been fair in his reporting.

While all interviewees claimed to have ignored trolls, some admitted that trolling had motivated them to be more careful with their reporting. An online reporter said she makes sure all words in her story can be defended in case trolls decide to make an issue out of them. A television reporter said trolling prodded her to conduct more research and to ensure that her questions in press briefings are not biased. A male online journalist said he is “extra careful” when pursuing critical angles: “You should be careful, careful in a sense that your story or your facts should be accurate.”

Two respondents admitted that the comments sections of their website or article were disabled because of trolling, one of them citing the presence of death threats as reason. One interviewee, an online reporter, claimed he used strong words in his script to provoke trolls: “It’s fun to vex those who are easily vexed. It’s fun to trigger those who are easily triggered.”

Perceived effects of trolling

This theme was divided into two sub-themes: The effects of trolling on respondents and the effects of trolling on mainstream media.
Table 6

Perceived effects of trolling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effects on respondents</th>
<th>Effects on mainstream media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Increased awareness or consciousness (risks in social media, trolls reading stories)</td>
<td>- Erodes public’s trust / creates bad image or negative perceptions (media is biased, perceptions that partisan bloggers are more credible than journalists, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Negative feelings (apprehension, demoralization)</td>
<td>- Makes people believe in fake news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No effect on reporting</td>
<td>- No effect on image</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At least three interviewees said trolling made them aware that there are social media users monitoring their stories. A television reporter said such awareness puts more pressure on her to be air and accurate in her reporting. A broadsheet reporter said trolling was used by his superior to remind the staff to be accurate: “There was a time that our managing editor reminded us, ‘Accuracy should be in your stories. Do you want to be trolled?’”

Two respondents said attacks by trolls could cause negative feelings. An online reporter said trolling makes one more apprehensive: “You would be more aware of the risks what would happen if you ask this question, you would have to expect messages on your Facebook or your Twitter, there will be memes again about your appearance.” A broadsheet journalist, meanwhile, admitted she was initially demoralized by negative comments about her.

All respondents said they have to perform their duty to the public and to stick to their news values. One interviewee, a radio reporter, claimed criticisms by trolls do not have an effect on her because everybody gets attacked anyway.

Eleven interviewees agreed that trolling affects the image of the mainstream media. They said the online attacks have given journalists a negative image, have influenced the views of social media users, and have eroded the public’s trust on mainstream media. According to a broadsheet reporter, journalists, whether they are on the take or not, used to enjoy a degree of respect from ordinary people. “Now, I feel, whether online or offline, the general perception on us is we are paid hacks.” A television reporter, meanwhile, said an aunt living abroad had told her that journalists like her are biased.

A radio journalist said trolling makes people believe in fake news while a television reporter said it creates perceptions that bloggers are more credible than journalists: “More people go to social media instead of mainstream media. They also now have choose bloggers over journalists because they want opinions and many bloggers pretend to be experts offering these alternative information.”
Only one online reporter thought trolling does not have an effect on the image of mainstream media. According to him, media outlets have their respective policies on ethics, allowing them to police their staff and prevent ‘envelopmental’ journalism: “Others are on the take but maybe only a few. That’s what trolls should think about, and readers…It won’t affect (the image of mainstream media) unless they can provide evidence.”

**How the media should respond to trolling**

All interviewees said journalists should respond to trolling by adhering to ethical principles such as honesty, truthfulness, and transparency. Some cited the need for media practitioners to evaluate themselves while others felt trolls should be ignored.

**Table 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How the media should respond to trolling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adhere to ethical principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Seek the truth / stick to facts / Be honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Avoid being biased / Be fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Examine self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Be transparent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t be affected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Continue asking tough questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Continue performing roles (informing the people / watchdog)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Ignore / Don’t stoop down to the level of trolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Face the trolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Fight disinfection / speak as one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Be oriented about trolls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to ethical principles, the most common responses include deliver news as it is, be honest, be fair, avoid bias, be accurate, and be transparent. An online reporter emphasized the need for journalists to reflect on their practice: “We should look into ourselves and ask ourselves what a journalist supposed to be. I feel a lot has lost their way.” A broadsheet reporter, meanwhile, said the media needs to “clean up” its own backyard.

All interviewees believe journalists should continue performing their duties and should not allow trolls to influence their stories. An online journalist said a journalist “loses” if he allows his
narrative to be controlled by trolls. A television reporter argued that there’s a need more than ever for journalists to be critical: “Just continue doing the job with emphasis on what we are supposed to do then it (media) will withstand everything.”

A broadsheet reporter said the media should fight disinformation and should always remember that they do not serve anyone but the public. An online reporter, meanwhile, said the media should “speak with one voice, the way trolls speak with one voice,” acknowledge there is corruption in the industry and stress that one cannot generalize the industry with its “bad apples.”

**Conclusion**

Data from the survey and interviews suggested that MPC members do not let trolling affect their reporting about the Duterte administration and the performance of their tasks as journalists. They cited the need to adhere to established journalism principles and to live up to their image of journalists, thereby affirming the self-affirmation theory, which states that a person seeks to maintain an overall self-image of moral and adaptive adequacy.

Respondents who saw the need to stick to their roles as journalists, therefore, did not experience dissonance or did not have to act against their principles to be safe from trolling. Dissonance-induced attitude change happens because dissonance threatens one’s positive self-image (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009). In this case, attitude change (e.g. doing more research, giving more attention to details, ensuring that questions and stories are unbiased) was more of a means to improve the respondents’ reporting and to deprive trolls of materials they can use to push their agenda.

While trolling was viewed as a phenomenon that could affect or even erode the credibility of the mainstream media, majority of respondents did not view it as a factor that could dissuade journalists from performing their roles. As a television reporter puts it: “I would like to think that we know why we are here and why we do this job. We know that there will be trolls who will try to put us down but we should know better.”

**Conflict of Interest Statement:**

The author is a member of the press corps covering the Philippine president. The author does not have any financial, personal or academic relationship with any member of the press corps since the group was just formed to ensure an orderly coverage of the president’s activities. The author’s membership did not affect the research reported in this paper.

**About the Author**

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With the Fourth Estate in Collision with the Fifth Estate of Citizens on Social Media, How Can We Teach Truthful Reporting?

Victoria Neumark Jones
London Metropolitan University, UK

Abstract

What is fake news and how can we teach our students not to be taken in by it, not to spread it and not to write it? I suggest going back to first principles of critical thinking: first by identifying how false information is created and spread, then by understanding why this happens, and finally by grasping how the public is deceived. News literacy is as important as proficiency in news gathering. To counter this: diligent digital knowledge coupled with age-old yet evergreen principles of research, critical questioning, unblinkered listening and civil response.

Introduction

“There is truth? said jesting Pilate and did not stay for an answer,” wrote Francis Bacon in the 17th century. He continued: “But it is not only the difficulty and labour which men take in finding out of truth, nor again that when it is found it imposeth upon men’s thoughts, that doth bring lies in favour; but a natural though corrupt love of the lie itself.” (Bacon, 1601). Everyone loves a lie – or, let’s qualify that, everyone loves using a lie now and then. We’ve all done it, maybe for the best of motives, to soothe a relative or get out of a difficult engagement. But very few of us like being lied to – and yet, we constantly are lied to and what is more, we go along with it for a variety of reasons which this paper will touch on.

We go along with it because we don’t know any better, because the lie is something we want or need to believe in line with our view of the world (cognitive bias, as Kahneman and Tversky have repeatedly explored, for example, in 1995) because it fits in with something we just heard or saw on social media, because we are scared not to, or just because we are lazy. And we also go along with it because it is hard to know when someone is lying.

Yet as journalists and as people who educate journalists, we proclaim the need for truthful reporting. How can we pursue this ideal in a world of evasions, falsehoods, propaganda and, of course, fake news? This paper will examine the different kinds of falsehoods with which we contend as journalism educators and suggest an age-old strategy. It will also, in line with an earlier paper of mine, brush aside the teaching of news values as central to journalism education. In brief, we need to apply old methods to a Hydra-head of new situations.

There are two sides to this: finding out the truth, and telling the truth.

It is indeed difficult to tell if people are lying, as Saner reports (2019) and yet that is a key skill for journalists. Perhaps, as her article suggests, society is more relaxed about fibbing, since we have had now several US presidents exposed as liars, the two most recent of whom got away with it scot-free. Yet as journalists, if we do not suspect that our interviewees may at times be “economical with the truth” as a senior British civil servant once put it (Robert Armstrong in 1986, quoting
himself 2004), and do not grill them accordingly, we will be as Chomsky and Amy Goodman have suggested, little more than stenographers to power (Barsamian 1992).

Is that all truthful reporting can be? – a variant on the tired old clichés of whether the Lady Mayor wore a flowered hat at the village fete or publishing the latest glossy report from a corporation? Do we as journalists not feel a higher calling, to hold power to account? We certainly often say so. As the old saw, variously attributed to William Hearst, Lord Northcliffe, and pundit Malcolm Muggeridge has it, “News is anything anybody wants to suppress; everything else is public relations.” Are we teaching public relations?

We tell our students that the fearless reporter must learn to ask searching questions and take nothing on trust, must have done enough research to call out evasion or misrepresentation. Truthful reporting, in short, will require an inbuilt “Bullshit detector”, to use the colourful language of Harry Frankfurter in his seminal essay (2005). And the best bases for this are a canny understanding of how other human beings respond to question coupled with in-depth research on the subject.

But while it is not so difficult to instil these basics about interview techniques in our budding journalists, following such doyennes as Jessica Mitford (2000) it is harder to develop their powers of critical thinking under the deluge of social media information. And yet it is learning to flex those powers, I submit, which offer the best training for journalists’ “truth muscles”.

However, Bacon’s aphorism does suggest one way to unpick the raucous conflicts between the Fourth Estate of traditional news media (routinely referred to by social media critics as “mainstream media” or MSM) and the Fifth Estate of social media. Finding out what is true and reporting it has at one and the same time never seemed more desirable or less attainable. We have to face the facts that social media is one of the main go-to sources for journalists, and that the MSM is itself a major target of social media trolls shrilling out that it purveys fake news. So telling the truth and calling out lies are inextricably linked, not only in real-life interviewing, but also in our consumption of news media. This is what the Cairncross Review (2019) calls for as “digital literacy” and what other colleagues are calling “news literacy” – what was always the backbone of media studies: the unpicking of the impacts of ownership, bias, crowd-pleasing, technology -- and the desire to run with accepted narratives rather than the difficulties of accurate reporting.

In the political era of Trump, Brexit, Facebook and Twitter, such unpicking is even harder than before. Journalists are being wrong-footed by a flood of digital information from sources often demonstrated unreliable or mendacious (see, for example, Cadwalladr 2017). Societal attitudes to truth are seen as ever more flexible – in Bacon’s terms, we are all Pilate now. Several journalists (among them, d’Ancona 2017, Ball 2017, Davis 2017) have written indignant books about fake news and flexible attitudes to truth, often nominating post-modernism as the root of the societal evil of “post-truth”. Perhaps it is true that greater understanding of how, for example, oppressed and oppressing people have different versions of history (let’s look here at the conflicts over the statues of Robert E Lee in the southern states of the US) or that embracing a more nuanced view of debates can preclude easy definitions of right and wrong – and even how these might contribute to a societal belief that truth is not an absolute – but most people will still agree that everyone dies, that the Sun rises in the East, and so on. Post-modernism is real in the academy but a ghostly presence IRL. So that, I submit, is a red herring.
We might suggest that the success of so much misleading information is rather more prosaic. Technology has always changed communication – no Laws of Hammurabi without clay tablets, no illustrated Books of Hours with the quill pen, no protestant reform without the printed Bible, no serialised novels of Dickens without the mechanized printing press – no Playboy without cheap colour printing. But now we have the mobile phone and fast internet access.

Technology has enabled propaganda to flow out in never-before-seen quantities, while anyone in a bad mood can pick up their phone and have a go at anyone else, with little fear of legal or practical consequences. Despite the recommendations of the Cairncross review (2019) to place legally enforced restrictions on digital giants in the UK or transnationally, it is hard to see this changing any time soon. Facebook gets apparently 1 million complaints a day globally, according to a DCMS spokesperson (NUJ event 18 March 2019).

So, means, motive, opportunity. Means and opportunity have been laid out – and as for motive, well! …So here is my first and most important prescription for our students. Whatever we read or hear in the news or from a public figure, let us ask, “cui bono?” Who wants you to know, believe, act on this? And why? I am not claiming anything new here, but I am drawing on a very old tradition.

There is, they say, a sucker born every minute. A deadly cocktail of gullibility, malevolence, greed, self-interest and sheer mischief has produced the current situation where President Trump’s cry of “fake news” is most often aimed at those exposing his own falsehoods. Let us not obediently open our mouths to swallow this concoction. “Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me,” as the old proverb has it. And I don’t exempt myself or any of us from that. I am just as likely to believe a news item from a source whose views are broadly in line with mine as anyone.

One process whereby fake news is swallowed is a development of Bourdieu’s (1998) notion of “show and hide”. An entertaining article by Gopnik in the New Yorker (2018) talks about how conjurers work. “Dariel Fitzkee’s “HYPERLINK "https://www.amazon.com/dp/1614278563/?tag=thneyo0f-20" 	 "blank" Magic by Misdirection,” a classic in the magical arts written decades ago by a once famous American performer tries to lay out all the varieties of misdirection,” writes Gopnik, pointing out how Brett Kavanaugh’s defence before his Senate hearing into his appointment on to the US Supreme Court was all about misdirection, rather than a defence based on testimony or one that answered the charges made against him.

As Marche writes (2018) “Fake news” has quickly come to mean nothing more than “other people’s news”—the news made by the other team. Trump versus Clinton, or Arron Banks versus the UK Remain campaign.

As educators, then, asking “cui bono?” we want to train our students to understand how lying and misdirection work, both emotionally and technologically. For we are working in a new matrix, the interface between the Fifth Estate of social media and its interface with our Fourth Estate. This has skewed our previous delimitations of the private and public spheres - - we must recalculate our understandings of Habermas (1992). It is no longer just politicians who dominate the public sphere. All kinds of spooks and goblins, wraiths and will o’ the wisps are there, from Kylie Jenner’s billions acquired through flogging lip cosmetics to Alex Jones of Infowars, who mixes cruel attacks on the
parents of children killed in the Sandy Hook school shooting (while in a state of “psychosis” he told a court REF) (see Beauchamp 2017) with advertisements for herbal supplements, or from “influencers” who make fortunes by filming themselves and their children unboxing their shopping, to jihadi filming gruesome beheadings. But so too are our most private communications – sex tapes, family pictures, last night’s dinner are all freely available. We are in an age dominated by a commercial version of the Assassin’s Creed: “Nothing is true, everything is permitted” – and don’t forget to buy Crusader Kings II -- now! This matrix in which commercial and political ends merge with private communication is a new arena – not a private sphere nor a public sphere but a Venn diagram.

As Waterson (2019) for example shows, the penetration of propaganda, misinformation and tendentious misdirection, masked as friendly “sharing”, into citizens’ private sources of information, is well advanced. There is nothing really private online – not only is nothing true, but also nothing can be deleted and everything is data to be monetised. That is, the deliberate structuring of social media to maximise “stickiness” and “rabbit holes” down which users endlessly fall has facilitated the activities of those with political or commercial aims, devious or otherwise.

As educators, it is crucial that we alert our students to these mechanisms and to the role which the algorithms of online advertising and retail have played in the development of social and digital media. Moore (2018) has unpicked the dangers this poses to democracy, by skewing information received by citizens to their personal preferences. No, it is not an accident that after buying slippers you get emails selling your pyjamas, that at the doctor’s surgery you get messages about cough mixture and that you get confirmation that the Prime Minister is a lizard after you have visited David Icke’s website. And that is just the ones you see. Your data is still being sold on even as you click. Hard to answer the question “cui bono?” When the beneficiaries might range from the sellers of mobile phones to patio lighting to political movements.

The 2019 Cairncross review surveyed this and highlighted the need for all educators to teach what they call “digital literacy”. I am suggesting a couple of ways in which this might proceed for journalism educators, while conscious of course that many others are ploughing this same furrow.

As well as laying out how our students actually get their “hot takes” on information, then, and the motives behind that, we also need to explain to them how that “news” is constructed. It is a complex operation, since social media operators remain parasitic on older news structures: they still follow the Five Ws, still purport to have the authority of fearless truth-telling – but their driver differs. No longer the fearless green-shaded reporter bashing the phones, but the social media entrepreneur – Breitbart or Novara or the Canary – hashtagging their feed at the merest sniff of a story, verified or not. And then gobbling up and aggregating the stories on other feeds.

How it can be to unpick news sourcing is exemplified by the story of mass rapes by immigrants in Sweden in 2017, eagerly picked up by Trump but discounted by careful analysis (Roden 2018). Or take 9/11. Here is Alex Jones of Infowars, quoted in Walters 2017: “9/11 was an inside job,” Jones said. “That means criminal elements in our own government, working with Saudi Arabia and others, wanted to frame Iraq for it. Just a fact.” Interestingly, Walters also notes that Jones uses his site to promote a line of organic toiletries, sales of which help fund his operations. And here we swing back to Moore’s contention – that advertising is the engine which drives much less than truthful journalism. The internet went wild for a story that Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are
literally demons from hell who organised a paedophile ring from the basement of a pizza parlour in Washington, DC (Beauchamp 2016)? The original author of that tale, Mike Czernovich, is entirely unrepentant about it and its consequences – the shooting up of the Pizza parlour, despite its not having a basement (Marantz 2016).

He got the clicks – and that is all that matters. Simple bombardment with repetition can solidify misinformation into “known facts” as Robson (2019) says “the most potent way of spreading misinformation is simple repetition; the more you hear an idea, the more likely you are to believe it to be true.”

Scandals like the uncovering of deceitful use of data like that of Cambridge Analytica in the UK referendum barely register with most users. In fact, we all forget where we get information from – when did you first hear that the Earth went round the Sun?

So here is my second prescription for students: so, where did you hear that? From whom? And why just then?

We must face up to the fact of malicious disinformation – as Robson (2019) writes “…misinformation can be engineered to bypass logical thinking and critical questioning”. And it often is. And although my examples are mostly from right-wing politicians, I don’t claim any exemptions from bad faith for any other group.

I come back to – people are lying to us. As Marche (2018) writes: “Falsehood flies, and truth comes limping after,” quoting Jonathan Swift, in 1710. He cites examples: “On Twitter, a cardiologist claimed that a video of Syrian children dying from poison gas was fake because the ECG pads were misplaced. His initial post received more than twelve thousand retweets; his subsequent admission of error received fewer than fifty. In the aftermath of the 2016 election, the Pew Research Center revealed what may be the most disturbing number of the whole sordid election: fourteen per cent of Americans admitted that “they shared a story they knew was fake at the time.” It was for the lulz, maybe.

None the less, a straw poll of any students still reflects “we get our news from social media”. For example, a torrent of revelations about Russian influence via social media on US, European and UK elections (Cadwalladr 2018, Mostrous et al 2017, Prokop 2018) has hardly registered on the indiscriminate public take-up of digital information. Compare Cadwalladr’s followers on Twitter – 280,000 – and those of Piers Morgan – 6.64 million. Not exactly an equal division of the public sphere – or Venn diagram.

In this Venn diagram of communication, smears and falsehoods, however unfounded, are never fully retracted, as Cadwalladr (2019) has complained about Nigel Farage and the Brexit party. Fact checkers flounder and withdraw from the fray, as Levin (2019) details in his account of how Snopes parted ways with Facebook.

How can journalism educators counter this? Journalism educators in the UK have often taken a more industry-focused approach to teaching truthful reporting, leading off with the notion of news values. This well-trodden path is largely driven by content analysis, beginning with Galtung and Ruge (1965) and revisions by Harcup and O’Neill (2001), O’Neill and Harcup (2009), O’Neill
Such discussions explore the challenges fake news on social media poses for a hierarchy of “news values” (and the way in which the media can subsequently be understood) as professionalism challenged by amateurs. A kind of priesthood of reporters is assumed, untainted by the profanities of ownships, bias, crowd-pleasing and the limitations imposed by traditions of what news is and where it is to be found.

I suggest we move away from this concept entirely. News values are an overly restricted, trade-oriented concept. Counting the content of stories -- even supposing that we can all agree on whether, for example, a story about a new Royal baby, is good news, bad news, news about the elite, news about the future, news which affects all of us, part of an ongoing series, entertainment, celebrity, sex, health and goodness knows what else – will still tell us nothing about how these stories are shaped, at whom they are aimed and how they get spun on, on social media. A brilliant spoof by Buzzfeed tracing the stages of a Twitterstorm is particularly good on this. (Phillips 2018)

For most of those who have written about news values as an essential element in reporting, the lesson for the academy is straightforward: Journalists must report objectively whilst also responding to cultural and commercial imperatives. Journalism educators must equip their students to enter this arena. The Fifth Estate is merely a subset of the public sphere, a locus for unruly sources.

Unfortunately for this prescription, the Fifth Estate will not stay in its box. The Wild West of social media has blurred older distinctions between, for example, investigative reporting, gossip and state propaganda. Under the blanket rejection of “MSM” and the embrace of social media, trust in classic journalism is withering daily. Users may understand that stories about Kim Kardashian learning law are clickbait – but they still click (BBC 2019). And when they click, someone, somewhere, makes money.

The Cairncross Review suggested various government remedies for controlling the corporations which profit from such algorithms and their addictive properties. Responses by those like Briant (2018), included in the final report, strengthen the case for demanding that companies clean up their act and be made responsible for real-life consequences of how they do business. Yet companies have been slow to change. Profits are at stake. Respected fact checkers Snopes have withdrawn from a partnership with Facebook (Levin 2019) and meantime the circus merrily grinds on. For it is a kind of showbiz, sleight of hand, pantomime.

Casalicchio (2018), among others, reveals the brazenness of those who are cooking the social media books. Being exposed as liars did no harm to “Brexit Bad Boys” Messrs Banks and Wigmore before the DCMS inquiry in 2018; it has done no harm to Brett Kavanaugh; it has done no harm to the 45th president of the United States (10,000 lies according to the Washington Post ticker -- and still counting according to Kessler et al 2019). Meantime, investigative journalist Carole Cadwalladr has been sneered at as a “mad cat lady” by senior broadcast journalist Andrew Neil (Mayhew 2018); rape threats to females in public life are so common that UK election candidates flourish them; statistics and made-up quotations clutter the internet – try tracking down that “all else is public relations” quote.
But I want to stress that this is not new. The use of lies, smears, abuse and disinformation goes back at least as far as the Roman republic, according to the scathing pamphlet supposedly by Roman orator Cicero’s brother (Wills 2012). It flourished in the pamphlet wars of England and France in the 17th century (Peacey 2013), and in the savage cartoons of the 18th and 19th centuries in England, as repression fought reform. And no doubt it will continue to flourish.

Cui bono? requires us to look at motives. Other critics have exposed the motives of those exploiting the Fifth Estate as a new area of the political sphere. Whether by analysing the mischievous lies of such as ex-UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson (Henkel 2018) or by highlighting the bias in many media outlets (O’Neill 2018), this analysis seems to find the distinction between traditional news and social media “fake news” rapidly eroding. Instead, media both MSM and social, are entirely up for grabs.

This is ignoring an important distinction. Not all areas of the public sphere are policed equally. There are extensive sets of laws governing the MSM and aimed at making it to some extent accountable. These vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but generally protect citizens from false accusations, hate speech and persecution, theft of intellectual property and perversions of the processes of the judicial system.

But what consequences are there for people who misbehave online? Doxxing, pile-ons, threats of violence, shamings and loss of employment are frequent and destructive—notably documented in Jon Ronson’s brilliant 2015 expose, So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed. Victims may be blameless in IRL – but that won’t save them. A few feeble police actions on one hand – the murder of a UK MP on the other.

And as for flat-out lying: it is Teflon time for the fabulists. Johnson, of course, has admitted untruths for which he was sacked as a journalist (Ball 2018) – but it has done his career and his earning power no harm at all. For others, like internet troll Mike Czernovich, and promulgator of the infamous Pizzagate conspiracy myth, there are no sackings, but rather rewards in terms of clickbait and advertising revenue (Kolbert 2019). Internet trolls like Czernovich or indeed, dare I say, Trump, have real-life impacts – pizza parlours get shot up, tiny children get separated from their parents at the US border. This must concern us as educators, of journalists or merely citizens – what happens next is also what needs to be held to account.

Our final difficulty is frivolity. Everything opposing such damaging lies can be shrugged off through parody or “bantz”. It was for the lulz. As Lamerichs, Nguyen et al point out in their incisive 2018 article, so-called satirical memes can actually solidify racist and sexist discourse into a powerful tool of ridicule, opposing which is cast as joyless and archaic. Arron Banks won’t engage with debate – he just sneers “lame”; Pepe the frog jeers at “feminazis” who want women to control their own reproductive rights.

In the classroom, it is noticeable how many would-be journalists do not consume classic journalism. They find it “boring” and “long”. Here is a poser for the educator. Increasingly short attention spans (Greenfield 2015, Levitin 2017) compound a psychological fact: inconvenient information is uncomfortable to process. Clickbait is quick. We have to encourage our students to read long and slow – and not to give up because something is difficult. There are a few signs that some media is moving in this direction—James Harding, ex-editor of the London Times, has set
up Tortoise Media: tagline “We’re building a different type of newsroom. For a slower, wiser news.” And there is The Conversation, promising “academic rigour, journalistic flair”.

As Robson shows, in his account of how a pair of academics inoculated students against misleading climate change misinformation (2019), including fake experts and petitions, **serious research and historical analysis can help students get involved in the longer view.** By looking at how the tobacco industry had bamboozled the public for years, participants in the study by Cook and Lewandowsky became more sceptical of climate change deniers’ tactics.

And here it seems sadly true that even the best research does not get traction in the MSM. Conway (2019) writing in the niche Byline (formed by disenchanted journalism educators) goes to lengths to explain how the May 2019 claims of mass funding by Farage’s Brexit party do not stand up. Cadwalladr and Channel 4 News (2019) expose Arron Banks as having spent nearly £500,000 supporting Farage in 2016, contrary to the code of conduct for MEPs, but support for this party continues to grow in the polls.

We come now to the other side of the coin – how and why the public chooses to believe what is often demonstrably false. This aspect, perceptively noticed by Bacon, (Walters 2017) – has received less attention, although Kahn-Harris (2018) has attacked “denialism” in The Guardian and in a book, from a moralistic perspective. Another voice from the European past remarks: “…he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived.” (Machiavelli, The Prince, 1513).

Analysts of human cognition like Kahneman (2012) have shown the perils of “thinking too fast”. Marxist-based critiques of media practice based on the work of such as Habermas (1992) and Bourdieu (1996), offer conceptual tools. Pollitt (2002) among others suggests how deep are the social currents that underpin the preference for the Fifth over the Fourth Estate. Traditional journalism is battling against the tide. We can make a difference, I believe, but we must not underestimate the strength of the desire for the reassuring lie.

How prescient was Stephen Colbert in his brilliant comedy bit about the word “truthiness” (Colbert 2005) which culminates with “Other folk promise to read the news to you. I promise to feel the news AT you.”

A fascinating study by the Cambridge Centre For Research In The Arts, Social Sciences And Humanities (CRASSH 2019) led by John Naughton, revealed, said researcher Dr Hugo Leal, a confluence of conspiracy theories. “Originally formulated in French far-right circles, the widespread belief in a supposedly outlandish nativist conspiracy theory known as the 'great replacement' is an important marker and predictor of the Trump and Brexit votes,” said Leal. Some 41% of Trump voters and 31% of Brexit voters described as true the statement that “Muslim immigration to this country is part of a bigger plan to make Muslims a majority”, compared with 3% of Clinton voters and 6% of Remain voters.

This links to work by Sunstein, pioneer of the idea that the internet allows people to consume news within “filters” or “bubbles” (2009, 2017), who points the finger at the neurological effects of modern technology and social media. Sunstein argues that “cyberpolarisation” -- when “certain tendencies of the human mind interact badly with certain features of modern technology, much as
certain prescription drugs interact badly with alcohol” (Kolbert 2009) -- accounts for the acrimony between Fourth and Fifth Estates, between the sober and the drunk.

O’Hara and Stevens (2015) dispute this by suggesting a different framing of the bubbles described by Sunstein. Using the sociology of religion, O’Hara suggests that rational analysis may suggest that such bubbles are neither entirely new nor necessarily destructive. "First, we examine the Internet directly to measure it against the Habermasian ideal of a public forum of free debate. Second, we consider what echo chambers can contribute to debate. Third, we see whether some examples of apparent polarization have been properly diagnosed. Fourth, we consider the related question of what structures will enable the Internet to support political action and other collaboration."

So – have we always been suckers and must we always be so? And does it really matter?

Must teachers of journalism accept this dystopian future in which no one can believe anyone -- unless they already do? This paper denies the necessity. Human beings have been down such mazes of deception before, many times. And truth and objectivity have been upheld, if sorely tested.

Sociology and history, then, do offer us some tools to counter the “natural though corrupt love of the lie itself”, as do social psychology and journalistic satire -- for example, from Kolbert (2009) or Swift (1709, 2015). Last, but not least, educators need to ground their practice in the tried and tested principles of teaching critical thinking (for example, McPeck 1990).

I want to urge here that we return to first principles. The Greeks had a method – Socratic dialogue. The Romans had a tag; cui bono? Journalism schools had a basic principle – two unconnected sources for every fact. We will scarcely go wrong if we apply these methods to such egregious howlers as reports from the likes of Infowars.

We don’t want to be stenographers to power – who ever actually did come up with the phrase. Its origins appear to be lost in the mists of the internet.

We want to train our students to listen to voices, not always the ones who shout loudest, but those whom society needs to hear. It is not as if our traditional journalism has always been covered with glory. In the UK, the shameful episode of the 2018 Grenfell Tower fire, where 71 people burned to death in one of the richest cities in the world, although they had bombarded the authorities and the news media for years with their fears about fire safety, highlighted how “news” was only the province of journalists and not the conduit for the public sphere that it surely ought to be. If we want to train youthful, truthful reporters, we also need – my final prescription – to train them to listen, not just to those in the bubble. Younge (2018) writes movingly about the deficiencies of the MSM on the tragic Grenfell fire.

And listening, of course, means learning to debate with civility, against a current grain, but back to a Socratic ideal. This has been tried before, with partial success.

According to Marche (2018) Michael Hunter wrote in “Establishing the New Science,” his 1989 history of the Royal Society. “Its organizers seem to have sincerely believed that the enterprise to which the early Royal Society was dedicated was healing, that it would in some sense escape from
politics by bringing together reasonable men from a wide range of ideological positions who could collaborate in gathering information which they hope that all would be able to accept.” The motto of the Royal Society was (and still is) *Nullius in verba*: “take nobody’s word for it.”

Truthful reporting is a global cause. The European Commission HYPERLINK "http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-3370_en.htm" announced in April 2018 that it would support “an independent European network of factcheckers” who would “establish common working methods, exchange best practices, and work to achieve the broadest possible coverage of factual corrections across the EU”. Eight factchecking organisations in six EU countries have been approved as members of this Brussels-backed collaborative platform, known as the HYPERLINK "https://www.disinfobservatory.org/" Social Observatory for Disinformation and Social Media Analysis (Soma). In turn, this has been attacked by anti-EU campaigners asking if this commission will examine the EU itself (Worstall 2019).

There are other moves afoot to assert the value of truthful reporting, among them Denmark’s TjekDet (as reported by Boffey 2019), not unlike the BBC’s More or Less. It is one of a group of 19 factcheckers operating across 13 EU member states as part of an independent platform Factcheck.EU, established by the International Fact-Checking Network at the Poynter Institute. Poynter itself, along with the UK FullFact, offers valuable resources for us journalism educators.

And lastly, but not least, as Rusel 2017 wrote, in we need to bring civility back to our discourse. Don’t we?

I should like to conclude, along with Bourdieu (1990) that “Enlightenment is on the side of those who turn their spotlight on our blinkers.” We will do our best to help young journalists be truthful reporters if we teach them how to be critical thinkers, who examine their own motives, listen to others, are civil even when they disagree and take no bullshit from anyone, on social media or off it.

**About the Author**

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ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR TEACHING AND UNDERTAKING NEW FORMS OF JOURNALISM
The Promotion of the New Journalistic Courses as a Reflection on the Realities of Media Practice

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Abstract

Russian provincial educational system reacts to the new world trends in journalistic education with delay as well as the practice of journalism. Being involved in a process of educational globalization, universities need to change their educational programs faster. Thereunto some of the Russian universities (University of Tyumen is not an exception) have become the participants of the Project 5-100, which has a goal to maximize the competitive position of a group of leading Russian universities in the global research and education market. It means that the curricula of the journalism departments in such Universities must be changed even faster. It is difficult to achieve the balance between the speed of implementation of new requirements and the expected results of this implementation. This study is dedicated to find out whether it is necessary to follow the latest global trends in the field of journalistic education, or to ignore those trends that have not had time to settle down.

Introduction:

Russian provincial educational system reacts to the new world trends in journalistic education with delay as well as the practice of journalism. Being involved in a process of educational globalization, universities need to change their educational programs faster. Thereunto some of the Russian universities (University of Tyumen is not an exception) have become the participants of the Project 5-100, which has a goal to maximize the competitive position of a group of leading Russian universities in the global research and education market. It means that the curricula of the departments journalism in such Universities must be changed even faster. It is difficult to achieve the balance between the speed of implementation of new requirements and the expected results of this implementation. This study is dedicated to find out whether it is necessary to follow the latest global trends in the field of journalistic education, or to ignore those trends that have not had time to settle down.

The relevance of the research topic is highlighted by the following reasons:

Designing and development of new training courses and the early update of old ones on journalism is a very important task, because the world in which journalists work is fast changing (Spilsbury, 2014). However, there is a distinction between mainstream evolving and diverse educational courses promoted by leading world universities and the provincial universities seeking to reach a high level.

At the same time, effective education is designed to promote topical courses, not only basic, core and typical disciplines taught at many universities, but the courses that reflect the realities of modern journalistic practice and which are related to current research in journalistic field (Tully &
Vraga, 2018). In such a case, there is important to know the trends, challenges and opportunities facing journalism from across the world (Newman, 2019).

The Russian Academic Excellence Project 5-100 has encouraged Russian universities to be more active in the international arena and has helped raise awareness of what Russia has to offer in the global market of educational services. It is a great opportunity, but it is a great challenge (Naumenko, 2016; Baker, S, 2018). Twenty-one Russian universities (and seven of them from Ural and Siberian region) are already included in this program and they need to reach international levels of research to correspond to the needs of global development. A strategic objective of the University of Tyumen is to create a new-generation university through the reorganization of its human resources policy, its core assets (educational, research, innovative) and institutional environment, and by means of comprehensive upgrading of infrastructure.

However, there is a lack to achieve the balance between the speed of implementation of new requirements and the expected results of this implementation. This study is dedicated to find out whether it is necessary to follow the latest global trends in the field of journalistic education, or to ignore those trends that have not had time to settle down. There are courses that have a long, nearly twenty years, history in foreign educational practice, but they are only now being introduced into Russian curricula. There is a dilemma: it is necessary to give them a lot of attention, or it is necessary to draw it on completely new trends in journalistic practice and introduce only the latest courses.

**Method**

To collect data for this study, we were engaged in research on fast-past journalistics curricula-programs and syllabi of the departments and faculties of journalism.

A total twenty-one universities (the 5-100 Project participants) and three foreign universities curricula and researching seminars (University of South Florida (St. Petersburg), Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, and Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism) for journalists (both for bachelors and masters) were examined. The comparison between curricula was conducted with the help of monitoring the official universities web sites. Moreover, the randomly selected 10 provincial universities were interviewed concerning of following modern trends in the implementation of storytelling, factual and fake news and critical thinking disciplines in their curricula.

The study was divided into two parts. The first part examined the specific of curricula of the most popular journalistic courses in various universities, the most important topics in journalistic discourse, presented at the recent conferences, the most required journalistic online courses. The second part of the research focused on studying the relationship between realities of journalistic practice and, as a result, the designing university curricula and educational programs.

**Results**

This comparative research of foreign educational journalistic programs offered for university studies and for Russian provincial (but fairly influential in the region) universities had few
intersections. It showed that at the same period the attention was focused mostly on different fields of study. However, leading metropolitan Russian Universities (5-100 Project participants) try to be in step with time.

The first trend we identified was the inclusion the ample quantity of courses of narrative journalism. The university programs in American and European journalism and media departments contain the diversity of different programs, which offer the studying of practice of narrative journalism and storytelling writing (Digital Storytelling, Video Storytelling, Telling True Stories via Sports, Story Structures, Telling Environmental Stories that Matter, Interactive Narratives: Future Storyforms, Multimedia storytelling, etc.). Storytelling is perceived as a traditional genre, as a narrative journalism indicates an essential, high-quality and also even traditional. Turn to historical analysis. In foreign educational practices, narrative journalism has a long history. In 2001, the educational program at Harvard University has established and it was an innovative program, as it was announced, program on narrative journalism.

Since 2015, Tyumen journalists are increasingly interested in creating in storytelling genre (e.g. long reads) and educators are involved into the exploring the possibilities of narrative techniques. It is too early to define it as traditional. It does not mean that there was no tradition of narrative journalism in Russia before, but since 1990th the more attention was paid to journalism of fact.

There are different scientific explanation of the popularity of the storytelling (marketing strategies, competition with new media, involvement the audience with emotions, using mythical archetypes, etc.). The scientists all over the world were involved in the researching of narrative journalism very actively. There were hold a large number of conferences. In 2016 on the third (an annual) Berkely Narrative Journalism Conference the professional journalists and researchers discussed the changing dynamics of storytelling, the participants wanted to find their own pathways to publication. Practical journalists (e.g. Scott Rensberger) proclaimed the idea that storytelling is everything for journalism in the same year.

Scientists have discussed the dynamics of change in the field of narrative journalism. We found it important from our own educational experience that the interest to the courses History of the Foreign Journalism and Journalism and Myth was increased. It explains that the basis of these courses is not only facts, but storytelling. Although the new modern system needs new practical, not theoretical courses.

Now there are other trends and new phenomena, such as media in post-truth world, false news, and populism. The different kinds of audiences have already been prepared for the perception of the post-truth, focusing the attention on emotional impact (involvement with emotions, empathy and feelings are so important in storytelling), not on facts. A lot of practicing journalists stressed the need for the rise in public confidence in journalists. Because they were pushing back against the charges of “fake news” and rediscovering our watchdog role. The next step was the emergence the university courses devoted to the identification of the false news.

Current trends in journalistic practice should have been reflected on the level of scientific discussion. These are the names of only a few conferences from the long list of the conferences and congresses that have been in the past year: Disinformation and Fake News: In the Wake of the
European Elections; Freedom, Facts and Fake News, Fake News: Political and Legal Challenges, Fake News and Disinformation, etc.

Such definitions like “post-truth”, “fact checking”, or “fake news” were rarely included in course names. However, there were few exceptions: Media in the post-truth era: theory and practice, Fake news. Students from the department of journalism of University of Tyumen are taught to recognize fake news in the department of journalism within several disciplines. Moreover, University of Tyumen held courses on media education for schoolchildren.

It has a connection with another trend. It has already appeared as a very fast reaction to the previous. We mean the critical thinking.

The emergence of following new university programs was predictable: The concept of Truth in Philosophy, The Basis of Critical Thinking for Journalists, Media, Culture and Critique, Critical Thinking and Writing, etc. These are the names of the new university courses. The teachers promote to use critical thinking techniques in journalism by organizing conferences and different workshops, panels, and sessions. It is very important to study (again!) with focusing on facts, not on personal belief. We suppose that the idea by N. Chomsky (2012), which he expressed in an open lecture at the University of Arizona, precisely demonstrates the need for introducing such educational courses on critical thinking for future journalists: Many troubling issues... would not arise if fostering independent thought and inquiry were regarded as a public good as during the Enlightenment model that is, having intrinsic value.

Since 2018, there is a tendency of increasing interest in critical thinking in journalism and communication education research. Over the past two years, hundreds of books have been published. Hundreds of conferences were held (Developing Critical Thinking, Critical thinking and Journalism, etc.). University of Tyumen supported the idea to discuss the importance of studying critical thinking in general. The international annual forum The Disciplinary Landscape was held. The forum brought together scholars, teachers and administrators from leading colleges and universities in different countries to discuss the main topic Critical Thinking in Academia Today, as well as following issues: Critical Thinking In and Beyond the Curriculum, Critical Thinking in the Space of Higher Education, Teaching Critical Thinking.

However, we found out that the interest in the topic of critical thinking is very weak yet, as well as a sense of need for these courses for future journalists.

Results based on scientific research are included in table.
Table 1. The Number of Universities (the 5-100 Project participants), in which new journalistic courses are implemented

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of universities</th>
<th>Number of universities in which courses are taught</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
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It should be noted that these trends are not always reflected in the names of disciplines. Sometimes it was not necessary to refer to the extended course description in order to understand, what it was about the fundamentals of storytelling, fake-news, or critical thinking.

**Discussion**

Broadly taken, this research aimed at the analysis of the role of the media practice in relation to the preparing new curricula journalistic studies.

Russian provincial educational system reacts to the new world trends in journalistic education with delay, as well as the practice of journalism. Being involved in a process of educational globalization, universities need to change their educational programs faster. The easiest way is to take the idea of the curricula of the foreign media departments as a basis and after that to imitate the main idea at the similar courses and disciplines (without plagiarism). This raises the questions as are they appropriate for the Russian regional journalistic realities (or it has no importance in the Era of media-globalization)? Is it difficult to follow the modern process in academic system and predict what will be necessary to study next academic year?

We tried to examine how to define the terms “traditional” and “new” educational approaches in journalism, how to plan what will be in demand in the educational environment, how to correspond to the current journalistic trends, how to transform the curricula intelligently and how to get the successful result. This study considered the motives and consequences of such problem.

The great illustrative example was the answer, which we have received from one of our recipient form on of the provincial universities. The question was as follows, did they include in their educational practice such courses as *Storytelling, Fake News and Fact Checking, Critical Thinking*. The answer was: “We are not so progressive and advanced”.

We are faced with difficult choice and problem in Russian provincial university. The reaction rate on the journalistic process increased and we have to focus the educational attention on all these three trends practically at the same time. Is it still necessary to continue to pay too much attention to the storytelling, or its better to decrease its salience (the courses of storytelling have already entered the curricula of Russian journalism schools) and increase the courses devoted to the critical thinking and fact checking?
This research was interested in contemporary changes in media education – both realized and needed. We are sure that the list of potential trend journalistic courses we have provided is non-exhaustive. It can include: MOJO, Social Media Manager, Data Journalism, Digital Ethic, etc. We need to note that our study does not claim to inclusiveness. Future research could include data developed to indicate and provide the fuller picture of this research.

By 2018, the most intensive period of the controversy had passed. The province media educational attention shifted to other practices and ideas. However, attention to the storytelling had certainly been strong enough to declare with confidence that it can be advanced research directions in Russian province universities for the next few years. On the one hand, only the educator can decide which of the ideas, themes will test on the classes, and he can decide how to teach the students. On the other hand, if the educator follows the trends form journalistic and from educational practice, it could help students to join in world educational process.

About the Author

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Utilitarianism, Deontology and Virtue Ethics: Teaching Ethical Philosophy by Means of a Case Study

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Abstract

The concepts behind three of the principal normative ethical theories (utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics) are evident in a real-life scenario. This case study involves videotapes recorded from inside Grootvlei Prison, Bloemfontein, South Africa in 2002. Prisoners captured sensational footage of warders selling alcohol, drugs, loaded firearms and juveniles for sex to inmates. It was footage every journalist would want to broadcast and it was for sale to the highest bidder. The country’s three flagship current affairs programs, broadcast on three different channels, were each approached to buy the footage. Each of the television channels operates under different models: one is the public broadcaster; another a free-to-air private channel; the third is a pay channel and part of a multinational listed company. Upon analysis it is clear that each executive producer espoused different ethical philosophies, yet each decision was ultimately ethical. The reasoning and philosophies of three ethical theories are highlighted in journalism decision-making.

Keywords: ethics, ethical decision-making, purchasing decision, competition, South Africa, Grootvlei Prison, utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics.

Introduction

This research came about as a result of a master’s thesis in journalism ethics, undertaken at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. The thesis intended to study the issue of paying for stories in South African current affairs broadcast journalism, but also unmasked such concepts as moral relativity and ethical diversity in the depiction of three of the normative philosophical theories at work, and produced broader insights into ethical decision-making in journalism.

Whereas these three normative philosophical theories—specifically utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics—are abstract concepts, the following case study captures the practical application of each. It is well suited for journalism students who are studying the process of ethical decision-making, and while it does not delve into ethical theories such as Confucianism, ethical justice or care ethics, for example, it does consider three of the normative theories.

According to Rosalind Hursthouse (2013) virtue ethics is less commonly utilized in the field of applied ethics when compared to utilitarianism and deontology. However, she notes that “many editors of big textbook collections on ‘bioethics’, or ‘moral problems’ ... now try to include articles representative of each of the three normative approaches but are often unable to find any virtue ethics article addressing a particular issue” (para 47). This case study addresses that gap.
**Historical Context**

Until 1994, South Africa was governed by the apartheid regime; ‘separateness’ in the Afrikaans language. Indeed, although the stated intent was ‘separate but equal’, underlying it all was the notion of white supremacy (Bird & Garda, n.d.). Yet, ironically, the ruling National Party spoke of South Africa as a democracy, when the majority of the population had no vote, the government had the right to ban publications and there was no Bill of Rights (Oosthuizen, 2014).

One media academic described the situation thus: “The spirit of laws oscillated between co-optation and coercion” (Fourie 2007, p. 168). It was an acknowledged fact that three of the Afrikaans newspapers were official mouthpieces of the National Party, and all newspapers published by the Afrikaans media groups supported it (Matisonn, n.d.). Those who pushed the envelope risked being harassed, banned, faced criminal charges, or even detained without trial for up to 90 days. Alternatively, the press censored itself (Oosthuizen, 2014).

In all, there were more than 100 laws restricting newsgathering and content which resulted in the South African public being unaware of the South African reality (Oosthuizen, 2014).

There’s no doubt that the normative theory of the press was authoritarian as per Siebert’s definition (McQuail, 1987). The media was required to support the government, avoid offence or attacks on authority, and censorship was justified. Coupled with the government’s virtual control over most media, television was only introduced to South Africa in 1976.

There were several reasons for this. The National Party, whose lingua franca was Afrikaans, was wary of outside influences such as civil rights movements, and a “gradual invasion of liberalism” (Cros, n.d., para 8). There was the danger that the Afrikaans language would become dissipated, as it exists nowhere else in the world outside South Africa, and they recognised that they were incapable of filling the media hours with home-grown local content. The Calvinist-Christian ethos prevailed, and conflicted with the morality they perceived would be displayed by broadcasting international content; they regarded television as a “moral danger” and the “one-eyed monster” (Cros, n.d. para 8) as a form of idolatry. (Cros, n.d. para 5) “If…you introduce television, you will pay for it with the end of the white man,” (Cros, n.d. para. 12) warned Albert Hertzog, the minister of Posts and Telegraphs at the time.

There may actually have been an element of prescience in Hertzog’s warnings. With television came a widening of the narrow focus that had epitomised South African society under the apartheid regime although initially the only television available was the state mouthpiece, the South African Broadcasting Corporation, previously broadcasting only on radio. As such, news was strictly controlled. On these airwaves there were no criticisms of the government and certainly no exposés (The South African Broadcasting Corporation, n.d.).

Founded by Naspers, itself a conglomeration of various Afrikaans press, M-Net was launched in 1986 (Naspers, n.d.). Prohibited from broadcasting news, the first current affairs program, *Carte Blanche*, was inaugurated in 1988 (Naspers, n.d.). It was a program of interviews and slice of life topics. One of the first hosts of the program explains: “We were interviewing swimmers and Bond
girls, so it was a very different show [to what it is currently]” (Watts, 2018). One of the earlier ‘investigations’ was a visit by the two hosts to a township for the day. As innocuous as that sounds, it opened the minds and eyes of many South Africans who never knew how the other half lived.

Before winning the first democratic elections in South Africa, the ANC already had their Media Charter written and ready to go. The document notes that with the transition to democracy, society must be one based on the free flow of information, and that the Media Charter would be expressed in the Constitution and Bill of Rights to entrench those values. It goes on to state that an environment must be created in which media workers can gather, process and disseminate information without restrictions, be protected against intimidation and be protected by law from disclosing their sources (Mantashe, 2016). Indeed, Nelson Mandela maintained that “a critical independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy” (Harber, 2010).

While the current state of the media in South Africa is not one without problems, investigative journalism into the functioning of government under the apartheid regime would have been forbidden. Despite Mandela’s proclamations, a latter ANC-led government was also becoming increasingly agitated by the examination into their inner workings, and there were threats of media tribunals, however,

while there has been a tense relationship between government and media since 1994, no direct action was taken against the media, and indeed tough stories were uncovered and many journalists...were sharply outspoken without any fear of arrest, closure or other form of the kind of state actions which had been common under apartheid (Harber, 2010, p. xv).

For these reasons, investigative journalism in South Africa may be considered in its infancy. It was really only after the election of the ANC government that it came into its own.

Case Study

It was South Africa, 2002, where it was becoming apparent that the newly democratic Rainbow Nation was not without its problems. The reigning president, Thabo Mbeki, appointed Judge Thabani Jali to chair a special commission to investigate and report on alleged corruption, maladministration, violence and intimidation in prisons at two such institutions in the province of Kwazulu-Natal. The Jali Commission into jails was thus created.

Grootvlei Prison, outside Bloemfontein, capital of the Free State province, had long had publicized problems with corruption. Four prisoners allegedly had had enough of the moral turpitude, one of whom described a Damascene experience. They arranged to have a small video camera smuggled into their shared cell, hidden in a strategic position. The prisoners set about recording the rampant, systematic crime and debauchery.

They captured visuals of prisoners and warders sharing food stolen from the prison kitchen, and warders, obviously part of the prison’s drug syndicate, bringing in alcohol, mandrax and marijuana for sale.
The videotapes also revealed a warder selling a loaded gun to a convicted double murderer who ‘ordered’ it to assist in his escape, and a particularly horrendous incident in which a guard ‘sold’ a juvenile from another part of the prison to an adult inmate for sex (McGreal, 2002). Judging by the casual and habitual manner in which these transactions were conducted, it seemed clear that none of these was an isolated incident.

The footage was explosive, sensational, shocking and clearly implicated a system rotten to the core (Special Assignment, 2014). It would have been a broadcasting coup for any media house.

The four prisoners handed their tapes over to the Jali Commission, which then expanded its scope to include Grootevlei prison in the investigations. They also collectively hired a lawyer, who, armed with a copy of the tapes, began making the rounds of the flagship television current affairs programs in the country. The lawyer specifically targeted three programs, broadcast on three different channels, hoping to play one off against the other (Stos, 2009).

The first was M-Net, a subscription-funded television station. As such, the audience ratings cannot compare to programs that are on free to air and public channels. However, the audience profile is more affluent than the average viewer on the other two channels and very influential. It is part of Naspers, a multinational internet and media group, listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and subsequently also listed on the London Stock Exchange (Naspers, n.d.).

Their flagship current affairs program, the aforementioned *Carte Blanche* created in 1988, is the longest running program of the three. It was designed to incorporate light programming initially, and post 1994, with investigative journalism. It was modelled after CBS’ *60 Minutes* in the USA (L. Lombard, personal communication, August 2008).

e.tv is a private free to air channel. The channel itself was only launched in 1998, and the now-defunct 3rd *Degree* was on air virtually from the start. Its mandate was to investigate, challenge and expose, and to hold those in authority accountable. Of the three programs, 3rd *Degree* had the smallest budget, and was very popular amongst the lower living standards measure (LSM) groups (H. Lategan, personal communication, August 2008).

*Special Assignment*, on the state broadcaster, SABC, was launched in 1998 by two journalists and is a specifically investigative current affairs program. It has been on air since 1998. Its audience ratings are substantially higher than both 3rd *Degree* and *Carte Blanche* (J. Pauw, personal communication, August 2008).

To put the situation into the context and normative practices of broadcast journalism in South Africa, buying interviews is considered one of the least ethical actions a journalist can take. It is called ‘chequebook journalism’, or the practice of paying for stories. Such a practice connects the journalist with the subject, who, in effect, becomes an employee (Black, Steel, Barney, 1995). As one newspaper editor cynically noted, “paying for news, like paying for love, tends to cast doubts on the sincerity of the transaction” (Selcraig, 1994).
In this instance it was the videotape, rather than the story, that was for sale—videotape captured by prisoners in a medium security jail. Source and motive is all important in a decision to buy videotape. Channels regularly buy footage from each other, as the source is trustworthy. Buying from the public is not, nor are the motives clear. There should be rigorous evaluation to ascertain the videotape is legitimate, and if the person selling the tape stands to gain by its sale beyond the price of the footage. The question must also be asked if the video existed before there was a price for it, or if it exists because there will be a price for it (Stos, 2009).

Buying such footage is not acceptable journalistic practice in South Africa as the source may be questionable; they may have an agenda; and they stand to gain financially or in other ways (cutting a deal with authorities, for example). In this kind of situation, buying videotape is tantamount to checkbook journalism (Stos, 2009).

The biggest driver of checkbook journalism is competition between channels, and the eternal quest for ratings. Those who attract the most viewers can charge the most for commercial airtime (Day, 2003). And this was sensational footage. Properly promoted, it would induce most of the people in the position to watch television to tune into that channel. Two of the three programs declined to acquire the footage.

When Carte Blanche heard there was a price tag attached, the executive producer turned it down. He said he would have loved to broadcast the material but he was not prepared to pay for it, feeling it was unethical to do so. He also noted that he hoped to always maintain this ethical position (G. Mazarakis, personal communication, April 2008). 3rd Degree, on the free to air channel, also rejected the footage. The executive producer said that his criteria for buying videotape of this kind is that the footage should be in the public interest, be newsworthy, and he would need to be satisfied that the person(s) selling the footage would not have motives that he would despise (J. Thloloe, personal communication, July 2008). There was no doubt that the footage was both newsworthy and in the public interest. Ostensibly his reservations were about the source of the videotape.

But Special Assignment, on the state broadcaster, did not hesitate. A few weeks after the tapes were handed over to the Commission, they were broadcast on Special Assignment. The executive producer of the program felt it was essential that the nation should see the footage. He said he would have preferred not to buy it, but was not willing to take the chance that it might disappear. He verified that the footage was authentic, then paid R60,000 [apx. $6,000 US at the time] in cash to the four prisoners, which in itself is against South African law. Article 289 of the Prisons Act states that “no person may without lawful authority supply or convey to any prisoner, or hide or place for his use, any document, intoxicating liquor, dagga, drug, opiate, money or any other article” (Prisons Act, 2000).

The South African state broadcaster was the only one prepared to be involved in a cash transaction to purchase ethically questionable footage. This material is still spoken of and can be screened on YouTube (Special Assignment, 2014).

It is likely that should such a situation have arisen in the UK, the US or Australia, where the competition among media is particularly relentless, a bidding war would have erupted. Television broadcasting is big business in those countries, certainly much bigger than it is in South Africa,
and the concomitant pressure to attract viewers is enormous. As investigative journalism was still somewhat in its infancy in South Africa, the competition is not great. A case in point: A rather insignificant event occurred in 2007 when heiress Paris Hilton was released from prison after spending only 5 of a 45-day sentence for reckless driving. Nonetheless it was an interview the American networks lusted after and they bid ferociously for the material. While Hilton eventually decided not to accept money for the interview, NBC had allegedly trumped ABC by significantly upping the latter's low six figure bid (Jeffries, 2007).

Checkbook journalism is still seen in those countries as a disreputable practice. However, “they pretend not to engage in it by paying for memoirs or for photographs, but that has made it a subject of more outrage” (Peters, 2001).

The decision-making models used in this case study remain relevant today, and are some of the principal philosophies used in ethical decision-making. Before evaluating the respective decisions of the executive producers, it is necessary to review these three key ethical theories.

**Deontology/Categorical Imperative**

Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804) is the philosopher most associated with the categorical imperative. Also called ‘deontology’, the origin of the word comes from the Greek word ‘deon’, meaning duty. The theory states that we are morally obliged to behave according to a specific set of rules or principles (Alexander & Moore, 2016).

Kant believed that there must be a categorical imperative to the actions one undertook, independent of circumstances, outcomes, personal preferences or opportunities (Kay, 1997). If an action is wrong in one situation, it is wrong in every situation. The moral imperative to always tell the truth, for example, must be followed through even if a life may be compromised in telling the truth (Kay, 1997). According to deontology, an action can be morally required, forbidden or permitted and as such, behaviour is very prescriptive. One must always act in a way that could become a universal law, and treat all people as an end in themselves, and not to be used merely as a means to an end (Alexander & Moore, 2016).

**Industries Employing Deontology**

In areas that require strong and unwavering policy, in which rules must be followed without exception and regardless of consequence, deontology may be the answer. Certain professions are also associated with a deontological ethic. Nursing is one of them (The Nurses Deontological Code, 2009). There also appears to be a shift in ethical thinking in the accounting profession, from a utilitarian focus on “moral responsibility for the public good” (Velayutham, 2003) to a more deontological “compliance with accounting standards” (Velayutham, 2003).

In the above case study, Carte Blanche employed deontological thinking in the decision not to buy the footage. The executive producer felt there was a moral imperative to uphold the ethics of good journalism, regardless of circumstance. His decision was based on the fact that he didn't think that paying for such footage was ethical journalism, and that the program historically had a policy of
not paying for stories. “It was difficult to lose that story because it was a story I would have loved to have had” (G. Mazarakis, personal communication, April 2008). Nonetheless, he said that while it is very difficult to be absolute, “I’d like to know that we are absolutist about this”, saying he hoped to maintain that position as long as possible (G. Mazarakis, personal communication, April 2008).

His highest loyalty was to his own integrity, and the integrity of the program. He stated that as far as he is concerned, there are definite “dos” and “don’ts” of ethical journalism, and he feels it is incorrect to transgress the clearly delineated ethical boundaries; that it is one’s duty to stay within them. Carte Blanche’s objection was to the act of buying the footage.

**Utilitarian Ethics**

Utilitarianism, on the other hand, is based on consequences of actions. One action would be deemed more ethical than another if the outcome resulted in more people benefitting than being harmed (Cavalier, 1995).

Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and later, Henry Sidgwick are the proponents of classical utilitarianism. As Mill (1879) described it, “Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure” (pp 9-10).

There are various forms of utilitarianism, such as Direct, Evaluative, Hedonism, Actual, etc. But Classic utilitarianism is consequentialist as it believes that the moral rightness of an act depends directly and only on consequences (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2015). Under utilitarianism, immoral acts can be considered permissible if the consequences are favourable, and wars are often fought with such thinking in mind. If innocent people are killed as a result of warfare it is not regarded as unethical, as the intended result is for the benefit of the greatest good. Likewise, it would be acceptable to kill one person if the result is saving the lives of several (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2015).

**Industries Employing Utilitarianism**

This philosophy is the ethical theory most employed in journalism, where taping telephone conversations without the other party being aware, or misrepresenting oneself, (neither being good journalistic practice) is ultimately condoned if it means that justice is served and more people benefit than are harmed.

Businesses have also utilized this philosophy, where ethical indiscretions are justified for the bottom line. It is important to remember that the greater good does not just refer to shareholders.

One aspect worth considering is that it is sometimes difficult to assess the outcome of behavior. Businesses may pursue a course of action with the rationale that there is no harm to anyone without fully anticipating the potential consequences.
The executive producer of *Special Assignment* had different considerations to those of the executive producer of *Carte Blanche*. He stated that as the footage was so profoundly newsworthy and in the public interest, and as his program was being aired on the state broadcaster, it was imperative to the public interest that this specific item be screened. He believed that the unethical practice of paying for the videotape was ultimately justified as broadcasting the material was in the best interest of the country; that his action would bring about consequences better than any alternative (J. Pauw, personal communication, April 2008).

He felt that had he NOT paid for the footage, someone with a vested interest would have bought and destroyed it and the story would have been lost. He did not think that it would be given freely to the press.

His philosophy, then, was that the ethical compromise of paying for the story was justified by the information becoming public. The extreme corruption in prisons was brought into the public sphere where it could be debated and where something could be done to address it. It was about the consequences, and that it benefitted more than the handful it harmed.

**Virtue Ethics**

This philosophy, as the name would suggest, is about living a life of virtue. Plato and Aristotle are considered the fathers of virtue ethics.

Aristotle believed that the key to living virtuously was to attain self-knowledge. He postulated that we are born as potential people. Through self-knowledge we develop ourselves, our character traits and fulfil our potential, which leads to happiness (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2016).

Aristotle described virtue as the character, or inclination of a person, to make wise decisions. He spoke of practical wisdom, or phronesis, as coming from a life lived well, with good choices, and demonstrating virtues such courage, kindness, honesty and generosity. Moral virtue is developed and strengthened from practice, and moral character is augmented and made dependable from making morally virtuous choices. Virtue then becomes a way of life (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2016).

Julia Annas (2011) puts a modern spin on an ancient philosophy by stating that learning any skill is about practise. Just as someone would become a concert pianist through diligent training, one can become virtuous by performing virtuous acts in a meaningful way as often as the situation arises. One may not be born courageous, for example, but in practising courage one learns.
Business Models Employing Virtue Ethics

Where employing virtue ethics in the business world may have once made a CEO or business a laughing stock, the global emphasis on corporate social responsibility and acting from moral character has become a more popular guiding philosophy than it was in previous decades (Fontrodona, Sison, de Bruin (2014)).

Esteemed professors of business ethics, Joan Fontrodona, Alejo José G. Sison and Boudewijn de Bruin (2014) have stated that

Virtue ethics provides managers and business with an opportunity to ask themselves what kind of people they become through their actions, and how their decisions impact the lives of others. It gives them a chance to consider what kind of business environments and cultures they should build, how business goals, policies and procedures foster positive or negative leaning in their employees and what kind of societies they contribute to developing through their operations and services they offer (p. 563).

Indeed, this is the philosophy espoused by the executive producer of 3rd Degree.

The executive producer of this program turned down the option of purchasing the material. He said his criteria for buying such footage was that it must be in the public interest, be newsworthy, and the people selling it wouldn't have motives that he would despise (J. Thloloe, personal communication, July 2008).

The story was unequivocally very newsworthy and in the public interest. His decision not to purchase the footage was apparently due to his assessment of the prisoners’ motivation. All four men were murderers and/or robbers. However, while the perceived motive of the prisoners was the stated objection, the decision was ultimately about the character of the executive producer.

He was the eldest of the executive producers by a few decades and a man who is greatly respected in South Africa’s journalism industry. He left 3rd Degree to become the country’s press ombudsman and among many other appointments held the chair of the editor’s forum (Joseph Nong “Joe” Thloloe, n.d.). He was awarded a fellowship to Harvard (Joe Thloloe, NF ’89) and was a recipient of an award for media integrity (Joe Thloloe gets media award, 2012).

3rd Degree’s decision rested on the actor, or the executive producer.

Competition

These executive producers were well aware of the implications of screening such footage on their programs. But without that hugely competitive push that many other countries face, they were perhaps given the luxury of choosing whether or not to bid on it, based on their own ethical values.

The fact that only one of the three channels was interested in buying the footage meant that there wasn’t a huge price tag; certainly not as big as it would have been had three programs been bidding
against each other for it. In fact, the executive producer of *Special Assignment* named the price he was willing to pay, justifying how much it would have cost him to have produced the same number of minutes himself (J. Pauw, personal communication, April 2008).

There are journalists who argue that information should be considered a product, similar to circulation figures or intellectual property for which we would ungrudgingly pay (Selcraig, 1994). Regardless, there is certainly an understanding that if a product does not sell it won’t remain in the marketplace.

**Conclusion**

The Jali Commission, a commission of inquiry into the Department of Correctional Services was ongoing at the time, and the videotapes certainly added momentum to the investigation. In fact, a special investigating unit was formed as a result.

*Special Assignment* considered utilitarianism in paying for the material and broadcasting the story. They were not criminally charged for paying cash to the prisoners. However, the executive producer allowed that it would have been more prudent to explain to audiences how and why they obtained possession of the prison tapes as he felt their credibility might have suffered by not admitting the fact of the payment upfront (J. Pauw, personal communication, April 2008). There was agreement amongst other South African journalists, one of whom summed it up as follows:

“It’s actually a bit hypocritical of us as a community of journalists to say that what everyone else is doing should be in the public interest, but surely our work is absolutely in the public interest and therefore the public should know everything about how it comes into being. And if there is something in that process that we want to hide from the public, what does that say about our ethics?” (Landman, 2008, as cited in Stos, 2009, p. 93).

When offered to purchase astonishing footage of unscrupulous goings-on at a state institution, the executive producers of three current affairs programs each made a decision corresponding with one of three normative ethical philosophies, specifically deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics respectively.

Whereas Carte Blanche focussed on the act, Special Assignment focussed on the outcome of the act, while 3rd Degree focussed on the actor. Each person made different decisions for different reasons, but all were ultimately ethical.

FYI - One of the prisoners subsequently became a public figure and is highly sought after as a motivational speaker, as well as a founding member of a political party. The infamous videotape controversy was not an unacknowledged factor in his celebrity (Gayton McKenzie South African MultiMillionaire Business Man, Motivational Speaker, Former Bank Robber, 2010).

And all four inmates received a presidential pardon (Thakali, 2007).
About the Author

Susan Stos is a journalist and independent educational consultant in the field of ethics. She has developed an ethical decision-making course, APPLY Ethics, and presents workshops and lectures to teachers, secondary, post- and undergrad university students. She has an honours BA from McMaster University in Canada and Master’s degree in journalism (thesis on ethics) from the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. She has written chapters/modules/articles for academic journals, textbooks, newspapers, and magazines in the field of ethics, and presented a MOOC on journalism ethics for Wits University. She worked in the national newsroom of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and as producer/director of Carte Blanche (a weekly current affairs program) on M-Net in South Africa. She executive produced Carte Blanche Africa which was broadcast to the African continent.

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Advancing Gender Equality in the Media Industries Through the Use of Mobile Journalism as Innovative Practice

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Abstract

This paper explores the advantages of using mobile journalism as an innovative practice to renew journalism education when focusing on a certain topic, in this case gender equality in the media. It investigates how mobile journalism can teach students to consider ethical boundaries when working via smartphones, as well as deepening their understanding of creating gender-aware news stories. It is based on the experiences from the project ‘Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries’, co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme of the European Union, consisting of a set of tools aiming to combat gender stereotypes and promote an equal, diverse and inclusive media sector.

Introduction

Using mobile journalism (MoJo) can be an innovative way to renew journalism education, especially when focusing on a certain topic. This paper explores the advantages of using MoJo when the topic is gender equality in the media, and the group of students has a mix of different nationalities with mixed experiences of practical work. It investigates how MoJo can teach students to consider ethical boundaries when working via smartphones as well as deepening their understanding of creating gender-aware news stories.

The setting of this paper investigating MoJo practice is the project ‘Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries’ (AGEMI), which is co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme of the European Union (EU). The project consists of a set of tools aiming to combat gender stereotypes and promote an equal, diverse and inclusive media sector. The target users are teachers, students, journalists, and media organisations. AGEMI was developed by a group of researchers and practitioners from three universities, Newcastle University, the University of Padova, and the University of Gothenburg, and two associations of media professionals, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) and the Permanent Conference of the Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators (COPEAM). Students have been involved through the process of building the online platform and its resources, and they also contribute their own stories to the platform.

The AGEMI platform has three main elements: a resource bank of good practice, a set of learning resources, and networking between media and journalism students and media professionals. The main goals of AGEMI are:

- fostering a gender equality perspective within journalism, media education and professional practice
• bridging the transition between education and employment;
• building on and fostering collaboration within and across the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) Task Force on the Global Alliance for Media and Gender (GAMAG);
• linking to the Global Alliance for Media and Gender (GAMAG);
• creating synergies with the UNESCO UniTWIN University Network for Gender Media and ICT, and
• reaching out to other local, national and transnational networks working on gender equality.

This paper focuses primarily on the networking between journalism students and media professionals and the pedagogical use of smartphones in the learning process. The methodology in this paper is document analysis and a literature review, combined with authors’ own experiences as course leaders at the AGEMI summer school in 2018 at the University of Gothenburg. Student interviews were undertaken by independent EU evaluators and the summary of the student evaluation is included in the material. The study is also based on the analysis of the student material from the MoJo tasks.

The Importance of Gender Equality in the Media

Gender equality is a fundamental condition for the full enjoyment of human rights by women and men, and the promotion of gender equality is a worldwide obligation. According to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), gender stereotypes are considered to be a form of discrimination against women, which governments must take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify (UN General Assembly 1979, Svensson & Edström 2014). The problem of gender stereotypes was further emphasized in the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (BpfA), adopted at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in 1995. The topic of women and media is addressed specifically by the BpfA (Area J) with a list of actions needed to be taken by states, civil society, and media industries (United Nations, 1995). The BpfA has two strategic objectives for the media: to increase women’s access to and participation in the media, and to promote a non-stereotyped portrayal of women in media.

The BpfA, together with CEDAW, are two core documents for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, or Agenda 2030) where gender equality is both one of 17 goals and a cross-cutting theme for all goals (United Nations, 2015). However, the role of the media is not explicitly mentioned in the SDGs, neither is freedom of expression nor media freedom. State parties are, for various reasons, not fully engaging with gender and media issues; the fundamental values of freedom of expression and gender equality often seem to be in conflict with each other, leading to almost no action at all, not even collecting or monitoring sex-disaggregated data on the media (Edström, 2019a; Edström 2019b).

Therefore, the AGEMI theme of gender equality in the media is an especially topical subject for journalism education, since there is a substantial democratic deficit in the media when it comes to gender, both in content and in the organisations. There also seems to be a lack of gender awareness in journalism education curricula. For example, a survey of 22 journalism education institutions in
Sweden resulted in 16 responses. Two of the institutions said that they offered courses on gender and media (one was a commissioned course outside the regular programme) and seven said that they had mandatory course literature regarding gender and media (Edström & Jacobsson, 2015).

The persistence of negative gender stereotypes has been pointed out many times as an obstacle to the achievement of gender equality, even in more gender-equal and progressive Scandinavian countries. The lack of women in the global news is still a problem: 24% of news subjects are women according to the Global Media Monitoring Project (Macharia 2015). The gendered newsroom culture, with horizontal and vertical divisions, has also been highlighted in several studies (Byerly, 2011; Byerly, 2013; Council of Europe 2013; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2013; Edström 2014; Edström & Facht, 2018; Edström, 2019b).

The problems with gender inequalities remain, both in the media and in society (UNESCO, 2018; Djerf-Pierre & Edström, forthcoming). Recent developments also suggest that gender equality as a core value is being contested by many nationalist movements in Europe. The ethical challenge is then to educate future journalists to hold onto human rights, freedom of expression and gender equality as core values in society and to make journalism more inclusive.

AGEMI Summer School 2018

The AGEMI summer school in 2018 had several aims: to test some of the online units created by AGEMI, to allow the students to contribute new ideas, and to elaborate various gender and media topics. The students also got a chance to meet editors and journalists from various parts of Europe, who were experienced in promoting gender equality. The intention of the knowledge exchange was also to create a common baseline for the students when they subsequently did individual internships with various AGEMI partners, such as media institutions, organisations and newsrooms.

The three universities within the AGEMI consortium could each send 10 students: 27 students from eight countries attended. In the group were three PhD students (from France, Denmark and Bangladesh) who also participated due to their interest in gender and journalism. The students met in Gothenburg, Sweden, in the last week of August 2018 to exchange ideas how to advance gender equality in the media. Travel and accommodation for students were paid by the AGEMI project and all but one Swedish student arranged their own housing.

The programme was quite intense, mixing practical and theoretical topics with talks given by guest lecturers. The media professionals were:

- Maria Brändström (Sveriges Television - Swedish public service broadcaster)
- Erica Hedin, former Diversity Officer (Sveriges Radio - Swedish public service broadcaster)
- Claire Kendall (BBC - British public service broadcaster)
- Safia Kessas (RTBF – Belgian public service broadcaster)
- Gunilla Ivarsson (former chair of IAWRT - International Association of Women in Radio and TV)
- Suzanne Moll (independent consultant)
- Luisella Serviso (Gi.U.Li.A, network of Italian women journalists)
• Giovanna Pezzuoli (Gi.U.Li.A, network of Italian women journalists)

The encounters between the students and the media professionals at the AGEMI summer school were created to raise awareness of the problems of gender inequality, to share ideas and experiences, and to consider a range of good practices which have been developed by media professionals and their organisations to promote gender equality.

**Mobile journalism**

As mentioned, one part of the AGEMI summer school consisted of a practical task regarding mobile journalism, MoJo: the students learned how to use their smartphones to create stories on gender equality. MoJo is here defined as working with a smartphone; filming, interviewing, editing, and uploading stories on the web. MoJo may be considered as both a tool for journalists in the field and a way for anyone to produce user-generated content (Burum & Quinn, 2015, pp. 11-12; Montgomery, 2018; Hill & Bradshaw, 2019, pp. 26–27).

A tool such as MoJo can be a useful and effective way to develop self-reflexivity around a particular issue, in this case, gender equality, arguing that asking students to demonstrate their understanding through their own research and filmmaking embeds their learning in a way which is more meaningful to them than simply sitting in a classroom being lectured. In other words, focusing on ‘learning by doing’ rather than ‘learning by being told stuff’. It may also contribute to peer learning (Bound, Cohen, & Sampson, 2001, p.3).

The Department of Journalism, Media and Communication (JMG), University of Gothenburg, has used MoJo as a pedagogical tool since 2015 and it is an integrated part of all educational levels, from the first week of the undergraduate programme to masters’ level. MoJo is considered to be a core skill for future journalists, is already a professional tool in most newsrooms, and is something that journalism students can use regardless of their field of interest. It is also important for students to be able to explore ethical boundaries that follow with routines of being a journalist who publishes 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Often there are no editorial filters when publishing on the go and journalists have to navigate editing and matters of privacy, consent and fact-checking.

When it comes to ethical decisions for journalists, it is important to make sure that all information is true and that what is said and shown is correct. Furthermore, it is essential to keep track of which laws apply to the area or country, with particular attention paid to avoiding slander or defamatory filming. MoJo as a method often means faster publishing decisions, which might increase the risk of slander. When publishing the journalistic material directly on the internet, it is not always possible to hide behind a responsible publisher. Depending on jurisdiction, journalists risk being prosecuted for those editorial decisions taken on the go, publishing live or on a social platform (Burum & Quinn, 2015, p. 277–278).

The task for the students at the AGEMI summer school was in three stages. Firstly, they undertook short interviews, then they created stories about gender equality in Gothenburg and, after the summer school, they used it as a tool to report back from a one-week internship at a newsroom or organisation working with gender equality. One challenge at the summer school was that the students had mixed experience, or no experience, of mobile journalism. Therefore, we created
teams of three students, with one Swedish student in every group who were familiar with MoJo, who knew the ethical guidelines and media laws in Sweden, as well as how to get around the city.

The first task was to interview each other and upload a student blog, as way of getting to know each other, and how to operate their smartphones. The students were taught to transform their headsets into microphones and learn basic image composition. They learned how to hold and manage the phone in a way that makes the end result of the filming look professional. The first task was also a way for the students to get to know each other. They uploaded the films on a student blog where everyone could see each other’s work. The blog was also the place where the practical instructions for the Mojos could be found.

The second task was to do a story on gender equality in Gothenburg. The topic were chosen by the students, but there were also a list of suggested topics that some student groups picked up on, such as a Wikigender session at Chalmers School of technology, The Statement Festival – a music festival for women only Gothenburg Rights centre and the project of making a gaming app for children, Alex and the Alchemist’s Secret, developed by Doris Film, a network with the purpose to change the film industry to become more gender equal. The last topic was expanded to the topic of stereotypes in the gaming industry. Several students chose their own topics, e.g., unisex fashion (the brand Hope), an ironic story (‘A girl’s guide to reaching home safely at night’), and the increase in the beauty clinics in Gothenburg. One group decided to do an interview with one of the guest speakers, Maria Brändström, SVT Umeå, on the representation of women in digital media in Sweden and the gender gaps in online news.

In the second task, the students developed their skills and worked more with storytelling and journalistic methods and tools used in video reporting. They got to learn, among other things, the importance of checking a source and how to build a good story with the help of a clear beginning, middle and end. The AGEMI summer school concluded with seminars where each group presented their second MoJo task in small seminar groups.

**Student Evaluation**

The AGEMI project has been subject to ongoing independent evaluation. During the summer school, the EU evaluators had their own meetings with the students and asked them about the content and learning processes. A summary from the student evaluations concludes that 86% made positive comments on their MoJo experience, and 43% said that MoJo was fun or great. Out of these, most said they learned something new, including new skills that would be useful in the future. Several students found it challenging or stressful – but fun – and would have liked to have more time to do better work with the MoJo tasks. Here is a flavour of what they said:

- It was great to work with so many different kinds of people;
- Their groups were enjoyable and by the end they had become friends;
- They enjoyed working as a team;
- It was great to learn new skills and start to apply them straight away; and
- Practicing MoJo in a different/new country was great.
As for those who did not really enjoy the MoJo exercises (14%), the main reason was that they felt there was insufficient time to do what they were asked to do properly, and that was frustrating. One student did not think that MoJo was well connected to the rest of the programme, and another one did not mention MoJo at all.

This confirms the conversation that we had as course leaders with the students, that some were a little scared at first, but they learned a lot by doing the exercise and most groups managed to bridge the various knowledge levels, both gender equality and MoJo.

**Preliminary Findings and Discussion**

There seem to be advantages of combining mobile journalism with a certain topic.

Firstly, mobile journalism is an innovative practice in itself. The AGEMI summer school experience also revealed that it can be used as a tool for peer-learning, connecting students with various skills and experience to learn from each other. The students who were experienced in MoJo were able to tutor their fellow students and they were able to create journalism together. Secondly, the topic of gender equality gave the students a chance to reflect at a personal and structural level, to create awareness of the male dominance in news media production, and how to avoid stereotypes in their own reporting. With the MoJo tasks, the students also started a reflexive process on interpretations of gender equality challenges to increase their ethical and professional knowledge. Thirdly, the exercise with mixed groups of students revealed differences in European journalism cultures and traditions that would not have been visible without the exercise.

Journalism is facing many challenges, one of them is being relevant to readers and users and being able to cover global challenges, such as the lack of gender equality. The professional business of journalism will require that students are able to perform in various ways and via various platforms: in this context, mobile journalism can be regarded as a complement to traditional reporting. For example, the students can practice live reporting and journalistic storytelling with audio and pictures. Almost every student has a relationship with their smartphone, and everyone can, in a few seconds, transform a smartphone into a video camera, take photos, record audio, or go live 24/7. Through mobile journalism students can produce and publish from everywhere at any time, even during their education. To know the ethical boundaries are then, of course, crucial. The AGEMI summer school turned out to be a safe space where they could experiment, test and expand their own capacities and knowledge.

We also have to acknowledge the intercultural learning that took place in the MoJo groups and in the other temporary groups at the summer school that discussed and gave feedback to the AGEMI online units. The understanding of what gender equality means is universal yet culturally, historically and locally situated. The existence of a unisex clothing brand and a music festival with no men allowed were two examples of gender equality themes in the city of Gothenburg that spurred many discussions.

The AGEMI platform aims to be a global resource on advancing gender equality in the media industries. The primary audiences are students and educators in universities, the secondary audiences are media practitioners and their organisations, and then there are media unions, civil society organisations, government departments, local authorities, regulatory bodies, and anyone
interested in understanding more about the media-gender relationship and addressing the challenge of overcoming gender stereotypes and inequalities. Through the MoJo exercise at the AGEMI summer school, more student-created stories on gender equality are now available.

We have in this paper argued that a tool such as mobile journalism is a useful/effective way to develop self-reflexivity around a particular issue. In this case, gender equality, we asked the students to demonstrate their understanding through their own research and filmmaking, embedding their learning in a way that is innovative and more meaningful to them than simply sitting in a classroom and being lectured at.

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Appendix

About AGEMI - Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries

The project is funded by the European Commission and the Rights, Equality and Citizenship/Justice Programme (2014-2020): action grants to support transnational projects to promote good practices on gender roles and to overcome gender stereotypes in education, training and in the workplace (Call for proposals JUST/2015/RGEN/AG/ROLE). [www.agemi-eu.org](http://www.agemi-eu.org)

The project leader is professor Karen Ross, Newcastle University.

About the AGEMI internship partners, from the AGEMI website:

“A significant aim of AGEMI is to build bridges between education and employment and in particular, to find ways for journalism and media students to engage with media professionals and organisations who use media to promote gender equality. Although students will often have the opportunity to intern with an organisation as part of their degree programme, the difference with AGEMI is that our internships are specifically focused on encouraging students to get involved in gender equality activities with their intern host. This was also one of the criteria for hosts to participate in AGEMI. A total of 25 students took advantage of an opportunity to work with a range of media professionals in formal newsrooms and media houses, but also with advocacy, activist and women-focused NGOs. We are immensely grateful to all our intern hosts who provided a fantastic opportunity to our students:

BBC, England; COPEAM, Italy; DJV, Germany; European Federation of Journalists, Belgium; European Women’s Audio Visual Network, France; European Women’s Lobby, Belgium; International Federation of Actors, Belgium; Johnston Press, Northern Ireland and England; Kvinna till Kvinna, Sweden; Observatorio de Pavia, Italy; Radio Tyneside, England; RAI, Italy; RTBF, Belgium; SVT, Sweden; Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research, Sweden; University of Padova, Italy.”

About GAMAG

The Global Alliance for Media and Gender is a global movement to promote gender equality in and through media, launched by UNESCO and partners at the Global Forum on Media and Gender in December 2013. GAMAG works to achieve gender equality in and through the media and ICTs in all formats and locations and across different forms of ownership. [https://gamag.net/](https://gamag.net/)

About UniTWIN Gender, Media and ICT

The Gender, Media and ICT University Network is a UNESCO UniTWIN (the abbreviation for University Twinning and Networking Programme). The network aims to advance research training and program development in UNESCO’s fields of competence by building university networks and encouraging co-operation between gender, media and ICT scholars. [https://en.unesco.org/unitwin-network-gender-media-icts](https://en.unesco.org/unitwin-network-gender-media-icts)
Supporting education and research on media, information and communication technologies, the Network specifically aims to promote gender equality and women’s participation in and through media on a global scale through research, education and advocacy.
Checking All The Boxes: Debating the Need for Journalism Students to Acquire Ethical Clearance for their Research

Dr Marenet Jordaan
Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Abstract:

Social science research is increasingly subjected to strict university-mandated ethical review processes. Since journalism departments or programmes often find a home in the social sciences, it could be argued that journalism research originating in higher education institutions should also serve before ethics committees – before sources are contacted. This paper illustrates the differences, and similarities, between ethical journalism and ethical academic writing. An example from a student-run digital-first news publication is offered as support for the view that pedagogy-driven student journalism should not require ethical review. Notwithstanding, journalism students should be trained to reflect on ethical review processes as it might enhance the quality of their own work.

Introduction

Journalism education programmes have always “occupied an uneasy space on the fringe of the university” (Hamilton, 2014, p. 289). These programmes are not only submitted to the age-old theory versus practice debate, they are also by nature interdisciplinary, which makes finding a home within a specific faculty or department a challenge. According to Mason (2015, p. 22), the academy “as a whole” questions the “theoretical mettle and impact” of journalism studies research. As such, journalism studies researchers often feel obliged to defend the relevance of their discipline and its worth within the broader university environment.

This running battle for relevance does not only affect journalism studies researchers; it can have a profound effect on how aspiring media workers are trained in higher degree journalism programmes.

On the one hand, educators have to keep up with ever-changing industry demands (see for instance: Ferrucci, 2018; Johnston, 2018; Tulloch & Mas i Manchon, 2018; Wenger, Owens, & Cain, 2018). In the words of Wenger, Owens and Cain (2018, p. 19): “Ultimately, it is hard to know what to teach and how to teach it when those goals are a moving target.”

On the other hand lies the challenge of justifying the position of journalism education programmes within a university environment where academic research outputs are key indicators of success (see for instance: Duffy, 2015; Kemper, 2015; Mason, 2015; Hamilton, 2014). Mason (2015, p. 22) explains:

The academy as a whole, especially the hard sciences, are biased against mass communication theory and methodological technique as lacking theoretical mettle and impact – the bias is systemic, affecting how journalism is perceived within a university and how its research is valued in the broader academic landscape.
Questions can thus be raised whether journalism educators, and their students, should constantly toe the industry line, or whether they should strive to better fit into higher education environments.

One issue that has the potential to further complicate matters, resides in apparent divergent views academics and journalists could hold on what constitutes ethical research and writing. Matheson (2019) argues that “tensions over journalism's place in the academy are central to the question of how to connect journalism to institutional research ethics processes”.

When doing social sciences research involving human participants academics need to adhere to strict, mandatory ethical protocols – usually involving a clearance process through an institutional ethics review committee (Wassenaar & Slack, 2016). Yet, journalists, whose work as a rule also involves interactions with humans, “operate under different rules of engagement” (Sieber & Tolich, 2015). In the case of journalists, their practices (at least in most democratic dispensations) are grounded in notions of free speech and media freedom. As Vine, Batty and Muir (2016, p. 233) explain:

The ‘worldview’ and ‘values’ of journalism prioritise a public right to know, aspire to facilitation and protection of freedom and diversity in the public sphere, and demand the practice of its craft in an independent manner.

Sieber and Tolich (2015) summarise the inherent differences between academic ethics and journalistic ethics thus: “Rather than having rights [as is the case with journalists], constraints frame researchers’ ethical considerations.”

This paper aims to contribute to debates on the ethics of journalism as practiced within higher education settings. The key question that directs this exploration is: Should students who practise journalism as part of their coursework be required to adhere to the same ethical review guidelines set out for other students in the social sciences?

Background on ethical research within the social sciences will be provided, along with a brief overview of what is considered ethical journalism practice. I will also show where these two approaches to human interactions arguably diverge and converge.

The example of a student-run, digital-first news production hub will then be used to illustrate how being based in a university can raise concerns around ethical clearance procedures used in journalism education – especially when students report on contentious university-related issues.

In the final instance, this paper hopes to offer some thoughts on how graduate journalism students’ work can be judged on both academic merit and according to industry expectations.

**The Ethics of Research in the Social Sciences**

According to Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012), “ethics review is increasingly becoming mandatory for social science research globally”. In addition, Wassenaar and Slack (2016, p. 307) contend that “poor ethics” can have the same detrimental effect on the “social value” of research as does “poor
methodology” on “the validity and utility of findings”. Most higher education research ethics committees commit to values similar to those of my home institution:

The purpose of the Research Ethics Committee (REC): Humanities in reviewing research, is to contribute to safeguarding the dignity, rights, safety, and well-being of all actual or potential participants in social, behavioral, economic and educational research conducted at Stellenbosch University. (Stellenbosch University: Research Development, n.d.-a)

In other words: the “dignity, rights, safety, and well-being” of research subjects should ideally be the determining factors when deciding if a proposed research project can be completed in an ethical manner. Or as Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) explain: “Academic freedom permits freedom of intellectual enquiry, but cannot sanction particular research methodologies that adversely affect the dignity and the rights of others.”

According to Israel (2015), social scientists are often caught between the need to conduct their research in an ethical manner, and the need to comply to regulatory processes and procedures that can be experienced as bureaucratic in nature. Many of my journalism students at Master’s level, unfortunately also consider the ethical clearance process as merely checking a list of compulsory boxes to get to the fun part of the research.

Israel (2015) contends that social scientists who see ethical review processes as hurdles might increasingly start to “ignore research ethics committees or retreat into safer research territories”. Such researchers do not see the work of ethics review committees as contributing to either their research aims or their research approaches. Nevertheless, adds Israel:

Social scientists can only benefit from contributing to the creation of an environment where they operate ethically, and where review mechanisms are conducted by respected, knowledgeable and experienced people who can help researchers develop better practice. (Israel, 2015)

In a similar vein, Wassenaar and Slack (2016, p. 308) suggest that a research ethics committee should be viewed “as a partner rather than an adversary”. These researchers make some practical suggestions on how researchers can approach ethics committees, including studying institutional policies on ethics review, engaging in a professional manner with the committees when queries are received, and being honest about potential harms (Wassenaar & Slack, 2016).

My contention, in line with the authors cited above, is that social science research situated in higher education institutions as a rule benefits from ethical review process – both in terms of academic rigour, as well as with regards societal value and acceptance. Adhering to the guidelines for ethical research should not just be a matter of checking the boxes; it should be a well thought out process that considers how all aspects of the research might influence the validity of the findings and the dignity of research participants.

As journalist turned researcher and educator, however, my views on ethical clearance processes are less well-defined. This uncertainty can in part be ascribed to the tradition of self-regulation according to professional codes of conduct that characterises my field. In the next section, I will briefly touch on current views of what constitutes ethical journalistic practices – with a specific focus on South Africa.
The Ethics of Journalism as Professional Practice

Some oft-cited general guidelines for acceptable journalistic practice, can be found in the so-called “elements of journalism” as formulated by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2007). These principles “have helped both journalists and the people in self-governing systems to adjust to the demands of an ever more complex world” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 5). The principles include, amongst others, the obligation to report the truth, loyalty to audiences, the critical need to verify information, editorial independence, the need to keep news “comprehensive and in proportion”, and the right of journalists to exercise their “personal conscience” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007).

Another perspective on journalism ethics is advocated by the Ethical Journalism Network as five “core principles”: truth and accuracy; independence; fairness and impartiality; humanity; and, accountability (Ethical Journalism Network, n.d.).

In my local context, the preamble to the Press Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media, reads that the “media exist to serve society” (The Press Council of South Africa, 2019). In addition, this Code holds forth:

The media’s work is guided at all times by the public interest, understood to describe information of legitimate interest or importance to citizens. As journalists we commit ourselves to the highest standards, to maintain credibility and keep the trust of the public. (The Press Council of South Africa, 2019)

This preamble, and the guidelines that follow it, are arguably universally applicable and comply with many similar international codes of conduct. Matheson (2019) explains that “western journalism” (which South African media are generally modelled on), has come to some “broad consensus on ethical practice” which centres on “freedom of expression, the public good and the interests of the disempowered”. In essence, this approach to ethical practice boils down to a balance between freedom of expression and social responsibility. Institutions such as the Press Council of South Africa, usually functions as independent regulatory mechanisms to monitor the editorial content of publications according to the guidelines set out in the codes of conduct.

In South Africa many ethical codes acknowledge the unique history of our country that still has bearing on the current media context. Part of the preamble to the Editorial Code of Ethics of the renowned weekly the Mail & Guardian for instance reads: “We salute those in our history who fought racism and oppression and created a democratic order which guarantees this right, and pledge to defend it at all times (Mail & Guardian, 2010).” It falls outside the scope of the paper to delve deeper into what the commitment to democratic ideals means for journalism – especially at university-level. Suffice to say that it adds another dimension to explorations into what constitutes ethical behaviour.

Whether journalistic outputs originating in the academy should only adhere to the broad professional guidelines and codes of conduct set out above remains a point of contention. Should journalists-turned-researchers follow their professional ethical instincts as cultivated in the newsroom and guided by self-regulatory processes? Or should journalists-turned-educators adhere
to the ethical guidelines for social science research set out by the higher education institutions they now call home? And, more importantly, how should a new generation of aspiring journalists be trained when it comes to developing an ethical awareness and conscience?

**A Clash of (Ethical) Cultures: Professional Journalism vs. Journalism in the Academy**

When dissecting the relationship between journalism ethics and academic integrity (as encapsulated in ethics review processes), one should note that these seemingly divergent approaches to research actually have a lot in common. As Mason (2015, p. 21) argues:

> The process for producing high quality journalism mimics every component necessary to scholarly research – data gathering, theory testing, reviewing previous literature, writing formulas, jurying by colleagues.

In a similar vein, Duffy (2015, p. 5) describes journalism and academic writing as “family” that share “the same genes of investigation and deliberation”. Or, in the words of Mason (2015) again: “The intellectual and physical effort to produce substantial journalism varies little from that necessary for scholarly output.”

It has thus been established that journalism and academic research have many methods and approaches in common. Researchers such as Awad (2006), Hermann (2017) and Meier and Schützeneder (2019) draw direct lines, albeit with some reservations, between journalism, ethnography, anthropology and evidence-based action research. These authors seemingly agree that journalists can learn a lot from academic research and that there should be a transfer of knowledge between journalism as practice, academic journalism research and journalism education.

Awad (2006, p. 923), for example, argues that journalism and anthropology face similar ethical challenges to which they respond differently. One example of such different responses centre on the way journalists and social scientists relate to their sources. Social scientists are usually mandated to protect the anonymity of research participants, while for journalists “confidentiality is not an asset, but a costly compromise in the tradeoff for information” (Awad, 2006, p. 933). Adds, Awad (2006, p. 933): “In journalism, real names are real people and hiding those names is a cause for suspicion.” She contends that comparing these two research disciplines may offer journalism “new insights into what the profession usually takes for granted” (Awad, 2006, p. 923). In other words: journalists will be nudged towards self-reflection when confronted with academic guidelines on how to interact with research participants. Similarly, Hermann (2017, p. 242) argues that teaching journalism students ethnographic methods of enquiry, in line with the social science tradition, can “propel the kind of journalistic reflexivity that may smooth the division between theory and practice”.

For Meier and Schützeneder (2019) bridging this gap between journalism education and professional journalistic practices lies in encouraging students to do proper, evidence-based research that can benefit working journalists. According to these researchers, journalism students are usually eager get into newsrooms to gain insight into “journalistic routines” and start imitating the practices they observe there (Meier & Schützeneder, 2019). Through encouraging their own
students to analyse “innovative routines and formats” through “scientific methods”, Meier and Schützeneder (2019) believe they taught the students to recognise “the value of scientific research for editorial practice as well as the value of evidence-based journalistic practice”.

Despite the obvious success of programmes that thus encourage students to reflect on their work or take their academic research skills into practical journalism settings, the question still remains: Which ethical guidelines should students follow as they move between newsroom and classroom? This question is especially pertinent when one takes into account one of the key differences between social science research and journalism, as captured here by Sieber and Tolich (2015):

A researcher's first obligation is not to the public's right to know or to serve the community. Their obligation is to the individual who volunteers to be part of the research. This obligation is to do no harm to research subject. ... A journalist's goal is to write in the public interest, whereas researchers seek to protect those vulnerable persons drawn into any research project from harm.

To further illustrate the quagmire that is journalism practised in a higher education setting, I next highlight some issues faced by our postgraduate students while running a digital-first community news publication.

The Ethics of Pedagogy-Driven Student Journalism: A South African Example

The digital-first publication in question is run by the honours journalism class at Stellenbosch University. Our students come from a variety of undergraduate disciplines into a one-year, full-time postgraduate course focused on practical and critical thinking skills that prepare them for a career in the media. The website, MatieMedia, was started in 2017 and is run by a student editorial team, with some input and mentorship from a practitioner-turned-educator. It serves as home for most of the students’ coursework – ranging from narrative profiles to podcasts. The students describe their aims thus on the website:

Here at MatieMedia, we strive to provide real news that is relevant and accessible to the residents and the students of Stellenbosch and surrounds ... we seek to position ourselves at the forefront of the ever-changing world of reporting by embracing the digital age, while still holding true to old-fashioned journalism done on the ground and face-to-face. (MatieMedia, 2019)

At the beginning of each year the students are tasked with writing a code of ethics for MatieMedia – based on extensive research about existing professional codes; yet relevant to their own context as university-based community news publication. This code of ethics then serves as the starting point for handling any ethical quandaries related to their reporting for MatieMedia.

One news event featured on MatieMedia come to mind when entering debates on journalism as practiced by students in a higher education setting. It relates to a shooting at a popular night club in Stellenbosch. One of our students, completely by chance, was close to the club on the night in question. He managed to capture a voice note of a distraught man running into the club, calling for his wife who had been shot – and later died. The decision on whether to use this voice note as part of the reporting on the incident lead to widespread debate amongst the students. In the end, the
student editors decided to publish the sound, with clear warnings about the disturbing nature thereof.

To this day, neither the students nor the journalist-turned-educator responsible for them that year, are in complete agreement about whether this was the correct decision. What is striking, however, is that the students handled this event as professional, or “real” journalists, would. This aligns with findings by Eberholst, Hartley and Olsen (2016) who explored the views of Danish students working for a publically-available news website. According to these researchers,

The students act like journalists when calling sources and engaging news stories, and in every respect possible, the challenges they face are very real—unapproachable sources, tight deadlines, feedback from both internal and external editors, as well as the many ethical problems relating to journalism. (Eberholst, Hartley & Olsen, 2016, p.192)

Despite this clear focus on professional ethics, it could be argued that as postgraduate students of Stellenbosch University, these aspiring journalists still have to adhere to more general policies on, for instance, research ethics and scientific integrity. As Sieber and Tolic h (2015) contend: “In journalism education, even within the university, students are taught to recognize the existence of distinct ethical boundaries and that journalists within academia serve different masters.”

The Stellenbosch research policies state, amongst other things: research needs to be relevant to the community; valid methodologies should be used; informed consent should be obtained; privacy and confidentiality should be protected; and, a risk-benefit analysis should be done first (Stellenbosch University: Research Development, n.d.-b).

If the scenario described above was to be evaluated through the lens of academic research ethics, an argument could be made that the MatieMedia journalists transgressed some of the guidelines of the research integrity policy; especially the notion of informed consent. Matheson (2019), however, argues that “it is impossible for journalists, whose story ideas often arise from constant contact with a wide range of sources, to seek prior ethical approval before talking to the sources they will use”.

Another issue that could bring the MatieMedia reporting in question, is the apparent lack of a “risk-benefit analysis”. Awad (2006, p.934) contends that while social scientists need to think carefully about the potential effects of their research, this should not be a requirement for journalism, adding: “Journalists have to inform the public as accurately and completely as possible, not to make judgments about what may happen with that information next.”

Whichever way you look at it, this brief example from MatieMedia indicates how at odds ethical journalism and social science ethical guidelines can be. This schism is even more apparent in the case where students report, or even want to report, on contentious issues related to the university where they are studying. Ethics committees take extra care when adjudicating research proposals that will involve students or staff members at the university itself. Yet, when our students at MatieMedia report on issues like alleged language-related discrimination by staff members, I would argue there should not be a need for them to first get permission to speak to the relevant persons at the university. Reporting that could put the university in a negative light should not be censored – even to protect the so-called research participants. Whether you frame it as upholding
academic integrity or not, preventing journalists to report on issues that are clearly in the public interest, can be viewed as an attack on the editorial independence of pedagogy-driven student journalism.

**Suggestions for Future Debates: Aspiring Journalists and Ethical Social Science Research**

In one of my first presentations to our postgraduate journalism students, I tell them that there are no right or wrong answers when it comes to media ethics. The real challenge does not always lie in finding an answer, but rather in arguing your case with sufficient support. While this might be an oversimplification of matters, the principle remains: ethics is a grey area. I would also argue that this grey area stretches beyond media institutions to higher education institutions where journalism is taught. There simply are no easy answers.

Nevertheless, I would venture some suggestions for furthering the debate on whether journalism students should adhere to the same ethical guidelines as other students in the social sciences. In age-old journalistic tradition, I will frame my suggestions as answers to the five W’s, one H and the oft-forgotten “so what” question.

**WHO is being trained:** Aspiring journalists being trained at higher education institutions are not professional journalists yet. They need guidance on a variety of journalistic principles, including what ethical practices entail. At the same time, they remain registered students at a higher education institution that upholds certain values when it comes to academic integrity. While I believe that their position as journalism students should take precedence, my suggestion would be for educators to encourage these aspiring media workers to at least familiarise them with the mission and values of their institution’s policies on ethical research. This will empower students to defend the credibility of their work and benchmark their investigations and writing against those of other social science students.

**WHAT should be evaluated:** Journalism practiced by students in higher education settings usually form part of their coursework and is thus graded. Usually this work – whether it be on publically available platforms or just for internal use – is measured according to journalistic principles. My suggestion would for this practice to continue, as is the case in our programme where a journalist-turned-educator mentors the students when they write for and publish on MatieMedia. Professional values and codes of conduct should serve as the barometers for what would be considered quality, ethical journalism.

**WHERE is the training situated:** My view is that the so-called hospital-training method, or experiential teaching model, works well to familiarise aspiring media workers with the conditions and demands of present-day journalism – especially within a digital environment. MatieMedia thus serves as a training ground for real-world journalism. Yet, I want to reiterate that journalism students cannot escape their position within the university. It might not be necessary for them to apply for ethical clearance for every story they write for MatieMedia, but they should remain cognisant of the broader values inherent in the university’s policy on academic integrity.
**WHEN should there be an ethical review:** This is perhaps one of the trickiest questions. As argued earlier in this paper, journalism as academic output actually requires the same rigour as academic research. Does that mean investigative journalism requires ethical clearance, but day-to-day journalistic outputs do not? Would the work of journalists-turned-researchers require ethical clearance, but that of student journalists not? Should the capstone projects of journalism students, as replacements for final theses, be subjected to ethical review, but their regular coursework not? I do not think I have ready-made answers for any of these questions. As argued above, I believe that pedagogy-driven student journalism that are presented on publically-available platforms, should adhere to professional journalistic guidelines. Yet, I do think student journalists should also be able to defend the credibility of their work within the broader university environment. And they can only do so, if they are aware of the relevant policies and guidelines.

**WHY should journalism students think about ethical review:** I believe quality journalism and good social science research share some common goals. They might interact with sources/research participants differently or have divergent views around what constitutes research in the public interest vs. research with social value. Nevertheless, journalists and social science researchers all contribute, albeit in their own distinct ways, to a better understanding of the world around us and the people we share our lives with. Mutual understanding between these two approaches to research should therefore be cultivated – especially in places where learning happens. Students should strive to gain insight into the points of agreement between ethical journalism and ethical social science research.

**HOW should students be trained for ethics:** Most good journalism education programmes either have separate courses on media ethics, while enforcing notions of ethical practices in more industry-focused courses where students produce their own journalism. This is a key aspect of journalism education and training that should not fall by the wayside. However, I do believe journalism students should also be trained in basic academic research methodologies, such as ethnography. In this way, they will be exposed to guidelines on what constitutes credible, reliable and ethical academic research.

**SO WHAT does ethical journalism have to do with ethics review:** In an article advocating for journalism to be accepted as academic output, Mason (2015, p. 25) summarises the significant role journalism plays in society: “Journalism changes lives, helps informs the public of misdeeds, fights gossip and disinformation campaigns, and illuminates both the darkness and the light in our world.” In the same breath, ethical social science research can also have a significant impact on society, as Hunter (2019) explains: “Research in and of itself is good, either because of the intrinsic value of knowledge or because of the human benefit we get out of applying that knowledge.” I would agree that it is both possible and necessary for all research originating in the social sciences, including journalism, to be of benefit to society. These benefits can only be realised when the research is reliable and credible. Journalism, especially not when practiced in an academic setting, cannot divorce itself from its ethical conscience. Reflecting on general guidelines for ethical social science research can serve to enhance the credibility and reliability of journalistic outputs. In the words of Matheson (2019): “Ethical review of a journalistic project can deepen its author's engagement with the power of journalism, and in particular the power of the privileged in reporting on others.”
Conclusion

Journalism students in higher education institutions are faced with a plethora of challenges related to the industry they want to enter. Educators who want students to survive and thrive in uncertain times, should provide them with opportunities to practise so-called real-world journalism from the get-go. I would argue in order to enable this type of on-the-go, quick-paced training – especially in a digital-first context – that pedagogy-driven student journalism should be exempt from institutional ethics review process.

In the same breath, however, journalism educators should not lose sight of the fact that their students are being trained in an academic environment. They should take cognisance of the reasons why ethics review committees exist; not as adversaries, but rather to protect participants in research and maintain academic integrity. While students’ everyday journalistic enquiries should not be required to go through rigorous social science ethics review, it would certainly be beneficial to these students to familiarise themselves with the ethical guidelines that foster academic integrity in higher education institutions.

For in the end good social science research and good journalism share the same broad goal: to explore and describe the characteristics of a society and its people in order to benefit or inform them in some way. As Duffy (2015, p. 9,10) explains:

Scholarly writing can be viewed as an advanced form of journalism: the methods are more rigorous, the sample sizes more representative, the editing process tougher and done by subject experts rather than expert editors. Good journalism can reach similar heights, and both are concerned with investigation and increasing our understanding of the world around us.

In the final instance, I believe the integrity and credibility of both academic research and journalism to a large extent hinge on whether it is conducted in an ethical manner. No matter the vantage point, the basic creed for all researchers should be to maximise truth and minimise harm.

About the Author

Dr Marenet Jordaan has been a lecturer and researcher in the Department of Journalism at Stellenbosch University in South Africa since 2015. She graduated as the best undergraduate student in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria in 2000. Her postgraduate journalism studies at Stellenbosch University culminated in a PhD awarded in 2018. She previously held the position of lecturer in the Journalism Programme at the University of Pretoria. Before joining the academy at the end of 2009 she worked as a journalist at various daily and weekly print publications in the Media24 group, covering beats ranging from crime to the arts.

References


Preparing Journalism Students to Cover Catastrophic Human Suffering in this Digital Age

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Abstract

This research study explores the extent to which journalism programs in the United States have incorporated the subject of covering catastrophic human suffering into their curricula. A close examination of 103 U.S. programs accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) has revealed that only a few of the programs offer stand-alone courses focusing on the topic of journalism and trauma. With little instruction on the theoretical understandings of human suffering and trauma, these stand-alone courses tend to be practitioner oriented. Further analysis of stand-alone courses concentrating on journalism/media ethics found that while a number of such courses existed, only a few included within their content the subject matter of journalism and trauma. Based on these research findings, the researchers of this study suggest that journalism programs might need to better prepare students to cover humanitarian issues in this global age by offering at least one course that combines instruction in human suffering coverage and journalism/media ethics.

Keywords: ACEJMC accredited programs, journalism and trauma, journalism/media ethics, curricula

Introduction

In the United States, the need to teach journalists how to cover terrorism was not seriously considered until after September 11, 2001, when terrorists used commercial airplanes to attack the World Trade Center in New York City and the United States Pentagon in Washington, D.C. (Luther & Lepre, 2007). News organizations and journalism schools actively sought ways to prepare journalists in how to respond to terrorism acts without putting their own lives at risk, both mentally and physically.

Such a concentrated effort to train students of journalism to effectually respond to acts of terrorism is now needed with regard to the coverage of catastrophic human suffering. The recent devastating effects of the Syrian conflict that has resulted in mass numbers of deaths and displacements (McKernan, 2019) have brought to light the need to re-examine how journalists are being prepared to cover those who are suffering due to existing destructive forces outside of their own control.

While covering trauma is not a new area for journalists, in this digital and hyper-competitive media environment, in which journalists are under increasing pressure to quickly generate stories and visuals that will captivate audiences, the need exists to provide journalists with the mindset and
skill-sets to cover human suffering in an ethical manner that will prevent them from inadvertently harming those who are suffering or personally harming themselves.

The general public usually comes to understand large-scale human suffering through news representations, whether conveyed through text or photographs via varying media platforms (Chouliarki, 2013; Milton, 2013). Thus, journalists play a critical role in constructing how individuals perceive and relate to the suffering, with potentially far-reaching consequences such as the degree to which individuals will lend support toward assisting those who are suffering. For as Kyriakidou (2009) has observed, media coverage of human sufferings often is “accompanied by an upsurge of global reactions and outpouring of aid pledges” (p.481).

With globalization and transnational media becoming the norm, it behooves journalism schools to re-examine their curricula and assure that while students are being educated in current technologically driven news media practices, they are also being taught and trained to cover human suffering, with underpinning critical knowledge in media ethics.

This paper will first provide a review of literature that pertain to how journalists have covered humanitarian crisis situations. It will then introduce a study conducted by the authors of this paper that explores the extent to which journalism schools accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) are preparing students to cover human suffering and whether or not ethics is being incorporated in the teachings.

**Journalists Covering International Humanitarian Crises**

Disasters caused by nature or people have led to mass human suffering across the globe. The aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunamis, the famine crisis in Somalia, the death and displacement of millions in Darfur, the tens of thousands of people forced to flee from their homes in war-torn Syria are only a few examples of humanitarian crises the world has observed over the past two decades or so. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, the number of people seeking refuge in other countries due to “wars and persecution” is at an all-time high (Edwards, 2016). With a majority of the refugees being children, the emotional and physical hardships faced by the refugees have been insurmountable.

For journalists, serious challenges exist in covering humanitarian crises. Using a quote from *Reporters Without Borders*, Cooley and Jones (2013) note:

> In many crises situations, it is not safe to harbour journalists or traditional media outlets in affected areas, since ‘local journalists work in terrible security conditions, caught in the crossfire from the fighting, and are often deliberately targeted by anti-media militiamen’ (p. 71).

The evidence exists that such symptoms can be transferred over to others in the newsroom when graphic imageries of the suffering and destruction are relayed, a phenomenon known as secondary traumatic stress (STS) (Keats & Buchanan, 2009). Incurring these symptoms are often exacerbated by the hesitancy of journalists to acknowledge that they are experiencing psychological stress as a result of their work. The stigma associated with admitting work-related physiological and/or emotional issues is still very much present in the journalism profession.
The risk of injury to the journalist is also accompanied by the risk of injury to those being covered in times of crisis. Within the journalism profession, reporters are normally required to suppress their emotions and approach stories in an unbiased and objective manner. As pointed out by Hopper and Huxford (2016), these journalistic norms are often difficult to carry out when reporters encounter traumatic circumstances or events. Yet, the expectation for journalists to do so endures at news organizations. Suppressing emotions to assist in maintaining objectivity while covering a story involving human suffering, however, could inadvertently have dire consequences on those suffering.

When individuals are faced with harrowing circumstances and are suffering, the presence of the news media can sometimes make the ordeal worse (Kay, Reilly, Amend, & Kyle, 2011). This becomes even more so the case when journalists approach the story in a perfunctory, detached manner. Examples of news media compounding the pain of people dealing with tragic situations are plentiful. Following the school shooting at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and University that killed 32 people in 2007, the news media swarmed the college community, interfering with the mourning process and prompting Virginia Tech students to protest the media presence (Kay, Reilly, Amend, & Kyle, 2011). In the aftermath of the tragic shooting of 20 children and six teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012, the news media were reported to have made the situation worse by making serious factual mistakes in their coverage, including naming the wrong person as the perpetrator, and by demonstrating insensitivity by interviewing young, traumatized students at the school. As one BBC journalist described the situation, “… every news crew for miles crammed into tiny Newtown, and the result was that an overwhelmed community was even more overwhelmed” (Daily, 2012).

It is said that most journalists are likely to cover a traumatic event at some point during their careers (Kay, Reilly, Amend, & Kyle, 2011). In the coverage of large-scale tragedies with human suffering, knowledge of ordinary journalistic norms and routines are not always adequate enough in leading journalists toward effective reporting. Because of the nature of such stories, journalists often find themselves becoming more involved in the story. However, due to the journalistic practice of remaining objective, as reinforced in liberal democratic notions of the role of the press, journalists strive to emotionally pull themselves away from the story. As a result, they might find themselves experiencing conflicting driving forces in their coverage. As Berrington and Jemphrey write:

> When the story relates to a large-scale human tragedy the pressures, both professional and personal, are greatly magnified. The exceptional circumstances surrounding disaster reporting mean that methods employed in routine news-gathering may be no longer adequate to deal with the situation (p. 229).

Commercial pressures, professional news values, and personal ethics all come into play in how a journalist covers a story involving human suffering (Berrington and Jemphrey, 2003). In their study on the 1996 shooting at Dunblane Primary School in Scotland that ended the lives of 16 school children and one teacher, Berrington and Jemphrey (2003) found that journalists who covered the story reported having allowed their ethical considerations to erode because of pressures from their editors to produce copy, pressures that were underlined with commercial needs.
For journalists, understanding and reflecting on possible factors that could possibly shape their coverage of human suffering even before encountering such scenarios is important. In covering catastrophic mass suffering, journalists must contend with decisions on how to cover those who are suffering, decisions which are impacted by their notions of professional ethics. From the selection of descriptive words to the choice of images to use to convey the suffering, journalists must face a number of ethics-related quandaries.

**Journalistic Ethics and Human Suffering Coverage**

It has become almost a truism in the study of human suffering in distant lands that most human suffering and the factors that cause the suffering go unnoticed by mainstream news media (Borer, 2012). Unless it is of a scale that cannot be easily overlooked, is in some way influenced by geopolitics (Kim, Su, & Hong, 2007), or is related to the news organization’s socioeconomics (McPherson, 2012), such news is often not deemed newsworthy.

Many factors are said to impact the type of coverage that is offered to disastrous events or human tragedies, including journalistic norms (Ryan, 1991) and political/cultural ideologies (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Past research has shown that when distant human suffering of non-Westerners is covered, the suffering tends to be presented as a spectacle for Western consumption (Huiberts, 2018). Through the news media representations of the victims of tragedy, Westerners are in a sense given a position of viewing the victims from a standpoint of privilege. As argued by Balaji (2011), the **Otherness** of those suffering is enhanced and the victims are devalued as human beings. Adding substance to his argument, Balaji (2011) demonstrates in his analysis of the news coverage of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, in which thousands of individuals were killed, that the Western media tended to portray the country as dysfunctional and Haitians as pitiful. They played down the Haiti people’s efforts at assisting the victims and, instead, focused on the “American/European do-gooders” (p. 61).

Simply understanding and reflecting on the internal as well as external forces that could possibly impinge on their work might make journalists better at covering distant suffering. Intentionally keeping in mind their ethical positioning has the potential of helping journalists in their craft. As an example, through his interviews with journalists who had experience in covering the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, Abubakar’s (2018) was able to show that while the news value of the story propelled the journalists to cover the insurgency, the journalists’ abilities to be cognizant of their ethical responsibilities assisted them in their news making decisions. The journalists relayed to the researcher that during their reporting of the insurgency, they were constantly encountering ethical dilemmas. Many of the dilemmas with which they wrestled were in relation to how to frame their stories, which choice of terms to use, and how to deal with the victims attacked by the Boko Haram. Abubakar (2018) concluded that “while the concept of newsworthiness pushes journalists and their news outlets into paying intense attention to violent extremists’ stories, journalism ethics serves as a moderating device to check excesses in the coverage” (p. 17). In essence, the ethical principles that the journalists had encoded helped them in their journalistic efforts.

Various professional journalism associations offer ethical principles to serve as guides for journalist. These include codes of conduct provided by such organizations as the National Union of Journalists (Code of Conduct) in the UK, the National Union of French Journalists (Charter of
the Professional Duties of French Journalists) in France, and the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ Code of Ethics) in the United States, and the German Press Council (German Press Code) in Germany. All of the associations have stressed the need to protect human dignity in news coverage. Even with the existence of professional ethics codes, however, when faced with ethical dilemmas when covering a story, journalists often rely on their own moral compass, a compass that can shift depending on the circumstances of the news story (Kay & Reilly, 2012). Lack of training is thought to be a factor in this reliance on one’s own notion of ethics (Duncan & Newton, 2010).

While more news organizations now train journalists in how to protect themselves and others during as well as following crisis situations, practitioners and scholars alike have pointed out the need to prepare journalists earlier, even before they begin their work in their chosen profession. There have been several calls (Dworznik & Grubb, 2007) for the training of budding journalists to cover traumatic events and/or human suffering prior to when the journalists commence work in the professional journalistic realm. Recognized programs that provide students of journalism with such training include the DART Center for Journalism and Trauma at Columbia University and at the University of Washington, and the Victims and the Media Program at Michigan State University.

The 24/7 news cycles, the growing need for news content for social media platforms, and the increase in the usage of freelance journalists to cover stories in areas of conflict (Hoiby, & Ottosen, 2019) have made even more important the proper training of journalists. Journalism schools have been identified as the appropriate place for such training since the journalists most likely to be sent out by news organizations to cover traumatic stories are those in their early years of the journalism profession (Dworznik, & Garvey, 2019).

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which journalism schools have incorporated into their curriculum courses or content that pertain in some way to the coverage of human suffering. To narrow the scope of the study, the curriculum of journalism schools in the United States and accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) were analyzed. Since the notion of training students to cover human suffering is broad, focus was placed on revealing courses from those journalism programs that were stand-alone trauma courses or stand-alone media ethics courses. Efforts were then made to closely examine the content of those courses via the syllabi offered. The specific research questions asked for the study were:

RQ1: How many stand-alone courses related to trauma news coverage do the ACEJMC accredited U.S. journalism schools have in their curriculum?

RQ2: How many stand-alone courses related to journalism/media ethics do the ACEJMC accredited U.S. journalism schools have in their curriculum?

RQ3: In the provided syllabi of the targeted stand-alone courses, were there specific mentions of human suffering or humanitarian crisis coverage?

Method

In order to assess the degree to which journalism programs in the United States have incorporated subject matters related to human suffering, the researchers first identified all U.S. college
journalism programs accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). According to ACEJMC, 112 journalism and mass communication programs across the globe are currently accredited by the Council. Among them, 106 programs are from the United States\(^1\).

Based on the list of ACEJMC accredited programs, the researchers first attempted to access the websites of all 106 schools in order to review each school’s curriculum. It was discovered that three of the program’s websites were not available during the data collection period. Thus, in total, the curriculum of 103 accredited U.S. programs were analyzed.

For each of the 103 programs, the researchers first examined the curriculum listed on the program’s official website. Whether or not the accredited programs had stand-alone courses dedicated to teach students on the subjects of trauma coverage and journalism/media ethics was determined. In total, eight out of the 103 accredited programs were found to have listed a course that pertained to trauma coverage and 93 out of the 103 accredited programs had stand-alone courses that allocated a large part of the course to journalism/media ethics.

The instructor of each of the identified stand-alone course(s) on trauma coverage and/or journalism/media ethics was then contacted and asked for a copy of his/her syllabus. They were contacted either via email or by phone. Six syllabi concerning journalistic trauma coverage, with three from the same school, and 49 syllabi regarding journalism/media ethics were acquired. Some of the instructors declined to share their syllabi due to copyright concerns.

In order to systematically analyze the 55 syllabi that were collected, a codebook was designed while keeping in mind the overarching purpose of this study and its research questions. Using the codebook as a guide, for each syllabus, the researchers noted the name of the school from which the syllabus was secured and paid specific attention to the descriptive words used in the syllabus and the types of required readings assigned for the course. The researchers then answered the following questions with a “yes” or “no” response:

1) Whether or not the examined syllabus has any indication of the topic on journalists covering trauma?

2) Whether or not the examined syllabus has any indication of the topic on journalism/media ethics?

3) Whether or not the examined syllabus has any indication of the topic on humanitarian crisis coverage?

4) Whether or not the examined syllabus has any indication of the topic on covering human suffering?

\(^1\) For further information on ACEJMC accreditation, please see: http://www.acejmc.org/accreditation-reviews/accredited-programs/accredited/reaccredited/
Results

Of the 103 accredited programs that had websites offering information on program courses, eight had courses largely devoted to trauma coverage and 93 had courses related to journalism/media ethics. After contacting the instructors of these courses, the researchers secured a total of 55 syllabi to examine (six in trauma coverage and 49 in journalism/media ethics coverage). What follows are insights garnered from a careful read of the collected syllabi.

**Stand-alone courses focusing on trauma.** Although a majority of the accredited programs did not have a stand-alone course mainly devoted to trauma coverage, some programs offered more than one course that was related to the topic (See Table 1). For instance, the School of Journalism at the University of Arizona has been offering a senior level course titled “Media Coverage of International Crises.” A close examination of the syllabus indicated that the course primarily focuses on journalistic endeavors in covering different international crises. The course is divided up into six main sections. The first three sections focus on journalists covering natural disasters, humanitarian aid, and ethics associated with the issue. The other three sections primarily focus on journalism within the context of war and civil strife. Journalists’ safety issues along with ethical concerns in covering war and conflict are addressed as well.

**Table 1. Stand-alone Courses Focusing on Trauma from ACEJMC Accredited Institutions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Indications of Covering Trauma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism, University of Arizona</td>
<td>JOUR 496: Media Coverage of International Crises</td>
<td>Natural disasters, humanitarian aids, war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism, University of Arizona</td>
<td>JOUR: 497/597 Coup &amp; Earthquake: Reporting the world</td>
<td>Media coverage of global calamity; ethical concerns in covering global disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism, University of Arizona</td>
<td>JOUR: 402/502 Media &amp; Terrorism</td>
<td>Media coverage of terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University</td>
<td>N/A: Gendering Migration: An Intensive Course on Women and Girls crossing boarders</td>
<td>Female migrants in media coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University</td>
<td>N/A: Covering Conflict</td>
<td>Coverage of natural disaster and war; associated ethical issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University</td>
<td>N/A: International Newsroom: Human Rights Reporting</td>
<td>Media coverage of human rights violations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University
N/A: The Journalism of Death and Dying
Media coverage of death; associated ethical issues

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication, San Jose State University
MCOM 136: WWII Press Coverage: Holocaust
Media coverage of human disaster during WWII

The School of Journalism, University of Southern California
Concentration Camps and Japanese Internment Camps
Media coverage of migration and refugee issues

The College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida
COMM 392: Media and Migration in Times of European Crisis
Reporting news in extreme situations, such as disaster and war; practice-oriented course

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Colorado State University
JTC 418: Journalism, Peace and War
The journalism coverage of war, well-being of people, conflict resolution

Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism, City University of New York
JOUR 4930: Reporting from Ground Zero
Media coverage of immigrants and refugees; war coverage

USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, University of Southern California
COMM 451: Visual Communication and Social Change
Photojournalism and death; ethical concerns of photojournalism

The University of Arizona School of Journalism has also been offering another senior level course titled “Coups and Earthquake: Reporting the World.” The course’s acquired syllabus shows that this course mainly discusses media coverage in times of global calamity as well as the danger and challenges that journalists might face in reporting on different distant disastrous events. In addition, the school has a course on the subject of terrorism for both undergrad and grad students.2 With the title “Media and Terrorism,” the course primarily investigates how news media have portrayed terrorism and terrorists, and the effects of news media portrayals on the public from a global perspective.

The Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University also offers more than one stand-alone course devoted to journalism and trauma. The first course is titled “Gendering Migration: An Intensive Course on Women and Girls crossing Borders.” The course description on the school’s official website reveals that this course examines the global migration issue from a gendered lens by investigating the vulnerability of female migrants and the different challenges and risks they face on a daily basis, such as discrimination, sexual exploitation, and violence. This 15-week course not only teaches students about the subject of global migration but also prepares students to cover such stories.

Columbia’s Graduate School of Journalism also offers two other stand-alone courses on journalism and trauma. One is titled “International Newsroom: Human Rights Reporting” and the other is

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2. The undergraduate course number is 402; the graduate course number is 502. The courses have the same content.
named “The Journalism of Death and Dying.” The course on human rights reporting looks at news coverage of different human rights violations since the time of the two world wars to the current time of the Syrian civil conflict. The role of journalists as well as the ethical dilemmas that they might face are taught in the course. As part of “The Journalism of Death and Dying,” the instructor states in the syllabus that the seven-week course “will equip students to cover end-of-life issues.” He goes on to state, “With the help of experts on trauma, students will discuss best practices about interviewing the bereaved and survivors.”

The College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida offers a senior level stand-alone reporting course on trauma titled “Reporting from Ground Zero.” A thorough examination of the syllabus reveals that the main aim of the course is to prepare future generation of journalists on how to report extreme news stories such as war, hurricanes, wildfires, mass shootings, terrorists’ attacks, and political revolutions. One of the main learning objectives laid out in the course syllabus is to discuss best practices on covering people who have suffered trauma due to such catastrophic events. The course also discusses how journalists should ethically and safely report news in different cultural settings.

*Journalism Ethics Course.* Of the 49 examined stand-alone courses that were related to journalism/media ethics courses, 11 of them were a combination of mass communication law and ethics. The researchers found that these courses’ main focus was on the legal aspect of journalism and mass communication, such as the First Amendment rights, privacy, libel, telecommunication regulation and etc., although they also did discuss journalism/media ethics. 38 of the 49 examined courses had as their focus journalism/media ethics. The syllabi of those courses revealed a general pattern in terms of the scope and content that they covered. The courses tended to emphasize discussions of different philosophical foundations that undergird ethical and moral reasoning processes, with less discussion on human suffering. The syllabi of eight of the 38 journalism/media ethics courses listed topics specific to trauma (See Table 2). For instance, a junior level journalism ethics course titled “Ethical Issues in Journalism” offered by the Department of Journalism at Temple University devotes a week on the topic of suffering and community, with a special emphasis on how the press covers sex crimes.

*Table 2. Stand-alone Courses Focusing on Journalism/Media Ethics that Cover Trauma*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs/Institutions</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Indication on Covering Trauma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Journalism, University of Temple</td>
<td>JRN 3704 Ethical Issues in Journalism</td>
<td>Topic on sex crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Iowa</td>
<td>JMC 3180 Media Ethics in a Digital Age &amp; Diversity Issues in Journalism</td>
<td>Week 8 covers the death and casualty of war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Media and Journalism, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill</td>
<td>MEJO 141 Media Ethics</td>
<td>“back to the dead guys”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Greenlee School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Iowa State University of Science and Technology</td>
<td>N/A, Evil Kindness, Mindfulness</td>
<td>Sexual assault on women; coverage of execution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Course Title</td>
<td>Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Communication, American University</td>
<td>MCOM 409 Journalism Ethics</td>
<td>Week 7, how to minimize harm, graphic image of violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Communication, American University</td>
<td>MCOM 409-001 Journalism Ethics</td>
<td>Crime, accident, tragedy, “too many bodies”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Communication, American University</td>
<td>MCOM 409-002 Journalism Ethics</td>
<td>Crime, accident, tragedy, “black death”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Communication &amp; Information Science, University of Alabama</td>
<td>JCM 493 Media Ethics</td>
<td>Covers empathy, social justice, society’s victims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of South Carolina</td>
<td>JOUR 501 Freedom, Responsibility, and Ethics</td>
<td>Graphic image, coverage of violence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Iowa offers a course titled “Media Ethics in a Digital Age & Diversity Issues in Journalism.” The course addresses how journalists should cover death and trauma. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the School of Media and Journalism offers a freshmen level course titled “Media Ethics” that includes the topic, “back to the dead guys.” The course deals with the media coverage of death and suicide.

The Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication at Iowa State University of Science and Technology offers a journalism ethics course titled “Evil, Kindness, Mindfulness.” Among the topics covered is the physical, mental, and emotional vulnerability and suffering caused by stalking and sexual assaults on women. The emotional toll on reporters of covering executions is also discussed in the class.

The School of Communication at American University offers three separate sections of a course titled “Journalism Ethics.” All three sections to a certain degree cover trauma and human suffering. The first is devoted to the issue of covering crime and accidents. The second to the topic of how to minimize harm as a news reporter. The third is devoted to teaching students how to cover death and tragedy.

In instances in which it was not entirely clear as to whether or not the journalism/media ethics course included topics related to human suffering, the instructor of the course was contacted and asked if such topics were included. For example, the instructor of a media ethics course offered by the College of Communication and Information Sciences at the University of Alabama shared that the ethics course did indeed frequently cover human suffering as a subtheme in the course. In an e-mail, the instructor stated that the course’s “segments on empathy and justice discuss the need for communicators (especially journalists) to care about and pay attention to society’s victims (“victims” defined very broadly …).”

As another example, the instructor of “Freedom, Responsibility, and Ethics” offered by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of South Carolina replied that the class spends quite a lot of time discussing issues involving human suffering and trauma, especially
within the context of privacy. The instructor also spends class time discussing the coverage of violence and usage of graphic images.

**Discussion**

According to UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the frequency and scale of natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, droughts, etc.) have significantly increased worldwide over the past several decades (UNDRR, 2019). Increases have also been observed in global conflicts (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2018). The devastating end results of these disasters and conflicts are death and human suffering. Humanitarian crisis situations ensue with the socio-economically disadvantaged individuals often being the primary victims. It is the role of journalists to make human tragedies known and to tell the stories of those suffering. Carrying out this role comes with much responsibility.

Past research (e.g., Dworznik & Grubb, 2007; Dworznik, & Garvey, 2019) has shown that young journalists are often the ones who are sent out by their news organizations to cover cataclysmic happenings. Moreover, these journalists are expected to deliver their news products in a short amount of time. The volume of content and the speed in which the content must be delivered have been amplified due to increased news competition and the widespread usage of social media for news. In spite of these pressures, often little preparation is offered to early-career journalists to assist them in covering crisis situations in such a way as to prevent harm from coming to themselves or to the victims of the tragedies.

It is thus even more imperative that journalism schools strive to prepare budding journalists in how to properly cover human suffering in an ethically sound manner. The purpose of this study was to explore the degree to which journalism schools in the United States accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) were teaching students about how to cover human suffering. It did so by analyzing the curricula reflected on the websites of the accredited programs and by closely examining the stand-alone courses covering trauma and/or journalism/media ethics.

The findings showed that out of the 103 accredited journalism programs in the United States, only eight had stand-alone courses that devoted a significant portion of class time to the topic of journalism and trauma. The eight courses tended to be practitioner oriented and did not concentrate on conceptual frameworks related to trauma. The courses had components in which best practices were taught on how to approach victims of trauma and those suffering great losses. To assist students in honing the practices being taught several of the courses also had students go through simulations or preparations of crisis coverage that mimicked what would need to take place under actual circumstances. Discussions on ethics were frequently embedded in the examined courses as well. For example, in the “Media Coverage of International Crisis” course at the University of Arizona, the instructor includes a week covering “Rescue or Report? The ethical and editorial dilemmas of crisis journalism.”

The number of programs that had courses focusing on journalism/media ethics were much higher than those devoted to journalistic coverage of trauma. This perhaps should come as no surprise given the fact that among the core competencies that ACEJMC stipulates as needed among graduates of accredited programs is related to ethics. ACEJMC requires that to be accredited,
programs must have graduating students who can demonstrate “an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity” (ACEJMC, 2019).

From the examined syllabi, it was gathered that some of the programs attempted to teach both legal issues and ethical principles in journalism and mass communication within one course. Others, however, had specific courses dedicated to journalism/media ethics. Those courses tended to fall into two domains: those that heavily focused on the philosophical foundations of ethics and those that introduced the principles of ethics and had students apply them to resolve ethical dilemmas. Eight of the 38 courses devoted to journalism/media ethics additionally incorporated trauma coverage.

When considering the mass human suffering that has been caused by increases in disasters and armed conflicts, it might now be an important time for journalism programs to consider developing a course that would be a combination of trauma coverage and journalism/media ethics. Especially given the fast-past, digital media environment in which they will be required to work, such courses will better prepare students to cover humanitarian issues and suffering once they enter the journalism profession. Given the low number of stand-alone courses that currently have such a combination, perhaps it is also time for ACEJMC to add to its core competencies effectual coverage of human suffering that would include ethical journalistic decision making when faced with victims of trauma and devastating losses.

About the Authors

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References


Teaching a New Journalistic Form Intended to Spark Response and Action: Evaluating Student Learning

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Abstract

While select universities across the United States have begun teaching solutions journalism, at the University of Oregon we have taken it one step further: We integrate investigative reporting with solutions journalism, thereby fostering a mix of potent reporting and writing methods intended to spark action and reaction as our student journalists uncover — and seek solutions for — some of our community’s most perplexing issues. The intention of this research is to evaluate this unique pedagogical approach. Through survey data and in-depth interviews, we explored student conceptualizations of these reporting approaches and of the role of journalism in society. Key findings show that students enrolled in our solutions + investigation courses did have changing perspectives on overarching questions about journalist’s roles; journalism’s civic mission; how journalism affects society and does — or does not — promote social change.

Introduction

As journalism schools continue to respond to ethical challenges caused by such forces as industry disruption, technological developments, and attacks on news media credibility, some schools are adding curricula about practices that reframe traditional journalism. In fact, journalism educators from across the country have called for reforms to our current practices in journalism and mass communication education (“Does journalism education matter,” 2006). At the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, we began teaching solutions journalism in winter 2016. Solutions journalism is an evidence-based reporting approach that covers credible responses to social problems. While select universities across the United States have also begun to teach this reporting approach, we have taken it one step further: We integrate investigative reporting with solutions journalism, thereby fostering a mix of potent reporting and writing methods intended to spark action and reaction as our student journalists uncover — and seek solutions for — some of our community’s most perplexing issues.

In this approach, we address a call put forth to journalism educators from Columbia Journalism Review: “Universities, both public and private, should become ongoing sources of local, state, specialized subject, and accountability news reporting as part of their educational missions” (Downie & Schudson, 2009). The intention of our approach is to teach our students to combine two active journalistic approaches to generate journalistic impact through response and action. Our pedagogical approach is the first-known hybrid of these two reporting methods. The ethical...
challenge is two-fold: 1) Teaching students to create impact with reporting while keeping them from becoming advocates, and 2) Teaching students how not to over-promise with solutions-based reporting.

We piloted the combined investigative + solutions approach in the 2017-2018 academic year. In the 2018-2019 academic year we formalized the approach, teaching a framework of specific courses to create a pipeline of students studying both solutions and investigative journalism through existing courses to help students deliver and publish stories that blend both journalism methods. Our teaching framework includes specific learning outcomes, including addressing the potential ethical challenges of this reporting approach.

We propose that students engaged in the combined investigative + solutions approach will:

- Enter the journalism profession with new reporting tools and with a strengthened perspective on their civic mission;
- View journalistic storytelling as a vehicle for uncovering wrongdoing and as a way to show society what’s possible;
- Gain greater awareness of how their journalism affects society and does — or does not — promote social change;
- Report nuanced, evidence-based stories that point to ways communities can solve problems;
- Produce published journalism, further building their portfolios while contributing to the public good.

As part of our work this academic year, we are conducting academic research to evaluate student learning. Using survey and in-depth interview data, this study reports on student conceptualizations of these reporting approaches and of the role of journalism in society.

**Solutions Journalism**

Solutions journalism—a growing strategy largely developed by two *New York Times* journalists—is a rigorous and fact-driven approach to news stories that provide credible solutions to societal problems. The creation of the non-profit Solutions Journalism Network (SJN) in 2013 delineated a new approach focused more specifically on solutions coverage (Wenzel et al., 2016). Solutions journalism stories include: 1) a response to a well-known problem, 2) evidence of results, 3) insights about the solution’s success factors, and 4) limitations to the response (Solutions Journalism Network, 2018). While there has yet to emerge an academic definition of solutions journalism, recent academic research uses the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN) definition: a rigorous and fact-driven approach to reporting credible solutions to social problems (see, for example, Lough & McIntyre, 2018; McIntyre, 2017).
Investigative Reporting

Investigative reporting draws attention to social problems and wrongdoing: it identifies people in power or systems of authority who have failed to protect civic values, such as public health, public safety and welfare, justice, equal access, the public treasury, and the honesty and integrity of our civic leaders. It does this by holding accountable people in power and authority. These people in power may be leaders in government, industry, corporations, and/or non-profit organizations. Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), a nonprofit journalism organization dedicated to fostering excellence in investigative journalism, defines the practice as, “The reporting, through one’s own initiative and work product, of matters of importance to readers, viewers or listeners. In many cases, the subjects of the reporting wish the matters under scrutiny to remain undisclosed” (Awards FAQ, 2017). Investigative journalism relies on original work in the collection of evidence and on-the-ground reporting by pulling back the curtain, revealing information or patterns that would have otherwise remain concealed or unknown or hidden from the public (Houston, 2009). And investigative work often does so when people in power or authority seek to keep the information hidden—information that may have been concealed by law or deliberately suppressed, or synthesized from public records in such a way as to reveal systematic problems (Abdenour, 2017). Investigative reporting must be in the public interest. Research from Gaines (2008) shows that one of the most common characteristics of Pulitzer-prize winning investigative stories is that the stories are “a matter of importance to the public well-being” (p. 2). It is also critical to note that investigative reporting is historically impact-oriented (Ettema & Glasser, 1998). In other words, investigative reporting seems to bring about meaningful change.

Solutions + Investigation

Investigative journalism identifies social problems and names the people in power who should be held accountable. Solutions journalism provides society examples of who’s doing a better job at solving problems. By combining the two methods, journalists can put greater pressure on leaders to solve problems by showing readers that problems are not intractable. Standing alone, investigative journalism can sometimes leave citizens unsure about how to respond. Solutions journalism can help bridge that gap; some studies have shown such stories improve audiences’ feelings of trust in media and self-efficacy about societal problems (Curry & Hammonds, 2014; Curry, Stroud, & McGregor, 2016). It is also critical to note that investigative reporting is historically impact-oriented (Ettema & Glasser, 1998). In other words, investigative reporting seems to bring about meaningful change. This is also a key premise of solutions journalism.

Journalistic Impact

There is a growing body of research on journalistic impact, but it remains an under-explored research area (Green-Barber 2014; Powers, 2018; Tofel, 2013). Journalistic impact is defined in various ways across newsrooms and in academic and professional literature. Impact can be limited to tangible measures of audience traffic and engagement (clicks, likes, shares), to measures of effects on individual readers (letters to the editors, emails, phone calls), and to broader outcomes on discourse, action, and change (public deliberation, public policy) (Powers, 2018). Powers (2018) defines journalistic impact as “outcomes of journalistic work such as increasing audience knowledge, spurring conversation, or changing policy rather than outputs such as stories produced
or revenue generated” (p. 454-455). For this study, we use modified versions of impact measures developed by Powers (2018).

Research Questions

Again, the intention of this research is to evaluate this unique pedagogical approach — bringing together investigative reporting and solutions journalism — the first-known hybrid of these two reporting methods. We propose the following research questions.

RQ1: How do perspectives on journalistic roles change from Time 1 to Time 2 for students enrolled in the investigative + solutions teaching model?

RQ2: How do perspectives on journalistic impact change from Time 1 to Time 2 for students enrolled in the investigative + solutions teaching model?

RQ3: How do perspectives on solutions journalism and investigative reporting change from Time 1 to Time 2 for students enrolled in the investigative + solutions teaching model?

RQ4: Why did students want to learn about solutions journalism?

RQ5: How do students define solutions journalism?

RQ6: How did students report that learning about solutions journalism changed their perspective on journalism?

RQ7: What do students see as the value of combining investigative reporting and solutions journalism?

Method

We conducted pre- and post-test surveys with students enrolled in our solutions and investigative reporting courses. The pre-test was administered in the first week of the 10-week term, while the post-test was administered in the last week of the term. Completion of both the pre- and post-test was optional. There were no incentives given. The first part of the survey measured students’ attitudes toward core functions of journalism as developed from a scale used by McIntrye and colleagues (2018). The scale included such items as: journalism’s core function is to investigate government claims, journalism’s core function is to point to possible solutions, and journalism’s core function is to set the political agenda. The items were measured on a five-point scale from 1-not at all to 5-definitely. Next, the survey measured students’ attitude toward solutions and investigative reporting. These were measured on a six-term, five-point semantic differential scale. Because of the small sample size, we simply report means and do not use advanced statistical analysis.

We also conducted in-depth interviews with students. Qualitative, in-depth interviews are a common technique for understanding learning and decision making (McCranken, 1988). In-depth interviews were conducted with six students. As McCraken (1988) notes, “…it is more important
to work longer, and with greater care, with a few people than more superficially with many” (p. 17). The interviews were conducted in early winter 2018. Participants were asked about ten questions, ranging from general attitude to individual experience questions. And as with in-depth interviews, additional questions were developed and asked during the course of the interview. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for accuracy and analysis purposes. Inductive analysis allowed researchers to discover data trends in the interviews to ascertain findings for the research questions. Data were analyzed based on the constant comparison technique (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). In this data analysis method, data points are analyzed and assigned to categories (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). Categories are then refined and the researcher searches for relationships and themes among these categories.

Findings

The surveys and in-depth interviews collected data on overarching questions about students’ opinions on journalist’s roles; journalism’s civic mission; how journalism affects society and does — or does not — promote social change; and the ethics of watchdog reporting and reporting nuanced, evidence-based stories that point to ways communities can solve problems.

RQ1: How do perspectives on journalistic roles change from Time 1 to Time 2 for students enrolled in the investigative + solutions teaching model? Please see the data in Table 1. Again, because of the small sample size, we simply report means and do not use advanced statistical analysis. As such, no definitive conclusions can be drawn from this data; nevertheless, it provides a snapshot of a cohort of students enrolled in the solutions + investigative teaching model. As seen in Table 1, there were changes in mean scores across almost all of the variables. Following course instruction, participants more strongly felt that journalism should “Provide analysis of complex problems,” “Contribute to society’s well-being,” “Alert the public of potential opportunities,” “Point to possible solutions,” and “Motivate ordinary people to get involved.” These are all key aspects of solutions reporting. Based on this data, the students in this survey more strongly agreed that these were key journalistic roles following course instruction. However, another key solutions reporting aspect – “Act in a socially responsible way” – received less support from survey participants following course instruction. Future research should look into this in more depth as it runs contrary to solutions journalism premises and the findings of research from McIntyre and colleagues (2018).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional role</th>
<th>Pre-test mean</th>
<th>Post-test mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accurately portray the world</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate government claims</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide analysis of complex problems</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alert the public of potential threats</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act in a socially responsible way</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid stories with unverified content</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get information to the public quickly</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contribute to society’s well-being  4.79    4.86
Alert the public of potential opportunities  4.36    4.79
Discuss national policy  4.86    4.86
Let ordinary people express views  4.00    4.14
Discuss international policy  4.79    4.79
Develop intellectual/cultural interests  4.50    4.50
Point to possible solutions  4.29    4.50
Motivate ordinary people to get involved  3.93    4.14
Provide entertainment  3.36    3.86
Concentrate on widest audience  3.43    2.93
Serve as an adversary of government  3.21    3.43
Set the political agenda  2.64    3.21
Serve as an adversary of business  3.36    3.21

RQ2: How do perspectives on journalistic impact change from Time 1 to Time 2 for students enrolled in the investigative + solutions teaching model? Please see the data in Table 2. As seen in Table 2, participants in this survey generally reported stronger attitudes toward creating meaningful change with their reporting following solutions + investigative reporting instruction. Specially, increases were seen in desire to change “attitudes,” “public policy,” and ultimately “bettering society.”

Table 2

Respondent means of agreement for impact measures (N=14). The items were measured on a five-point scale from 1-not at all to 5-definitely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I hope the stories I produce…</th>
<th>Pre-test mean</th>
<th>Post-test mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact people’s attitudes</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact people’s behaviors</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact public policies</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave audiences more negative than positive</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultimately better society</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ3: How do perspectives on solutions journalism and investigative reporting change from Time 1 to Time 2 for students enrolled in the investigative + solutions teaching model? Please see the data in Table 3. Following solutions + investigative reporting course instruction, survey participants reported feeling more positively about both reporting approaches. They more strongly felt that both methods were “good,” “effective,” “worthwhile,” and “wise” following course instruction.

Table 3

Respondent means for attitude toward solutions journalism and investigative reporting (N=14). These were measured on a six-term, five-point semantic differential scale.
Dahmen, N.S.; Thier, K.; & Walth, B.  

WJEC 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solutions Journalism</th>
<th>Pre-test mean</th>
<th>Post-test mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthwhile</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wise</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficial</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbiased</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investigative Reporting</th>
<th>Pre-test mean</th>
<th>Post-test mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthwhile</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wise</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficial</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbiased</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ4: Why did students want to learn about solutions journalism? Turning to greater depth of inquiry, we wanted to know why students wanted to learn about solutions journalism. The following findings come from the in-depth interviews:

I wanted to learn because I was having a hard time reading the news, and I thought that was weird as a journalist. I would get a lot of notifications on my phone from different apps or whatever I was following, or like scroll through my Twitter feed, and I would like read a headline and just be like “I can't click on that story”, or I just would read stuff and not want to keep reading it. It made me want to turn off the notifications on my phone. So I found out about solutions journalism and thought that it was just an interesting way to engage with audiences and something that I would want to read.

I was interested in learning a new type of journalism beyond just problem-based reporting. And when I first heard about solutions journalism, it did sound a little like advocacy, and I was kind of hesitant at first, but I was curious to kind of see what was going on. Especially since the University of Oregon is kind of pioneering and like one of the more like top schools nationally to study solutions journalism. That seemed like a good opportunity to take advantage of while I was here, but I also really value being in a class with a lot of like-minded, motivated, and ambitious students as well.

As seen in the above data, these two students reported two key points: that they were generally disheartened by the news they were reading and their chosen profession and that they wanted to learn a method that reporting news beyond the typical problem-based narrative. These responses were repeated in varying ways across all of the interviews conducted.

RQ5: How do students define solutions journalism? Next, we were interested in learning how students defined solutions journalism (in their own terms) following course instruction. The following findings come from the in-depth interviews:

Solution journalism is rigorous reporting, and I think, I honestly think about it through the impact that it has of re-engageing people and then into their communities. I think of solutions journalism as something that’s at the community level not this like massive higher up theoretical scale, but something entrenched into the community and has hooks in to the community and active -- actively gives people back their agency
of what happens around them and how to make connections within their community about things that are actually happening. But that's done through intentional rigorous reporting.

I would say it's a step beyond problem-based reporting. It's showing why something works, so that other people can adopt those characteristics of their solutions, so that they can also make a change.

I think the most important thing when you're building a definition of solutions journalism is evidenced based solutions. It's not somebody… who is the do-gooder, the do-good like non-profit or the community hero. It's evidence-based solutions that can be possibly implemented in your community. I think that that's the most important thing about solutions journalism is you're not just focusing on individual people doing these really good things, it's something that has actual evidence in credibility backed behind it.

Solutions are stories about how to fix problems that we have. And real-life solutions, literally, that are existing in the world and that are working in one way or another to fix problems that we all know exist. No, it’s not advocacy, because its facts, it's working, and it's real work that people are doing to fix problems, and there are results. And you wouldn't you wouldn't write a solution story on something that doesn't have some sort of positive result. I think the best solution stories kind of show what's working and encourage people to pay attention to what's working, which is newsworthy and relevant and important.

As seen in the above responses, students in the interviews clearly articulated key aspects of solutions reporting: that is was evidence based, that it reported on workable responses to known problems, that it’s rigorous reporting, that it isn’t advocacy, and that it’s not about one person doing one good thing (must be systematic response).

RQ6: How did students report that learning about solutions journalism changed their perspective on journalism? We were curious to learn more about how students in our reporting model viewed the journalism profession following solutions + investigative course instruction. The following findings come from the in-depth interviews:

I think as a student I always went into situations with other journalists thinking that because of their experience or expertise, that they were just like by default, that was the right way to do things. I think now going into a newsroom I would question how we are reporting, I guess, as a newsroom. Even though I may be like the least experienced journalist there, that doesn't mean that there, I haven't learned something valuable through this course, that we should always be questioning how we're reporting things, especially as the way audiences receive media is changing so rapidly. That's something that is now part of our role. It's also made me a bit less fearful to go into a career in journalism knowing that there are people who are actively thinking about these things and wanting to report on things in the most ethical way possible -- as opposed to just getting the news out.

Because there are instances where you do need to report about an episodic problem, if like something happens, you can't not report on it, but taking the extra step and also doing a solutions piece, I think that makes for a more well-rounded publication.

This is probably the best launching pad that I could probably hope for. I can't imagine being in a better position with the skills that I have learned going through this course that would help me in the future. I honestly wish I could have taken it earlier in my
work hear earlier. I mean, I kind of wanted to do this stuff right up out of the gate, and that was a little disappointing, that I had to go through some of the intro courses to get here, but I mean now that I'm here, it's kind of everything I expected it to be. Everything that I kind of wanted.

I think it is, but it also presents a new problem in my opinion. I'll start with the first part of this, where there's so much happening in the news cycle right now, where it seems like everybody is putting out these like massive like blockbuster stories, whether it's like Michael Cohen gave money to silence an affair or Trump like dodge taxes. There's so much like hard-nosed investigative journalism going on, and that's good, we need that kind of accountability. At the same time it's also very exhausting, and people kind of like develop this exhaustion and this mentality that, oh yeah everybody's a crook, how do we fix it? With solutions journalism, if we can promote these, I don't know if promotes the right word, but if we can identify these evidence-backed solutions, it could maybe give people little optimism and hope. I think that the most important thing and just knowing how like media literacy is in this country, I think the most important part is to emphasize that solutions journalism isn't like puff and PR. It's looking at an evidence-backed solution and it's not trying to do like PR for a company.

As seen in the above responses, students clearly reported feeling more positively about the profession and that they felt that they had new skills and knowledge to take into a newsroom – knowledge that many in the news business do not possess. They also reported feeling more strongly that journalism can make a positive impact on society, that this was an ethical reporting practice, and that it was more thorough reporting (the solutions + investigative reporting model).

RQ7: What do students see as the value of combining investigative reporting and solutions journalism? Finally, we asked students their opinions on the value of the investigative + solutions reporting approach. The following findings come from the in-depth interviews:

Investigation is like the main part of it, and then solutions journalism is just going that one extra bit and asking, “O.K. what's being done to address this?” So instead of it being like a two-part story, it's that most people read just the first part, and then you post the second part later. It's just one big story. They actually go hand in hand a lot, and solutions journalism is just an extension of investigative journalism.

I think it definitely is an important piece, because you need to do some investigations to kind of track the evidence on your own, because it'd be nice if there was a neat report that said, that like tracked the solution, but some organizations may not have the capability to necessarily track their own success. Being able to kind of do the research and the investigation, to see not only the problem, but if the solution made a difference is an important piece.

Because it's not enough to just a report on the issue, there has to be a response. And I mean the press isn't necessarily responsible for that response, but in a way it is, because the main goal of the press is to - to give the public what it needs to make decisions. And if you're not doing that from an investigative standpoint by providing extra information towards a solution, then it's a failure around the reporting system. I mean attaching the solutions angle, it doesn't leave the world so bleak. It provides hope, I think. Something everybody needs.

The whole basis for combining the two is to investigate these kind of larger like social and societal problems, and having kind of the toolkit, the investigators reporting toolkit, is the most important part for combining these two things, because
investigative journalism like isn't just like a genre of journalism necessarily. It's not like anybody is like majoring in investigative journalism, it's like building these toolkits to know how to find those stories and know how to find all the research. When you're able to combine with those, you can kind of look into these societal issues and make sure that you're getting everything and not just getting what people are telling you.

I remember a professor gave a lecture on how after his investigative reporting on stuff he would get a call from someone that said, okay I'm angry, but now what do I do about this? I feel that's a sentiment a lot of people have after reading deep-dive investigative work. The fact that it's a little, you're a little helpless, you can't really do anything about it. I feel you don't necessarily have to combine the two all the time, but when used in tandem it's like, here's a problem, but here’s possibly how to solve it. It's a lot more rigorous it feels.

It’s all critical thinking. You're working through problems whether you're trying to find the problem or whether you're working to fix the problem. You have to look at all sides of that coin when you're looking at them, and investigative reporting maybe focuses more on the problem, whereas solutions focuses more on the fix. They’re all related, and there's so many paths and steps that both work in that kind of reporting.

Students reported understanding how the two practices could be used in conjunction with each other: investigating the solution and not just the problem. They also articulated that this reporting model shows both the problem and a potential solution, thereby giving audiences clear indications that workable responses are possible.

Discussion

While solutions journalism is gaining momentum in newsrooms across the United States, only a select few universities are teaching solutions journalism at the collegiate level. At the University of Oregon, we take it one step further to integrate investigative reporting with solutions journalism, thereby fostering a mix of potent reporting and writing methods intended to spark action and reaction as our student journalists uncover — and seek solutions for — some of our community’s most perplexing issues. The intention of this research was to evaluate this unique pedagogical approach — bringing together investigative reporting and solutions journalism — the first-known hybrid of these two reporting methods. Through survey data and in-depth interviews, we explored student conceptualizations of these reporting approaches and of the role of journalism in society.

Key findings show that students enrolled in our solutions + investigation courses did have changing perspectives on overarching questions about journalist’s roles; journalism’s civic mission; how journalism affects society and does — or does not — promote social change. Key findings from the survey show that students in the survey did have more solutions-based perspectives about journalism’s key values and the potential impact of this type of reporting from Time 1 to Time 2. Findings also showed that students felt more favorable about both approaches from Time 1 to Time 2. But certainly do definitive conclusions can be drawn because of the small sample size, which is a limitation of the research. From in-depth interviews we learned that students could articulate definitions of these reporting practices and that they felt more favorably about journalism and their role as journalists following enrollment in this teaching model. Future research should continue to explore student learning in this area with the goal of continuing to implement reforms to our current
practices in journalism and mass communication education (“Does journalism education matter,” 2006).

About the Authors

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Doing it for Real: A study of Experiential and Situated Learning Approaches in Teaching Journalism Practice Through Engagement with the Public Domain

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Abstract

In recent years there has been a huge growth in apprenticeship and internship style learning in the UK but does this provide students with a safe place to make mistakes or are they simply mirroring the mistakes of others? This paper will examine the application of the Experiential Learning Cycle of Kolb (Kolb, 1984) in journalism education alongside the Situated Learning and Communities of Practice approach as advocated by Lave and Wenger (Lave and Wenger, 1991). It will examine the ethical challenges faced using both models in relation to creating a safe place to make mistakes in an era of intense pressure to engage in the public domain. The author will do this by looking at two case studies of universities in the UK teaching journalism through practice and adopting different approaches to students engaging with industry and placing their work in the public domain and the ethical and pedagogical challenged this produces.

Introduction:

Scholars have argued for years about which is the most effective way to teach journalism and have called for new ways to reinvent journalism education (Dennis, 1984; Medsger, 1996; Reese, 1999; Reese and Cohen, 2000; Adam, 2001, MacDonald, 2006; Deuze, 2006; Mensing, 2010 & 2011). Much has been written about how journalism courses have tended to focus on providing training for students to get jobs in the media industry (Dickson, 2000; Becker, 2003) and how often the curriculum is shaped by the requirements of industry and professional accreditation standards (Zelizer, 2004) but ignores more critical, conceptual and contextual thinking (Greenberg 2007).

Meanwhile the traditional news organisations that helped shape this training-based journalism education and feed into the accreditation bodies’ requirements, are struggling with falling sales whilst audiences engage with news through a plethora of alternative platforms and sources. (Mensing, 2010 & 2011). Mensing argued that teaching students the practices that reinforce the status quo is of little use to them and can prevent them from adopting new responses and innovations. She said this devolves degree programmes into little more than training courses (Mensing 2010, 2011). She called for a realignment of journalism education from an industry-centred model to a community-focused approach as one way to re-engage it in a more productive and vital role in the future of journalism. She argues a ‘community-centered focus could provide a way to conceptualise a reconstitution of journalism education to match that taking place in journalism beyond the university.’(Mensing, 2010,p 511).

Journalism education in the UK is now predominantly delivered in Higher Education (HE) at both undergraduate and postgraduate degree level. (Baines, 2017).

1. A version of this paper can be found in the October 2019 issue of the Association of Journalism Education journal.
The first undergraduate programmes in journalism were launched in the 1990s but previously training was expected from employers as a fit and proper way for them to invest in staff and maintain standards. (Greenberg, 2007)

Over recent years there has been a drive in the UK towards ensuring journalism programmes are accredited by a recognised industry body. In 2015 over a third of the UK’s 300 undergraduate and postgraduate journalism courses were accredited by at least one of the main accreditation bodies (NCTJ, BJTC, PPA). Canter (2015) said this demonstrated the marketing value universities place on such schemes in an increasingly competitive marketplace and asked questions about the ongoing value of belonging to these bodies in an increasingly digital age. However, The Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC), the biggest of these organisations, still accredits 56 courses in the UK (figures correct May 2019).

The BJTC stipulates a list of practice-orientated skills that it requires students to be accomplished in as part of their degree course. According to the requirements, achieving these ensures the ‘highest professional standards in journalism training.’ (BJTC, 2017. p2) and when students graduate, they are ‘capable of working in the production of online, multimedia and broadcast in the world of news, current affairs, features and documentaries.’ (BJTC, 2017. p2). Meanwhile universities are increasingly marketing their courses as being aligned with industry providing work ready graduates. In order to achieve accreditation courses are shaped by professional bodies along the lines of training, much like Zelizer (2004) suggested.

The main focus of the BJTC courses is news days, a simulation of a working newsroom where students cover real stories and create TV and radio programmes and websites under tight deadlines. They then reflect upon the process, apply relevant theory to their findings and go out and do it all again the following week. It is a model that aligns closely with the principles of experiential learning and in particular the Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) of David Kolb (Kolb, 1984).

**Experiential Learning:**

Experiential learning theories build on social and constructivist theories of learning whereby the emphasis is on the individual construction of the world and knowledge being created by the student building their own mental models based on their own experience. The idea can be seen to have its origins in the work of Jean Piaget, John Dewey and Kurt Lewin which challenged the view of biological determinism that was prevalent at the time.

Experiential learning theorists situate experience at the core of the learning process and aim to understand the manners in which experiences, whether first or second hand, motivate learners and promote their learning.

They are based on the theory that ideas are not fixed but are formed and reformed through reflection. All start with the premise that experience is essential to the learning process and that it is possible to integrate theory and practice through reflection.

The most prominent modern day developer of experiential learning theory is Kolb. Kolb defines learning as ‘…the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of
experience.’ (Kolb, 1984, p38). Kolb’s (ELC) (Kolb, 1984) draws upon four main bases that the learner must engage with: concrete experience; reflective observation; abstract conceptualisation, active experimentation and then the cycle returns to concrete experience. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle

The model builds on the premise that practice will be adjusted based upon the reflection and the theory building. The learner can engage with the cycle at any stage.

Kolb based his model on what he calls the Lewinian Experiential Learning Model. He stressed that in order for experiential learning to be successful there needed to be two aspects: concrete and immediate experience valuable of creating meaning in learning and feedback/reflection. The model is based upon action research and laboratory teaching which are characterised by feedback. Kolb said that the information provided by feedback is the starting point of a continuous process consisting of goal-directed action and evaluation of the consequences of this action. While Dewey talked about the integration of action and thinking (Dewey, 1916) Kolb distinguishes between different learning styles needed for action and thinking allowing students to engage with the cycle at various different stages. He referred to a ‘dialectical tension’ between the experiential and conceptual stages but resolves the tension by placing them as separate stages in his model.

Similarly, Schön, like Kolb, approaches learning from an organisational discipline. His work (Schön, 1983) can be seen to compliment Kolb’s in that he argues that engaging with practice,
underpinned by intellectual theory, helps to maintain knowledge. He uses the phrase ‘reflective practicum’ to refer to this.

Beard and Wilson (2006) attempt to integrate the social, historical and cultural aspects of learning which Kolb did not include. Others have taken a different definition of experiential learning. Rogers (1969) theory of experiential learning comes from a humanistic approach to psychology. He distinguished two types of learning: cognitive, from academic knowledge, which he said was meaningless and experiential which, relates to applied knowledge, which he describes as significant. The distinction was that experiential learning addresses the needs and wants of the learner. He argued that learning occurs when the student participates completely in the learning process and has control over it. There are some similarities between Rogers approach and that of Kolb in that they both require students to learn from reflecting on their own experiences, however they differ in the fact that Rogers approach negates the need for academic involvement and the reflection to be done in the classroom and therefore it can be argued that this is closer to the situated learning theory and communities of practice approaches.

### Situated Learning

Situated learning theory is a socio-cultural approach and focuses on students’ changing participation in a community of practice. According to this perspective there is no learning which is not situated, emphasising the relational and negotiated character of knowledge and learning as well as the engaged nature of learning activity for the individuals involved. According to the theory, it is within communities that learning occurs most effectively. Interactions taking place within a community of practice (E.g. cooperation, problem solving, building trust, understanding and relations) have the potential to foster community social capital that enhances the community members’ wellbeing.

Lave and Wenger (1991) coined the term Communities of Practice (COP) for groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. According to Lave and Wenger, a COP is constituted by a domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a community of people who care about this domain, and the shared practice that they are developing to be effective in that domain. They develop this notion of a community of practice through their idea of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP). They look at five studies of apprenticeship and seek to understand how newcomers or apprentices could become masters through engagement, interaction, collaboration and learning knowledgeable skills. Newcomers are peripheral to masters of whatever practice but participate in a legitimate and useful way through social practice and situated learning. (see Figure 2).
Wenger (1998) extended the concept and applied it to other areas, such as organisations. The increase in online communities has seen this applied further afield in recent years (Stoker, 2015) and, it can be argued that the resurgence in apprenticeships can be seen as more closely aligned with this approach (Fuller, 2005).

For Lave and Wenger the key distinguishing factor of COPs was not just experiencing the practice but fully participating in the community in which it took place.

In our view, learning is not merely situated in practice as if it were some independently reifiable process that just happened to be located somewhere; learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.35).

For experiential learning theory, however, the learning occurs not in the participation but in the reflection. Scholars have argued that for experiential learning to truly happen that reflection needs to be formal, facilitating the students’ understandings of what has been learned. (Usher & Soloman, 1999, Moon 2004).

**Applying the Models to Journalism Education**

What does this mean for journalism and how can these theoretical perspectives be applied to the issues that have arisen in teaching it? The author has already hinted at a theory/practice divide that has arisen in journalism education as journalism practitioners enter the academic world keen on providing training for jobs whilst academics wish to preserve the critical engagement skills. (Dickson, 2000; Becker, 2003; Greenberg, 2007, Mensing 2010 and 2011). This issue can be seen...
to be ever more present in recent years with increasing calls from industry leaders and journalism scholars for practical learning and real content production (Parks, 2015) resulting in many courses requiring practising journalists to teach on them and universities marketing their courses as providing real world experience and skills and strong links with industry.

Meanwhile academics have argued that these skills simply reinforce the status quo and devolve degree programmes into little more than training courses (Mensing, 2010 and 2011).

Greenberg (2007) looked at Kolb’s ELC as a solution to this and concluded that journalism practitioners would gain value by engaging with theory to give the experiential learning cycle the chance to explore its fullest potential. She also argued that theory-based disciplines should look at alternative theoretical frameworks and examine their own response to feedback from practice (2007, p.302). Brandon (2002) said that experiential learning could open new areas of knowledge for journalism education as well as helping to improve courses for students. She wanted to discover whether courses addressed students’ career aspirations, encouraged initiative, offered training that would lead to different job positions, allowed input, used mistakes as learning opportunities, provided frequent feedback on performance and encouraged the use of knowledge gained in other learning settings (Brandon 2002, p65).

Steel et al (2007) advocated the use of experiential learning following their study with postgraduate students working as real journalists on the 2005 UK General Election. This was a one-off experiment followed up by reflection and semi structured interviews. The authors raised questions about how educators manage the balance between ‘throwing students in at the deep end to resolve problems’ whilst ‘still retaining sufficient control’ (Steel, 2007, p333).

Other studies based on short-term experiential style learning exercises have advocated this theoretical perspective (Kartveit, 2009, Evans, 2016 and 2017, Parks 2015).

However, the definition of experiential learning and the application of it was slightly different in each of the studies. For some, there was an overlap with the pedagogical approaches used in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Steel et al (2007) referred to the ways in which students learn from and with each other through the development of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) within journalism and said that this area was relatively under-researched (Steel et al 2007). This suggested that it is possible to have a community of practice within Higher Education, and it doesn’t have to be exclusively linked to the traditional apprenticeship model. Students could learn from one another with a common domain of knowledge, goals and practices and would bond together by the common goal of producing the programme/website or newspaper. On news days, the experiential learning activity prescribed by the BJTC, students are not only expected to work as a team, but as a team with a clearly structured hierarchy, where peers stop being peers (Steel et al 2007). Whilst there is hierarchy in Lave and Wenger’s COP model, Steel’s work showed that students taking part in this exercise were not always ready for that level of authority and, at times, it caused dissent amongst the group.

Parks (2015) case study examined experiential learning in enhancing skills in news writing where students in a classroom environment were able to publish their work. Whilst pointing out benefits of experiential learning in giving students hands-on experience, Parks argues that the trade-offs prompted by this approach could be that analytical instruction is sacrificed in the name of ‘real-
world’ experience (Parks 2015, p136). He called for a variety of approaches for journalism education.

Experience-based courses should not be the exclusive format for teaching journalism, but experiential learning is essential to a quality journalism education. (Parks, 2015. p 36)

This understanding of experiential learning differs slightly from the Kolb model (Kolb, 1984) in that whilst Parks’ exercise was useful in providing students with skills and experience, it gave less time to the instruction and reflection which are central to Kolb’s model (Kolb, 1984).

The author’s own work, (Evans, 2017) followed the Kolb model more closely in arguing for experiential learning to be successful in journalism education there needs to be a ‘safe place to make mistakes’ (Evans, 2017. p75) with opportunity for critique and reflection.

This concept of a “safe space” is referred to widely across disciplines.

In management education in arguing that in order for experiential learning to be beneficial a “safe space” needed to be created early if deeper learning is to be achieved, and this would enable critical thinking (Kisfalvi and Oliver 2016, p735). These approaches adhere to an education rather than training-based approach where the need for reflection alongside repetition is essential in the learning process.

Winnicott (1989) said the classroom becomes a transitional or in-between space that prepares students to move into the real world.

Schaffer (2004), however, argues that reflection can be done on the job in journalism as reflecting on one’s practice is a skill internalised by the learner as they become part of a practice community.

He looks at the professions of architecture, mediation and journalism and draws upon Schön’s idea of the ‘reflective practicum’ where learners have a capacity to combine reflection and action, on the spot, ‘to examine understandings and appreciations while the train is running.’ (Schön, 1985, p.27). Schaffer argues that Schön’s reflective process is progressively internalised in journalism through norms, habits, expectations, abilities, and understandings of a community of practice and refers to Lave and Wenger’s model in allowing individuals to reframe their identities.

For example, journalists share common ways of thinking and working, and individuals who work in the field of journalism incorporate these ways of thinking and working into their sense of self, coming to think of themselves, at least in part, as journalists (Schaffer, 2004. P.1404).

There is some obvious overlap between the two theoretical perspectives of experiential and situated learning and it can be argued that what is needed to reinvent journalism education and prepare students for the changing world of the profession is a hybrid approach.

Tulloch and Mas Manchon (2018) looked at The Catalan News Agency Experiment (CNAE) at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona where third and fourth year students were tasked with
providing professional-level English-language content for an official news agency. The CNAE saw students producing directly for consumption in the public domain. Students worked for the agency from January to June but were based in their classroom with tutors fine tuning the skills necessary to produce professional-level material for the agency whilst also providing academic critique and rigour. Authors argued that the project helped bridge the gap between theory and practice. The CNAE project can be seen to have some similarities with the the second case study in this paper at University B.

Two UK Case Studies:

Both case studies are at post 92 Universities which offer BJTC accredited journalism courses but follow a different pedagogical approach to their teaching of practice.

University A follows a model closer to Kolb’s ELC (Kolb, 1984) in that its days are focused around feedback and reflection.

News days start, like most busy news rooms, with a meeting to discuss the news agenda, students then go out of the classroom and find real stories, film, record audio, write, edit and present a final broadcast product to a tight deadline. However, unlike a real newsroom, they end with a session of feedback and reflection. The process is then repeated the following day or week with students putting into practice what they have learned on the previous news day. News days here can therefore be seen to be the embodiment of Kolb’s ELC (Kolb, 1984).

The days therefore are a hybrid of experiential and simulation-based learning. Whilst the students report on real stories in the world outside of the classroom, they are under the guidance of a tutor and there is opportunity for learning from their mistakes. (Evans, 2017; Kisfalvi and Oliver, 2016; Winnicott, 1965). The university operates a cautious and gradual approach to autonomy in that material produced on these days is kept in house at first and second year and only third year and masters work is placed in public domain once it has been checked by a lecturer. This is not the practice on all BJTC accredited universities though and it raises questions about professional identity and whether these experiences at University A are real enough to make the student feel like a journalist.

University B adopts a pedagogy closer to Lave and Wenger’s situated learning or LPP model (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Students on this journalism course are offered an optional module working as an intern at a local television station. The module, runs alongside other traditional classroom-based modules that the students also take in their third year instead of news days and two theory-based modules. The students are not paid for the internship and work a week on/week off shift pattern with alternate weeks being spent back in the classroom environment in workshops and tutorials. They are fully integrated into the newsroom and are expected to operate as a professional journalist during their time on this module adhering to the workflow and practices of the newsroom rather than the classroom. Material they produce is broadcast in the public domain and is also used as part of a portfolio for assessment on the module. This raises questions as to whether these students have a safe place to make mistakes (Evans, 2017; Kisfalvi and Oliver, 2016; Winnicott, 1965). It also poses some ethical challenges for teaching journalism in terms of exposing students to real world
work flows and practices in relation to reconciling apparent inequalities in the newsroom with the parity expected by students in HE.

Ethical Challenges

In the author’s earlier work Evans (2017) she argued that students valued the ‘safe place to make mistakes’ (Evans, 2017, p.75) on news days as this gave them confidence to experiment. However, this needed to be balanced by the need for exposure and reality (Evans, 2017, p.81). Madison argued that concerns about providing a safe place to make mistakes are mitigated by the perceived benefits of immersive “real world” experience and being able to ‘participate in news-gathering alongside seasoned professionals.’ (Madison, 2014, p.318). It must be noted that Madison mentioned that the students worked ‘alongside seasoned professionals’ (p.318) hence there was someone present to act as the master in the master/apprenticeship relationship (Lave and Wenger, 1991) scaffolding their learning and giving them someone to reflect with. Journalism education is rapidly evolving and further anecdotal evidence that the author has received from students since publishing her work suggests that students expect their news day work to be published/broadcast so it is timely to revisit this issue.

In relation to University A’s model this poses questions as to whether it goes far enough to provide the real world experiences that university courses are increasingly encouraged to provide.

One lecturer teaching into the course at University A thought that when material was published at third year and masters’ level it was transformative:

I think, it’s a very transformative environment, I think, for the students, when they are publishing. There are a number of things I know they’re highly motivated by. The first is that they have an online portfolio of live work, which showcases their skills, and it’s one of the things I know that students are very, very keen on, because often they’re going straight from their award or programme straight into the world of work, and so having a by-line, having something that’s in the published environment. (Lecturer 1, University A)

That people can see? (Interviewer)

Yes, that people can see – is really, really important. (Lecturer 1, University A)

The lecturer also said that she had noticed that students developed more pride in their work as a result of it going into the public domain.

However, whilst this approach may boost the confidence of some, for others it can limit their creativity as they become fearful of making mistakes (Evans, 2017).

It also raises questions as to whether members of the public who students interview as part of their news days would want their contributions broadcast in the public domain.

Whilst on one hand it may give the student more kudos in securing interviews as the contributor would know that there was potential exposure for their content, on the other hand it may make securing sensitive interviews more difficult. It also poses challenges about the professional identity
of the student; are they students of journalism or journalists who are students? If the students are working as journalists as part of their university course the university is responsible for them and, if the content is broadcast the public domain, it is also responsible for that content.

At University B students are told from the moment they start the course that they are journalists first students second.

And that is kinda the ethos of (name of institution) we tell them don’t think of yourselves as students think of yourselves as journalists who happen to be students. It is the kind of ethos we try to instil in all students whether they are on (name of internship module) or whether they are working as a newsgathering team on news days. (Lecturer 2, University B)

Lecturer 2 said that she felt students valued being treated as professionals and she had received predominantly positive feedback from students about their experiences in relation to the employability skills they perceived it gave them.

However, she had noticed that those who were on the optional internship module had started to develop a sense of superiority, presuming that because they were working for a real world media organisation and their work was being broadcast in the public domain they were better than the others. She said at times this caused tensions in the cohort which lecturers then had to reconcile. All students on the course are entitled to a parity of experience however, for some having this added exposure and kudos that working for a TV company gave them meant they felt elevated above others in the cohort. It also gave them more opportunities to produce TV material needed for their portfolios. This then led to some students doing better in their portfolio assessments than those who were on the traditional news day module. The module has since been redesigned to address this.

Reconciling the differences between classroom and newsroom pose an ethical challenge with the model. University B’s model aligns well with the Lave and Wenger (1991) situated learning and LPP model in that students fully participate in a COP, learn what they need to know and do from journalists at the TV station and gradually become a part of the community. However, by adopting the workflow and practices of the newsroom rather than the classroom can cause tensions. Whilst in some areas the students gained additional skills, in other areas there were gaps.

Lecturer 2 said this meant that in recent years they have built in additional support for the weeks these students are back in the classroom. Additional support included inviting the internship students to join the traditional news days on their weeks off shift to ensure they got experience of radio news, required by the accreditation body but not provided by the TV station:

The main tension will be because we don’t have editorial control or input it is a complete stand alone independent commercial organisation whose main goal is obviously output that we have no say over, so our students, we cut them loose to it and we have got all these measures to support that and mitigate for anything that might go wrong in that scenario so it’s a balance that the week on week off enables. (Lecturer 2, University B)
This intervention can be seen as an additional safety net built in to bolster the experience on the internship and potentially compensate for any shortfalls that full participation can bring.

The Lave and Wenger model presumes that newcomers/apprentices will learn from old timer/masters which is an integral part of the internship set up. Students are also given feedback at the end of the day from editors at the TV station through a programme debrief. Whilst this may be good for developing their practical skills and ensuring that they replicate the practices of the newsroom, (Mensing, 2010, 2011), this is purely practical and professional. It does not foster the critical engagement skills that Greenberg (2007) said can be incorporated through the reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation elements of Kolb’s ELC (Kolb, 1984).

Instead these skills are developed in workshops and tutorials with academic teaching staff on the weeks the student is off shift.

The model also raises some questions about learning from old-timers/masters and whether students are also picking up bad habits alongside essential employability skills.

As the internship is an accredited university module, students undertaking it are not paid for their work as a journalist at the TV station. Whilst the students are aware of this from the outset, clearly value the employability skills it gives them and see themselves as journalists, it could be asked whether it is ethical to not pay people for working for up to 15 weeks a year. University B’s ethos of journalists who happen to be students runs through the whole course, yet if these students are working as journalists it could be argued they should be paid as journalists. Further work is needed to find out how many of these students go onto paid work as a journalist after graduating and how many are subsequently taken on as paid staff by the TV company.

Conclusion:

This paper examined two models of teaching journalism practice through engagement with the public domain. One took a more cautious approach focusing on the process of reflection on the practice rather than the practice itself and had similarities to Kolb’s ELC (Kolb, 1984) while the other adopted an approach closer to Lave and Wenger’s situated learning and LPP model (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Both models pose many ethical challenges for teaching journalism. The author’s earlier work advocated the need for a ‘safe place to make mistakes’ on news days (Evans, 2017). However, by examining two different pedagogical models at two university settings she concludes that the exposure that placing students and their material in the public domain can bring many benefits which can mitigate some of the ethical issues raised. With multimedia newsrooms and classrooms in universities claiming to echo industry’s digital first mantra and the increasing normalisation of people’s lives being recorded on social media, if students are still to feel they are doing it for real (Evans, 2016) then support needs to be built in to mitigate for what might go wrong. It may be time to look into a hybrid of the two models through a placement year or summer enabling students to return to the classroom for the final year of study where they can truly reflect upon their time in the COP. Whilst this may not completely address Mensing’s concerns about journalism education (Mensing, 2010 & 2011) it may enable some form of synergy between the two theoretical perspectives of learning.
The author aims that further research through focus groups and semi-structured interviews will discover students’ and former students’ perceptions of these two ways of learning the practice of journalism, whether they feel they are able to safely make mistakes and when, if at all, they feel they have become journalists.

About the Author

**Myra Evans** is the Director of Inclusive and Practice Oriented Curriculum for the Faculty of Arts Creative Industries and Education at the University of the West of England (UWE) in Bristol, UK. She also teaches journalism at UWE. She has been teaching journalism for 11 years and for five years was the Programme Leader for UWE’s BA Journalism Degree. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a UWE Learning and Teaching Fellow. She is a qualified print and broadcast journalist with more than 20 years experience in journalism. Myra’s research specialises in experiential and simulation based learning in journalism education. Myra is currently studying for a Professional Doctorate in Education.

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Curriculum and Requirements in Undergraduate Online Degree Programs in Journalism and Communications in U.S. Not-for-Profit Universities

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Abstract:

This paper examines online degree programs in areas of journalism and communications in US public universities accredited by the Accrediting Council for Journalism and Mass Communications. In all cases, admission and degree requirements were the same for on-campus and online students. There were differences among the universities regarding the tuition and fees charged for online or in-person courses. The paper further examines the online degree programs at the University of Florida, identifying challenges and barriers to successful implementation and operation. The most noteworthy conclusion is that such programs require significant resources, beyond the capability of most public universities.

Introduction

An increasing number of U.S. universities are offering course work in journalism and communications in an online environment. While offering education away from campuses dates back to correspondence courses in the 19th century (Marlanda, 2013), the availability of high speed broadband and wireless connections have made internet-based education increasingly convenient, especially for non-traditional students, or others with disabilities or family circumstances which make participation in typical synchronous education difficult. The first online education program was developed in 1982 at the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute, in California (Feenberg, p 366).

These early efforts established that interactive instruction, even text-based, even without video or audio augmentation, could be an effective means of delivering education. They also established that the most successful courses were relatively small (Feenberg, p 366), a lesson that has not always been followed by designers and presenters of online programs.

One effort to bring high-quality learning to distant learners was the creation of “MOOC’s,” Massive Open Online Courses. They have been offered by such prestigious universities as MIT and Stanford, often at little or no cost to students. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of these courses, with almost 10,000 being offered worldwide in 2018 (Chronicle, Cumulative Growth), with the largest number in technology and business subjects (Chronicle, (MOOC Course Description). However, MOOCs have not achieved the educational results many hoped for. Student attrition is high in many of these courses.

Feenberg criticizes online programs, and other uses of educational technology as neoliberal attempts to focus on student and societal economic goals, rather than on their well-being and the improvement of society. Further, while students at elite private institutions will benefit from small classes with personal interaction with the best professors, students from lower social strata will be the recipient of less personal, more mechanized instruction: “the old model of the university as a
place of collegial intellectual life is doomed to go the way of the steam car and telegraph (Feenberg, p 365).

North America is significantly more invested in online, or e-learning, than other areas of the world. Estimated 2016 spending for packaged e-learning content in North America was $20 billion, compared to $8.5 billion in Asia, and $6 billion in Western Europe. (Docebo, 2013). One survey found that in 2015 almost half of surveyed students reported having taken at least one online course in the previous years (ECAR).

While there are several motivations leading a student to enroll in an online degree program, including cost, convenience, or life situation, the vast majority of such students have been identified as “career minded.” These students are either already employed, but seeking to further their pay or status with a degree, or those seeking to transition to a different career. According to a survey, 69% of online students in 2018 fell into that category, compared with 20% who identify as “lifelong learners,” and 13% who are recent high school graduates transitioning to a university (Best Colleges, p 5).

At the same time, there has been a slight decrease in the percentage of students interested in a completely online degree from 47% in 2016 to 37% in 2018. There is an increased interest in hybrid programs, which require at least some on-campus meetings, or a combination of online and in-person courses (Best Colleges, p 11).

Online degree programs are often specifically targeted at students who have completed some of their degree requirements, but dropped out of school prior to completion. A second target is students seeking to transfer from other institutions, particularly 2-year community or junior colleges (Best Colleges, p 25).

Online education has been somewhat tarred by poorly conceived, poorly taught courses offered by for-profit “schools.” Poor, or non-existent, advising, exorbitant tuition, and little or no support for graduates seeking employment have been commonplace. These programs have been the dominant home for completely online degrees. In 2016, 85% of students taking a completely online degree were enrolled in private, for-profit programs, compared with 35% in public universities (DLC, p 37) However, reputable not-for-profit public and private universities, such as Arizona State University, and the University of Florida, have been leaders in developing online programs. One area of development is degree-granting programs in the disciplines included in journalism and communications.

The author’s university is one offering such degrees at the undergraduate and graduate level. The undergraduate degree programs require the same admission standards, have the same course requirements, and are taught by the same faculty who teach in our in-residence environments. In some cases online courses include students in both the in-residence and online programs. Two such degrees are currently offered in areas of journalism and communications. The author’s insights based on experience leading the development of the program, developing and teaching courses, and continuing supervision of the program are included.

As these online degree programs proliferate, it is fair to ask how well they are preparing students for careers in journalism and communications. One purpose of this research is to analyze the degree
requirements and curriculum of university undergraduate online degree programs in journalism and communications. A second purpose is to describe the creation, implementation, and operation of the program, with an eye to exploring the feasibility for other universities to offer an online program in journalism and communications

The focus of this paper is public universities. Public universities in the United States operate under different legal and political environments than private universities. As one example, the University of Florida Online program was the result of an act of the state legislature. Public universities typically have mandates to serve broader constituencies than do private universities. While several private universities, e.g., Ivy League universities, have large financial resources, many smaller programs must focus on a relatively small number of degree programs, and typically have small overall enrollments.

While many books and articles have been written about distance education, research into distance education programs in journalism and communications is relatively sparse. Several panel sessions were held in the 1990s at annual meetings of the Association for Education in Journalism and Communications, primarily focusing on computer-assisted courses. One example, published several years ago, by Du and Thornburg examined differences in opinion between online journalism instructors and professional journalists regarding necessary subject matter for the courses (2011).

There is interest in Journalism and Communications online degrees. According to Best Colleges, 6% of students or potential students indicated an interest in Journalism and Communications degree programs. While well below the numbers for Business, Management and related areas (25%) and Health-related professions (12%), it was comparable to subjects such as Criminal Justice, Engineering, and Social Sciences (Best Colleges, p 38).

An analysis of undergraduate curriculum and degree requirements was based on a purposive sample of leading U.S. public and private universities, based on accreditation by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). We first answer these questions:

- What are the similarities and differences in admission requirements for online and in-residence journalism and communications degree programs?
- What types of course are required or offered in online journalism and communications degree programs?
- What are the similarities and differences between requirements for online and in-residence journalism degree programs?

We then look more closely at the University of Florida Online (UF Online) programs in Journalism and Communications, especially the challenges of developing and implementing an online degree program.

Of the 112 fully programs fully accredited by the Accrediting Council for Journalism and Mass Communications, 83 are public institutions (ACEJMC). Accreditation is reviewed every six years, and the process includes at least a year of preparation of a report by the respective university, and a 3-4 day site visit by a team comprised of academics and journalism and communications
professionals. Because of the time and effort to go through the process, most universities choose not to participate, although most major state universities do take part. Accreditation signifies that a program combines professional preparation with attention to areas such as liberal arts and sciences. As an illustration, accredited programs may require no more than 52 semester hours of journalism and communications courses out of 124 typically required for graduation. Other emphases include instruction in the history of the professions, freedom of the press and professional ethics, as well as diversity of faculty and students, and ongoing formal assessment of instruction and curriculum by faculty and professionals.

Examining websites of the accredited programs and their universities revealed eight offered at least one undergraduate online journalism and communications degree program (Figure 1). Many of the universities which do not offer an undergraduate program offer at least one online Master’s program. Graduate programs have generally been widespread for several reasons, including a demand from working professionals, shorter, more focused programs which do not require significant coursework outside of the department’s offerings, and the belief that graduate students will be more disciplined in completing online courses.

These data are consistent with earlier findings reported by Castaneda (2011). She surveyed ACEJMC schools and found that most of those offering online degrees were at the Masters level (78%), while only 22% offered BA coursework. Consistent with the proportion of schools offering a complete degree now, she found that 9% offered a complete degree (Castaneda, p 367).

As seen in Figure 1, all of the programs have the same entrance and course requirements as their in-residence programs. Online programs are sometimes criticized as being less rigorous than in-residence programs, a charge often leveled at for-profit programs. For-profit schools, particularly, have been accused of enrolling students who would not otherwise be admissible to a public university. In the case of the accredited programs here, requirements and degree requirements are the same.

There are some differences in the amount of tuition and fees charged between in-residence programs and online. One factor in the popularity of online programs has been the lower infrastructure costs—classrooms, utilities, parking, etc. Students in online programs are able to reduce overall educational costs by eliminating housing and transportation to and from campus. As seen, below, some universities pass some of those savings to online students, while others do not, or may even charge higher fees.
**Figure 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Program(s)</th>
<th>Entrance Requirements</th>
<th>Degree Requirements</th>
<th>Tuition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona State University, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication</td>
<td>Digital Audiences, Film &amp; Media Studies, Mass Communication and Media Studies</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>All students pay in-state tuition rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas State University, Department of Media and Department of Communication</td>
<td>Communication Studies</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, School of Journalism and Strategic Media</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>Same tuition as in-residence, additional fees for online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado State University, Department of Journalism &amp; Media Communication,</td>
<td>Journalism and Media Communications</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>Higher tuition for online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Illinois University Carbondale, School of Journalism</td>
<td>Journalism and Mass Communications</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New Mexico, Department of Strategic Communication</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>Same as in-residence</td>
<td>All students pay in-state rates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UF Online

UF Online was established by the Florida Legislature in 2013, and began offering degree programs in 2014. The goal was to offer “high quality, fully online baccalaureate degree programs at an affordable cost” to students who are either first time in college or transfer, in-state or out of state students.” (UF Online About Us). At the end of the first academic year 1,172 students were enrolled. There are currently about 4,000 students in UF Online, including 198 in the two Journalism and Communications departments: 125 Public Relations majors and 73 in Telecommunication Media and Society (UF Online Annual Report). More than 1200 students have graduated, including about 60 in Journalism and Communications programs (UF Online Annual Report). In 2019 the Walt Disney Corporation announced a partnership in which it would pay the tuition for its employees who enrolled in the Public Relations or Telecommunication Media and Society degree programs.

The UF Online student body differs from that of the in-residence students in ways that would not be surprising. For example, 54% of UF Online students are part-time, and the average age of the students is 27.2 years, considerably higher than the vast majority of in-residence undergraduate students are almost entirely 18-22 (UF Online Annual Report).

2018 marked the first year in which UF Online revenue exceeded expenses. Including a $5,000,000 subsidy from the state of Florida, the program had revenue (primarily tuition) of more than $13 million, against expenses of $12.2 million. The largest expense category was course delivery (which includes pay for instructor, and licenses for course management systems) at $5.2 million. Reflecting the difference between an online and on-campus degree program, the second largest expense category was Marketing ($2.3 million). As the programs have grown, overall cost of course production has been reduced from $1.3 million to $840,000 (UF Online Annual Report).

The program’s overall success is marked by its ranking as the fifth best overall online program by the well-known US News and World Report Best Colleges; UF Online tied with Penn State World Campus and the University of Illinois at Chicago. The ranking was based on four criteria: student engagement (35 percent); student services and technology (25 percent); faculty credentials and training (20 percent); and peer reputation (20 percent) (University of Florida News).

While ultimately successful, the development of UF Online was hampered by two structural problems. These were delays in appointing a full-time university administrator, and an unsuccessful attempt to use a third-party to carry out marketing, admissions, and other student-related activities.
When UF Online first began, a University administrator with experience in online programs was appointed interim director. Just prior to the beginning of the Telecommunication Media and Society degree program a full-time director was appointed, someone with significant experience directing a major university online program, and familiarity with the University of Florida. For reasons that were never fully made public, she chose to leave after only a few weeks. The previous interim director returned to that position, but during the year before a new full-time director was appointed he chose to make few long term decisions.

As a result, there was uncertainty about lines of authority and responsibility. For example, leadership of the course development team, and even its physical location, changed more than once. In March, 2015, a permanent director, given the title of Assistant Provost, was hired (a Provost is the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and is normally responsible for the academic operations of a university).

The Telecommunication Media and Society program was one of the first to be included in UF Online, with preparation beginning in Spring, 2014, and the first students admitted in Spring, 2015. The first cohort were all first year students, who had several pre-requisite and general education courses to complete, so the first department courses were taught in Spring, 2016. The department’s participation came about at the behest of the University administration to develop the online degree program, rather than as a result of our own initiative. At the time there was little faculty expertise in the department in developing and delivering such a program.

There were several challenges in beginning and implementing the program. On online degree program involves several levels of activity, support, and execution. Picciano (2018) describes those within the context of a standard evaluative program QLC Quality Framework. He elaborates on these elements, but the list includes:

- Institutional Support
- Technology Support
- Course Development/Instructional Design
- Course Structure
- Teaching and Learning
- Social and Student Engagement
- Faculty Support/Student Support
- Evaluation and Assessment

**Finding instructors/course developers.** Several courses in our curriculum were already being taught online, but most of the required courses, especially those early in the students’ programs were not. As department chair, the author worked with our College liaison to UF Online to identify possible instructors. While our preference was to have full-time faculty responsible for the creation, several who were approached chose not to participate for reasons of time or interest. We turned, then to adjunct instructors to fill in holes. Initially UF Online provided generous funding for course creation. Faculty were paid $10,000 for a completed course, but that amount has been reduced to $3-4,000 because of the budgetary stresses.

As described, below, the UF Online course developers had a model for course structure that required a significant amount of time for development. The author developed one course, which
required a weekly 1-2 hour meeting with developers, time for the actual development, and several weeks of videotaping lectures. With the need to develop assignments and quizzes, the process took about six months to complete.

**UFO course standards/procedures and production infrastructure.** Online courses are often criticized as being rife with cheating or the potential for cheating on assignments and examinations. Many online programs, including several of the Journalism and Communications programs from ACEJMC-accredited universities require students to come to campus, or to selected testing sites, to take their examinations.

UF Online initially adopted two strategies to address the problem. The first, used with typical objective or essay examinations, required students to use a test-monitoring company, called “ProctorU,” (there are several such firms) for which students pay a special course fee. With this system, a live proctor monitors the student taking the examination using the camera in the student’s computer.

The approach UF Online preferred was one in which there were a large number of “low stakes” assignments. If an examination is worth a significant portion of the student’s grade, there is a greater incentive to cheat. The UF Online approach was that if each individual assignment is worth a small amount, that incentive is significantly reduced.

Further, these assignments were a combination of short quizzes, discussion groups and submission of brief reports and projects. Another part of the course management system allowed for comparing written submissions with archived material to demonstrate the likelihood a paper had been plagiarized. Cheating on quizzes was somewhat mitigated by limiting the time available to take the quiz. The in-residence course I created for UF Online is a typical lecture course with 3-4 examinations, utilizing objective questions, and mechanical test scoring. The UF Online section had 43 separate assignments, approximately three per week.

A second reason for this approach was to make the students feel more a part of a group. Even in a large lecture course small groups of students will join together for study groups, or may already be acquainted from other courses or student activities. An important task for UF Online was to make the students, located around and outside the United States to feel part of something. The many discussion groups, and student critiques of others’ work, helped students connect with each other.

The challenge with this “large number of low-stakes assignments” approach was that development of courses was far more complex than in an in-person course. Instructors and designers were challenged to think of new ways to introduce and measure knowledge and skills, adding to the development time. More importantly, while the approach was successful in meeting its goals, the burden of grading became significant for instructors. As mentioned, the Introductory course had 43 different assignments, and there were more than 25 students enrolled. Some students also complained about the number and lack of significant time between them. The number of assignments has now been reduced by half.

**Courses needed from other departments in the College and University.** A completely online degree program requires more courses than those offered by the department. While the mandate was to provide sufficient required courses to allow students to meet degree requirements, we were
not required to offer all of the courses available to in-residence students. However degree requirements included courses from the other three departments in the College of Journalism and Communications. While some were already offered in an online format, others had to be created, requiring buy-in from administrators and faculty.

In addition, students in the degree program are restricted by accreditation rules to no more than 52 hours inside of the College. The other 72 hours include state-required general education courses (English Composition, US History, Mathematics, etc.). Because these requirements applied to most of the UF Online degree programs, development of those courses were made a priority. But, other choices for students were limited. This was particularly the case with our Outside Concentration requirement. Students in the degree program must complete 12-credit hours in a department outside of the College. For our in-residence students these typically include Business Administration, Political Science, English/Film Studies, Sports Management, or virtually any group of courses that are appropriate to a student’s professional or person interests. Currently, of outside programs normally of interest to our students however, only Business Administration and Sports Management offer enough UF Online courses to be of interest to our students.

As faculty choose to develop courses in an online format, even for in-residence courses, and as new degree programs have been added, the number of courses have grown. In the first year of UF Online, 2013-14, there were 78 instructors teaching 76 courses. By 2017-18 this had grown to 501 instructors teaching 450 courses (*UF Online Annual Report*).

Additional need and demand for courses grew out of a separate University initiative, beginning in 2015, called “Path to Campus Enrollment,” or PaCE. These were students who were turned down for admission to the university, but offered an opportunity to be admitted after completing the first two years of courses (60 credit-hours) at another appropriate institution (normally, 2-year Associate degrees, which Florida refers to as State and Community Colleges. Some states refer to these as Community Colleges, or Junior Colleges), or in UF Online courses. The incentive to these students for taking UF Online courses is the reduced tuition and the ease of not having to transfer courses from another institution.

Departments who chose to participate in the PaCE program did not have to be a UF Online degree program, but needed to offer at least some early, required, courses for the students. An example of the extra demand is students in PaCE can major in any of the three programs we offer: Digital Film and Video Production, and Management and Strategy, in addition to Media and Society. Thus, all of the students, whether in PaCE or UF Online need the UF online version of our Introductory course, and our introduction to writing for media. We have already added one section (of 30 students) of our introductory course in Fall and Spring terms, and in the Fall we will add an additional section of the writing course.

*UF Online vis-à-vis in-residence online and in-person courses.* As noted, in the beginning several courses in the Telecommunication Media and Society program already existed, while others had to be created. In the latter situation a decision had to be made about course content and approach. The result was that some courses continued to be taught in a traditional lecture, discussion and/or lab format for in-residence students, while special sections, with somewhat different content were created for UF Online. In some cases this reflected the need for UF Online courses to be more interactive, and therefore have a manageable size. In at least one case the content difference
reflected the different circumstances in which the students existed. A required 1-credit course was designed to familiarize students with the operations and services of the College, such as counseling and advising, student activities, career placement, etc. Since the needs and access to services was different for the UF Online students, a version with different course content was created.

The course management system used by UF Online, called Canvas, allowed for the integration of UF Online students directly with students in existing (or later created) online courses. While course section numbers differed to reflect coding for UF Online or in-residence students, students in the sections were blended for the purpose of discussion boards, peer evaluations, and similar activities. Students seldom knew that they were interacting with peers in the other program.

**Refreshing and updating content.** Reading materials and assignments can be changed fairly easily from one term to the next, but lectures are a greater challenge. In an in-person course, lecture content can be changed easily and immediately. Adding or revising Powerpoint slides, or providing a new example to illustrate a point can be done in moments. In an online course with pre-recorded lectures, this on-the-fly changes are not possible. While a brief revision might be able to be edited into an existing lecture, that still requires recording the changes and editing. Completely new lectures require far more extensive effort. An ongoing challenge has been to update and refresh courses. UF Online provides some funds for these purposes, and makes technical and design resources available. However, as the number of courses created as increased, the number needing updating likewise increases, as does the wait-time for technical assistance.

A greater issue has been how to compensate the instructor responsible for the update. In an in-person course we would expect the instructor to keep lecture material fresh and current as part of the responsibilities of being an instructor. But, as noted, the online course requires a great deal more time and effort. In the case of adjunct instructors, who are teaching part-time, and may be physically far from the University, can we require them to make the effort to update? This problem has not yet been resolved in our programs.

**Administrative Challenges.** The administrative structure and student services has evolved significantly since the beginning of UF Online. Initially a third-party company with experience with online programs was hired to conduct marketing, recruitment, and other student-oriented functions. Academic advising has been under the purview professional academic advisors appointed or hired specifically to work with the UF Online students to select courses and meet graduation requirements.

Relations with the third-party company were difficult from the beginning. The contract was based on paying a fee for each enrolled student, but the number of admitted students, while increasing each year, never reached the goals established by the company. One explanation may be that the University’s admission requirements were more stringent than the company expected. As many as two-thirds of the recruited students were inadmissible. The company had estimated the total UF Online enrollment would be almost 12,000 students in academic year 2017-2018. In actuality, enrollment that year was below 3,700 (UF Online Annual Report)

Second, the nature of the students proved different than what was expected. The largest group of UF Online students, outside of PaCE were those who were returning to complete their degree.
Instead of paying tuition for a full four years of coursework, many needed only one or two years of coursework to complete their degree, thus reducing overall revenue.

Finally, there were some tensions between the third party and university offices for financial aid, and other administrative and fiscal entities. Some academic advisers complained students were given faulty or incorrect information by recruiters.

In 2016, the university terminated its contract with the third-party, and brought all functions in-house. Offices were established for marketing and recruiting, and additional staff was hired to assist students with financial aid and other matters. Since students are away from the University, a major goal was to minimize the efforts needed to solve problems. In-residence students must visit different offices, some in different buildings, to deal with financial, registration, and other matters. UF Online students are able to contact a single office, by phone or online, with staff who handle the respective matters.

Conclusions

While online technologies hold some promise for bringing higher education to those who find it difficult or are unable to attend universities, their use in Journalism and Communications programs is still limited. Examining the degree programs offered by public universities suggest that the challenge is not with preparing rigorous and meaningful courses. Rather, the challenge is that the infrastructure required to offer such a program may be beyond the capabilities of most universities. As illustrated, above, the technical facilities to design and create courses, the administrative offices and personnel to work with students in areas of financial aid, academic advising, and navigating the bureaucracy of any university are many. Instructors who design and teach online courses must not only be competent, but enthusiastic and invested. An important aspect of successful online courses is having instructors who are responsive to student questions, and make themselves regularly available for phone or online meetings. Assigning a faculty member who is resistant to the that level of engagement will not work. Students have been vocal in complaints about inattentive instructors.

The additional courses in an online program also requires the hiring of additional faculty. While the nature of online courses means the instructor can be literally anywhere in the world, that can also make it more difficult for academic administrators to adequately oversee those instructors, and to deal with student issues.

We have also had to learn what it means to have students who are not physically present on campus, and subject to conditions different than those in our location. For example, in the last several years several severe hurricanes have struck parts of Florida. While conditions in Gainesville may be unaffected, students in devastated areas may lack power for a significant time, or otherwise be engaged in restoring the safety of dwellings. We have learned to search our records to determine if any students are affected, and work with them to make accommodations for missing or late assignments.

Emerging technologies do offer some potential to improve the development and implementation of online programs in Journalism and Communications. As one example, 5G has the potential to improve the communication infrastructure. Combined with development tools, collaboration, and
video and other moving image technologies may speed the process, and reduce attendant costs. At the same time, the lack of availability of higher speed internet as these technologies roll out, particularly in rural areas which might most benefit from online University programs, may actually hinder their growth. Virtual and augmented reality may create opportunities to improve the instructional design of courses, and increase students’ feeling of inclusion. However, the costs of those technologies may, again, limit their use to large universities with sufficient resources.

About the Author

David Ostroff is a Professor of Journalism and Communications and Chair of the Department of Telecommunication at the University of Florida, a position he has held since 2002. He came to UF in 1985 after six years on the faculty at Bowling Green University, in Ohio. He holds a PhD in Mass Communication from Ohio University. His teaching and research interests are in international communication, media technology and policy, and applications of new and emerging technologies. He is co-author of the text Perspectives on Radio and Television, and The Uses of Video in Organizations.

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UF Online About Us. https://ufonline.ufl.edu/about-us/

Using Single-Platform Social Media Newsdays in Television Journalism Education: a Heutogogical Approach

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Abstract:

Traditionally, journalism education has been a mix of academic and practical classes. It often uses close-to-industry simulations in the form of student news rooms and newsdays which replicate industry practices. For television journalism, this has included newsdays which begin with a 9:00 news conference, and end with the live TV studio news programme. In order to maintain currency, elements such as social media posts have been added alongside the traditional television packaging. However, these aspects have often taken a backseat to the main focus of the studio news programme. In order to address this, I experimented with single-platform social media newsdays; focusing on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Keywords: Heutagogy, practice-based learning (PBL), university learning and teaching, higher education, student-negotiated assessment, journalism, broadcast journalism, education, television news, social media

Introduction:

According to a Pew Research report in 2018, about four-in-ten Americans (43%) get news on Facebook. The next most commonly used site for news is YouTube, with 21% getting news there, followed by Twitter at 12%. Smaller portions of Americans (8% or fewer) get news from other social networks like Instagram, LinkedIn or Snapchat. Further, a Reuters Institute study found a third of young people say social media is their main source for news, more than online news sites, and TV and printed newspapers. Clearly, social is an important platform for delivering news, yet it follows different, and as yet undefined rules of production and delivery. Indeed the grammar of the social media video package is evolving and developing over time.

Newsdays are a good way of instilling industry practice, increasing speed of journalistic newsgathering, and instilling a sense of the professional world students are about to enter. They simulate industry practices and prepare journalism students for expectations of the broadcast industry. As such, encouraging students to include delivery of material to social media platforms alongside considerations for a television studio programme have been encouraged. In teaching television newsdays over several years, there have been efforts to include social media in order to reflect changes in industry practice. However, with deadlines and the lure of the studio lights, social media often took a backseat to more pressing television-specific challenges. Through qualitative interviews with students and journalism educators, this paper looks at an experiment to fully explore the use of social, by turning the traditional approach to television newsdays on its head and instead, making social media the sole focus for some of our newsdays. This included making packages and conducting live reports on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, and led to a better, fuller exploration of these single platforms by targeting them one at a time.
Because this was rather experimental, the students were given most of the control over the way these newdays were delivered, structured and transmitted. They foresaw problems along the way, and sought to address them themselves. They developed a format for transmission, a visual theme for reports and a style of live reporting as a way of tackling this way of transmitting news. This paper explores the reaction to this heutogogical approach to teaching journalism wherein the students determined how to achieve an end goal of adapting a traditional television newssday, to that of a single social media platform.

**Heutagogy: A Theoretical Framework**

Heutagogy is an attractive theoretical concept for teaching journalism because it evokes the kind of experiential learning that seems to translate well to students acquiring skills and being able to perform in a news room situation. It’s sometimes called “self-determined learning” (Hase and Kenyon, 2013). “The essence of heutagogy is that in some learning situations, the focus should be on what and how the learner wants to learn, not on what is to be taught. Hence this approach is very different from the more formal and traditional way of ‘teaching’ people.” (Hase and Kenyon, 2013 p. 7)

Heutagogy has been regarded as the third stage of learning, wherein the first stage is pedagogy, and the second; andragogy (Hase and Kenyon, 2013 p. 184) where “the instructor shows learners how to find information, relates information to the learner experience and places a focus on problem-solving within real-world situations”. (Heutagogy and Lifelong Learning: A Review of Heutagogical Practice and, 2012) Heutagogy therefore, is seen as the third stage and “involves higher levels of autonomy [called] self-determined learning.” (Hase and Kenyon, 2013)

“In a heutagogical approach to teaching and learning, learners are highly autonomous and self-determined and emphasis is placed on development of learner capacity and capability with the goal of producing learners who are well-prepared for the complexities of today’s workplace.” (Heutagogy and Lifelong Learning: A Review of Heutagogical Practice, 2012)

The Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC) which is the broadcast industry-approved accreditation body in the UK and accredits both the Broadcast Journalism Bachelor of Arts undergraduate programme and the Master of Arts in Journalism post graduate programme at Leeds Trinity University advocates experiential learning. It says its “accreditation standards are very much based on direct and practical experience and all accredited courses are valued by teachers and students, employers and employees, as they are relevant and responsive to the operational demands of the broadcast industry.” (Bjtc.org.uk, 2019) This is why the practice of newdays is such an important component to successful accreditation, and why it forms such a key aspect of the broadcast journalism curriculum. Additionally, it also fits in with the heutagogical approach to learning.

**Newdays for Learning**

Newdays are an important aspect of journalism education because they become an active learning situation. Students who have been taught skills such as interviewing, research, sourcing of stories, and technical aspects such as filming and editing, bring these skills together to produce broadcasts
which mimic that of industry. The more realistic the situation in terms of deadlines, ethical and legal considerations, time pressures and technical ability, the greater the potential for the student to learn and be prepared for the workplace. This experiential learning, or learning-by-doing means that students are put under deadline pressures which they will face in industry. It helps prepare them for this whilst testing their accumulated knowledge and skills. It also falls in line with the idea of problem-based learning where students are guided to work together to achieve the best outcome; that of an industry-acceptable television broadcast. Newsdays “…have several different learning and teaching functions: they are assessable tests of students’ journalistic and technical abilities; they provide a framework in which students gain understanding of how newspapers and broadcast shows come together and what is realistically possible under technological and professional conditions.” (de Burgh, 2003)

Phil Race (Race, 2007) believes that the most effective form of learning is experiential: learning by doing. Experiential learning “should also allow people to decide how to meet objectives, encourage them to be open about problems and use mistakes as learning opportunities, provide opportunities to learn new skills, provide frequent feedback, encourage people to experiment with new methods, and support efforts to implement learning from a classroom course.” (Brandon, 2002) This is a guiding principal in journalism education where students don’t just study the field, but engage in actively doing it. These newsdays provide real world experience for our prospective broadcasters, and fit in with the theory of problem-based, experiential and heutagogical learning – where students are tasked with producing the news each day, fulfilling roles in the newsroom as editors, reporters, presenters and technical operators and meeting strict deadlines to find their own way to reach the endpoint of transmission. The classroom becomes a working newsroom during these periods. This sort of experiential learning is essential in the education of journalism students, where “learning is active, meaningful and relevant to ‘real life’ agendas.” (Weil, S. and McGill, I. (1989) p. 7) “Students can gain a lot of feedback while they do practical work. They get very rapid feedback just by seeing how the work itself proceeds, and often get even more feedback by watching and talking with fellow students working alongside them.” (Race, 2007, p. 75)

As part of the BJTC accreditation requirements, students must complete fifteen newsdays during the second and three year of their BA Journalism course. Courses approach this requirement differently: some with newsdays once a week; others in consecutive days. The approach at Leeds Trinity is to complete three weeks, working Monday through Friday consecutively, in radio, broadcasting news hourly on the established Bradford Community Radio station, and three weeks of television programming live-streamed on Yorkshire-Voice.com. Both the radio and television work is outward-facing and live, which requires tutors to be highly involved in the broadcasts to ensure legal compliance and ethical considerations as well as those of a technical nature. This is not always the case with other universities who feel that it is too risky to allow students to broadcast live and outward facing. However, this is one aspect we pride ourselves on at Leeds Trinity because it produces such a realistic broadcasting environment.

Students take on the usual newsroom roles which include those of presenter, reporter, editorial roles such as news editor and producer, as well as technical roles such as vision mixer, autocue operator, and camera operator. These roles are usually rotated daily to ensure each student gets exposure to all of the roles and can see where their strengths and weaknesses lie. As far as the broadcast is concerned, there are quality issues since the roles held on any given day are likely to be done by students new to them. However it is all part of the learning experience. This real-world
experience is intense and stressful for students but also puts real world pressures on them to produce journalism in a timely way. It is hoped this maximizes the learning experience for the student.

As well as focusing on the daily television broadcast, students are also tasked with making use of our social media platforms and our website, Yorkshire-Voice.com and we have always encouraged the use of our in-house Yorkshire Voice on the Twitter and Facebook platforms as a means of additionally publishing news stories. However, when the main focus is on hitting the 4pm deadline, efforts are usually concentrated on the broadcast and the social media platforms whose deadlines are not as exacting, are often dropped or ignored. To address this, social media editor has been a role added to the rota. However, illness, story deadlines and other considerations mean that this is one area usually regarded as non-essential. In the 2016/17 external examiners report, it was suggested we go further than the traditional radio or television news output to include news production on social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat). The BJTC backed up this suggestion in their own accreditation report the same year. It is also backed up through reading around the subject as described by Hill and Bradshaw (2019, p. 139):

‘Distributed content’ is a strategic approach to publishing whereby social media platforms are used not to ‘drive traffic’ to the publisher’s own website, but instead to host content that only, or primarily, exists within that platform. Content produced this way is typically called ‘native’ content: in other words, it is native to Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat or whichever platform it has been published to, rather than having been first published elsewhere.

Research bears out the concept that mobile journalism is increasing in significance in people’s lives, especially young people’s. “There is increasing awareness of the significance of mobile phones as part of young people’s media biographies (Staid, 2008) and the potential to co-opt them as learning devices generally (Prensky, 2008) and for journalism training in particular.” (Theendofjournalism.wdfiles.com, 2019)

In order to address this, I introduced the idea of single platform social media news days to replace some of our more traditional newsdays so that the entire focus for the students for that particular newsday would be on one social media platform. This fell in line with a heutogogical style of learning wherein the students were tasked to produce news for the platform but given very little other guidance.

In keeping with skills prized by the industry (through discussions during a Knowledge Exchange conference in June 2016 wherein I discussed the issue with head of BBC North, Helen Thomas) I established that journalists who could package news as well as go live were sought after. Therefore I suggested a combination of the two types of outputs. Students were tasked to each produce one live report and one packaged video story for each newsday. The organisation of those reports was left up to them as a problem to solve. It was the students themselves who decided to schedule the day mixing up live spots with pre-packaged news at regular intervals and how these newsdays should look to an audience.

How it Worked

The students quickly established a Whatsapp group to share story ideas and as a means of communications leading up to the first newsday, which was delivered on Facebook. They devised
a theme for the video packages with consistent colouring, a watermark to copyright the work, consistent Yorkshire Voice branding among other things, and circulated the specifications on the group discussion forum. They investigated the requirements of each platform (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) in terms of broadcast production (maximum length of packages, specifications such as widescreen or square, portrait vs landscape etc), and ensured this information was shared amongst the group.

In keeping with the student-centred approach, my role as module leader was to guide the process, and act as a sounding board, rather than to construct the way this new style of broadcasting would occur. What happened was that the students took the organisation of the news days in hand. The producer of the day quickly realised that it would not be good to try and have two student reporters attempting to broadcast live at the same time. Similarly, it was felt that the mix between live reports and pre-produced packages should be interspersed throughout the day so that there was a regular flow of news and features from our newsroom.

The first student producer decided to establish a schedule of output every twenty minutes. With a cohort of twelve students there were twenty-four slots created mixing between live reports and packages. This ensured our student newsroom was publishing throughout the news day. The first student news editor decided there should be a corporate feel to the packaged reports, so on-screen captions were used for all interview clips. A consistent theme was established so that the same font and colours were used and a Yorkshire Voice end titles used at the end of each package. These were decisions made by the students themselves, taking into consideration what the industry was doing and emulating the best practices into their own style.

There was a high level of learning. Each platform required investigation prior to the newsday. The platforms vary in whether they accept landscape or portrait filming. They vary in the length of video that can be hosted. The parameters change from time-to-time as platforms are updated. They vary in terms of how live reports are set up and produced. These aspects were learned along the way with the students feeding back to each other via Whatsapp group conversations to ensure everyone was aware of how to avoid mistakes which did occur – such as using more traditional styles of television packaging which didn’t work on social media, and how not to appear sideways during a live transmission.

**Student Feedback**

Students were generally very positive about the single platform newsdays. They found it relevant to their future careers and allied more closely to their experience as news consumers. One student said she’d been offered paid work because the employer was able to see what she was doing on an outward-facing platform, and because it was relevant experience for that work. Another found that it allied very closely with the experience on work placement in industry where her social media skills were put to good use. Still another commented that the skills used to make packages for social media improved her television news packaging skills.

Not only were the social media single platform newsdays a success, but by tackling them first, the students were more open to using social media alongside the traditional television broadcasts once we’d returned to them toward the end of the semester.
“It’s great that we’ve done lives especially on different platforms because it teaches you how to utilise them in different ways; how to communicate with audiences, and just generally broadens out your skills and it’s just catching up with modern technology and modern journalism. Like a lot of BBC use Facebook lives so it’s great to know all those skills.” – student, May 2018.

“Having a course that does that - having social media days that are specific to a certain [social media] platform means that we have a lot of time to focus and work out what we need to do [when we are trying to get a job]” – student, May 2018.

“We got to work with a lot of social media, like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook which is really important because social media is really the way forward now. This is something that employers are really looking for. I've had work offered outside of uni [sic] just because people have seen what I've produced on these newsdays.” - student, May 2018.

This practice has also met with a very positive response from the BJTC which accredits our courses.

“We expect a high level of experiential learning through those newsdays and a good part of that will be applying those social media skills into a newsday output and people like Leeds Trinity and others are applying that on their newsdays in quite a unique way at the moment and it really does make the students ready to go out and work in the real world.”
Chief Executive Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC)

Colleague Feedback

I have outlined the experiment with single platform newsdays at previous conferences. The response from other journalism lecturers has been very positive, and several said they would look to introduce more outward-facing, social media news reporting in their own newsdays.

"In regards to the comprehensive social media news day focused presentation from Katherine Blair at the AJE Summer conference in Canterbury, I can say I am very impressed. The utilisation of strict social media targets and platforms including Instagram packaging has been of valuable usage to me as an educator in implementing a new social strand to our news days and weeks. We are also reviewing the inclusion of this for MA news assessments. I have already drawn on the knowledge delivered by Katherine earlier this trimester by bringing in a Periscope/Facebook Live and Instagram Stories news day for 4th year BA honours students" (Journalism Lecturer, November 2018)

“The information about incorporating social media into news days, presented ... was both creative and innovative. Her practice is cutting edge in the teaching of skills for a rapidly changing industry. As a result, her ideas and practice were of great interest to other conference attendees and some other lecturers have taken up and incorporated her practice into their own teaching.” (Lecturer, November 2018)

Tutor Reflection

The students in this cohort are those I have taught throughout their three-year degree. In the past I had struggled to convey some basics of television news primarily because students tend not to view news programmes in a linear way. In student accommodation, they generally do not have televisions, or pay the license fee. They prefer to watch online which means watching stories out of context with the rest of the day’s news. That means they distance themselves from some of the
cultural grammar of television news production. However, because social media news content is much more part of their every day experience, they grasped ways of producing news for social media much more intuitively. They understood what was expected in terms of production because they were used to consuming news in this way. They were much more active learners because they recognised that they were as much experts as their tutor. They were also more likely to take confidence in their decisions about how to produce news than they were with traditional television which they sometimes regarded as old-fashioned.

What impressed me was their confidence in making decisions themselves, without referring back to me as their tutor. They seemed to sense that there were no rules in social media news production, so they felt more comfortable with making decisions about the way to approach it. I also felt they had a better sense of how to approach news production with innovative ways of news distribution.

They generally used mobile phones for filming, and this was something that continued when we went back to our traditional television studio based newsdays, despite having easy access to larger JVC cameras.

**Assessment and the use of Student-Negotiated Assessment**

The decision of how to assess the module was left to the students as part of the Leeds Trinity University Learning & Teaching Strategy which encourages student-negotiated assessment. This was something I have tried in other modules in the last couple of years, after explaining the learning outcomes of the module as well as asking students what they expect and want to learn from the module. Often students request a number of assessments in the belief that spreading marks out amongst a series of assessments will better their chances to get the best overall mark. They also tend to dislike group work. In order to successfully execute a newsday with the associated news production, group work is essential. Aleksander Kocic (2017) acknowledges that group work is not always popular because they may not take individual efforts into account. Students generally don’t like to have their marks held hostage by other students who may lack engagement.

In the case of the module described in this paper, students decided that in order to be allowed to experiment and to fail, that only one of their video packages (from a possible five news days; both single-platform social media and traditional television news broadcasts) should be submitted, as well as one live report. In order to ensure all students contributed on each of the newsdays, I built into the requirements that although only their best work would be assessed, they were still required to submit on each newsday.

The student submission took the form of an individual report which reflected on their work and the work of the group and linked to the individual packages and live reports. This gave the added opportunity of students being able to examine and put forward evidence for their performances in key roles such as producer and news editor amongst others.

This seemed popular with students because their best work was being assessed, and there was less reliance on the group in order to do well in the module. Some of the work neared the quality of that broadcast or published by more established news organisations. However, much did not, and that remains the focus for teaching in the upcoming academic year.
Next Steps

Single-platform newsdays have been a very good way of focusing on the individual aspects of one social media platform and for students to fully explore more than just their favoured social media channel. However, the reality is that journalism requires reaching out to audiences on more than one social media channel for the same story. My next step will be to try and add a social media newsday which makes use of at least three social media platforms for the same story so that students learn how to reversion material and change it for the various platforms. This will require a good understanding of how different audiences view the different platforms and how material can be reused and reconfigured to meet the requirements of the platforms.

Conclusions

Focusing on one social media platform for publishing news on a single newsday has meant students have benefitted from getting to understand the nature of the platform, the requirements and processes for delivery, and how that platform performs in terms of engaging an audience. It has stretched students so they explore platforms they might not otherwise be comfortable with and has meant they have a better awareness of the culture surrounding these platforms.

Using a social media platform as a means of ‘broadcasting’ news was a good way of learning the differences between traditional television news packaging and that of social media. It also meant students were actively recognising problems and were seeking answers to issues that arose along the way themselves, and then sharing their knowledge with the news team.

Choosing one social media platform for a sole newsday meant social media was the forefront of students’ minds and not an afterthought or something that happened if there was time. It was the focus of their attention and meant brought out new skills from them as they are active consumers of news on social media. This experiment allowed them to become active producers of news on social media as well.

It allowed students to become self-directed learners, or heutagogical learners without realising it. In order to have a successful newsday, they had to figure out a way of doing so on a social media platform without a roadmap to do so. In effect they made it up as they went along, followed their instincts, incorporated what they knew and produced some news along the way.

About the Author

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References


Promoting Journalism: Analysis of Education Programs’ Homepages

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Abstract:  
Homepages of ACEJMC-accredited journalism programs (N = 113) were examined to determine how they are representing and promoting themselves in this arguably difficult climate. Content and thematic analyses revealed that homepages are promoting journalism as a skills-focused major that prepares students for workforce employment. They also gave significant attention to the programs’ technological resources. They mentioned principles and ethics in passing, but most did not overtly mention journalism industry struggles. This study suggests that, overall, journalism programs are relying on their strong connection to professional practice as their homepage’s primary recruitment tactic.

Introduction  
Encouraging college students to enter journalism has historically been a problem (e.g., Willnat & Weaver, 2014), but efforts to promote journalism education today involve several additional challenges. Programs are addressing internal disagreement over best teaching practices as well as external disagreement over the value of the industry. College journalism programs have faced, and are continuing to face, some key struggles internally and externally.

Internally, journalism has had a difficult history as an academic field of study. As discussed by Folkerts (2014), American journalism, in particular, “has been anchored in both the printing trades and the world of intellectuals” (p. 227). He explains debate from the mid-19th century: “News professionals and university educators pondered whether journalists needed to be college-educated, whether they needed a liberal arts degree, or whether they needed professional education that combined liberal arts and practical training” (p. 227). Such debates continued into the 20th century. Mencher (1994) noted the “devaluation of professional undergraduate journalism training,” (p. 71) and Carey (2000) described journalism education in the 1950s as “a very fragile enterprise indeed” (p. 12). Such discussions continue today, which leads to debates within academia about the role of journalism education and best practices for that role.
Externally, the journalism industry is facing difficulty, as well. The public has generally low perceptions of the industry (Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel & Sumida, 2018), and there have been reports of news fatigue and news avoidance (Palmer & Toff, 2018). This, combined with the declining numbers of practicing journalists in many countries (Grieco, 2018) and reports of low job satisfaction to those who are working in the industry (Willnat & Weaver, 2014) could give the field an aura of negativity, especially to those thinking about getting started. In all, this could be making the field seem unattractive to prospective students.

How are journalism programs promoting themselves amid such struggles? This study seeks to address this concern by examining the ways in which journalism programs are promoting themselves on their homepages. One way that prospective students learn about programs is through the departments’ websites (e.g., Yeo, Erickson Cornish & Meyer, 2017). In fact, prospective students’ first “exposure” with college programs are likely through these websites (Bidell, Ragen, Broach & Carrillo, 2007, p. 209). It seems likely, then, that the programs are making their strongest pitches online. Specifically, this study analyzes journalism programs’ homepages to see how they are talking about their programs and the industry.

**Literature Review Economic and Political State of the Journalism Industry**

The journalism industry has faced economic and political struggles in the past several years. Journalism as a field has been struggling economically in the Web 2.0 era as the industry is experiencing declining numbers of practicing journalists in many countries (e.g., Grieco, 2018; Simons, 2017). News consumers do not need to actively search for journalism content; they will receive news content just by logging on to social media, for instance (Gil de Zúñiga, Weeks & Ardèvol-Abreu, 2017; Newman et al., 2019). Coincidentally, while consuming news on social media might be popular, newer media companies with significant influence are dominating the advertising revenues for digital journalism content, leaving journalists and their media companies with little of the money (Simons, 2017). Thus, though journalists view social media as important to their jobs (e.g., Cox, 2016; Gil de Zúñiga, Diehl & Ardèvol-Abreu, 2018), the revenue streams from social media are at least somewhat lacking.

Various world leaders have assailed journalism’s credibility, criticizing factual reports with the mantra of “fake news” (e.g., Grynabaum, 2018; Mogato & Petty, 2018; United Nations, 2018). The verbal attacks from political elites has led to fact-checkers getting death threats (Funke, 2018). Sadly, these threats too often correspond to real violence; 82 journalists were killed on the job in 2017 (International Federation of Journalists, 2018).

There also have been reports of decreased trust in the journalism industry. According to a Pew survey, only 21% of U.S. adults say they have a lot of trust in the information they get from national news media (Mitchell et al., 2018). Perhaps as a result, there have been reports of news fatigue and news avoidance (Palmer & Toff, 2018). Additionally, there have been reports of decreased job satisfaction. Willnat and Weaver (2014) report that 49% of U.S. journalists were “very satisfied” with their jobs in 1971, but only 23.3% said the same in 2013 (p. 12). When asked about the “most important problem facing journalism today,” they mentioned: “declining profits ... threats to profession from online media ... job cuts and downsizing ... the need for a new business model and
Is Journalism Education Necessary?

In addition to economic and political difficulties facing the industry, there appears to be an added obstacle to practicing journalism. To be employed in modern journalism, one increasingly needs a college education. According to Weaver & Willnat (2012), more than 80 percent of journalists around the world have four-year college degrees. However, their same global report indicates about 42.5% of practicing journalists have a journalism degree. Similarly, more than 92% of U.S. journalists have at least a four-year bachelor’s degree; however, of those with a degree, only 37.4% majored in journalism (Willnat & Weaver, 2014). This discrepancy indicates a tension between what education and skills are required to become a journalist. This tension is exemplified in an aptly-titled article from Harvard University’s Nieman Journalism Lab: “Should you major in journalism? Here are stories from eight working journalists who didn’t” (Baldridge, 2018). A common theme from that article is the idea that those aspiring to work in journalism can learn the necessary skills from working at college news media outlets and interning at professional journalism companies, rather than through classroom instruction.

However, it could be that the benefit of the degree lies, not in the classes, but in the connections. One journalist, for example, argues that obtaining a journalism degree is essential as a networking tool, particularly for racial and ethnic minorities (Hampton, 2018):

As a black woman I didn’t have a choice not to go to J-school—and that’s a sentiment shared among many of my classmates. Journalism is an industry rife with nepotism, where career trajectories are determined more often by the people that you know rather than the quality of your work. ... Breaking into these elite spaces is a necessity, and journalism school not only gives you access to professors with connections but also the future journalists who could put you in contact with your next hiring manager (para. 5).

This could be one reason why, though college enrollment in mass communication programs has decreased, women serve as the majority of students in these programs. According to Willnat and Weaver (2014), women comprise more than 65% of mass communication students. The high number of female students has not resulted in equally high numbers of female practicing journalists. Globally, women comprise slightly more than 41% of all journalists (Weaver & Willnat, 2012). It could be that women and minorities, historically left out of the industry, are seeing journalism education as their way in.

Within higher education, journalism often holds a precarious position. Legendary communication scholar James Carey (2000) described early journalism faculty as often “undistinguished. They had little background in higher education having come from small regional newspapers after modest professional careers and were ill-at-ease in the foreign and generally hostile environment of the academy” (p. 12). He goes on to describe that journalism faculty had to work especially hard at proving that journalism had a place in universities separate from other more established areas, such as English. There have been — and continue to be — tensions between whether journalism programs should emphasize a skills-based or a liberal arts-based curriculum (e.g., Folkerts, 2014; Mulrennan, 2018).
Some scholars have noted a “devaluation” of journalism during different periods and sought a revamping of the discipline (Mencher, 1994, p. 71). Other scholars have also advocated for changes to journalism education. Some have critiqued the journalism industry for not more quickly embracing digital technology, and they have critiqued the academy’s replication of the same practice (Kraeplin & Criado, 2005). Even though higher education has been teaching more convergence media, “there is an inconsistency regarding the inclusion, importance, and assessment of these skills” (Cullen, 2016, p. 364). On the other hand, there is also a movement to push journalism education away from a reactionary paradigm toward a model “to set the students up for life-long learning in the aggressive and rapidly evolving news industry” (Mulrennan, 2018, p. 330).

However, the fast-paced changes in journalism could be one underlying reason for the current struggles facing journalism education. A report commissioned by American journalism practitioners in the early 1980s found that higher education did not innovate and looked to mirror and replicate industry practices (Folkerts, 2014). The importance of this is key: The journalism industry has historically critiqued higher education for both not giving students enough skills to thrive in the industry while also not providing students with a robust liberal arts education that emphasizes critical thinking (Folkerts, 2014). It should also be noted that industry “experts” are not always correct. For example, a second industry-generated report in the 1980s noted that “changing technology” should not be a concern for journalism educators for the 1990s, outside of having “up-to-date equipment” (Folkerts, 2014, p. 267). Thus, in the current journalistic landscape, it is difficult to ascertain what is the “correct” formula for journalism education in light of rapid technological and platform changes in the industry.

College Recruitment amid Industry Struggles

The emphasis on curriculum and faculty must be tempered with ideas of recruitment. Declining enrollment continues to be a problem within mass communication programs, which include journalism (Gotlieb, McLaughlin & Cummins, 2017). The drop in journalism enrollment was especially steep from 2013-2015, with a reduction of more than 16% (Gotlieb, McLaughlin & Cummins, 2017, p. 144). The enrollment decline has been occurring at the same time as the financial and employment upheaval in journalism mentioned earlier. However, the concerns over “fake news” and criticism from political elites might have inadvertently spurred some new growth in journalism education. High school educators are reporting increased student interest in journalism after years of decreases (Jones, 2019). In a survey of 500 journalism and media educators in 45 states, 44% of teachers reported a rise in journalism class enrollment, and more than 30% said they have noticed an increase in students’ interest in majoring in journalism in college or pursuing a journalism career (Jones, 2019). It could be that the decreasing perceptions of the industry are actually leading to an increased interest in the field. LaMagna (2018) reports recent jumps in journalism school applications across the United States, as well. Sullivan (2017) suggests benefits to the profession, even if those trends aren’t sustainable: “Trump coverage may not recruit a new generation of reporters, but it does seem to inspire those who are already in the journalism pipeline. Many of them are fired up by what they see every day” (para. 21).

To attract these interested and potentially interested prospective students, programs are increasingly relying on their websites. The role of websites as recruitment tools for potential college students has grown (e.g., Bidell et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2016). Bidell et al. (2007) reported
that prospective students’ first “exposure” with college programs are likely through programs’ websites (p. 209). Multiple scholars have also posited that programs’ websites can help with recruiting underserved and hard-to-reach populations (e.g., Bidell et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2016; Yeo, Erickson Cornish & Meyer, 2017). Websites, then, are crucial recruitment tools for universities and their specific programs.

This project, therefore, analyzes journalism programs’ homepages to see how they are promoting themselves. More specifically, it examines how various programs address the tensions of an unstable, rapidly changing journalism economy, while still encouraging students to major in journalism. Additionally, it explores if and how journalism programs are addressing public criticism regarding the industry’s credibility and value. In all, this study addresses the following:

**RQ1:** How do journalism programs promote their majors to undergraduate students?

**RQ2:** How do journalism programs’ homepages describe industry principles and ethics?

**RQ3:** How do journalism programs’ homepages depict technology?

**RQ4:** How do journalism programs’ homepages address modern industry struggles?

**Methods**

**Data collection**

The researchers analyzed the 113 member schools of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (“Accredited/Reaccredited,” n.d.). ACEJMC schools were selected because of their high commitment to journalistic excellence, their mission statement, and their international reach. The schools are primarily in the United States, but member schools are located in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Mexico, Chile, and New Zealand. ACEJMC’s mission statement indicates its commitment to “excellence and high standards in professional education in journalism and mass communications” (“Mission Statement,” 2013).

The homepage from each college’s journalism program was the unit of analysis. However, the nature of a “homepage” differed by school, largely because the structures of the programs differed. For example, some accredited members are situated in schools of journalism (e.g., Michigan State University), departments of journalism (e.g., San Francisco State University), and colleges of journalism (e.g., University of Maryland). Others have journalism programs housed within departments of mass communication (e.g., Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville) or departments of communication (e.g., University of Louisiana at Lafayette). Some universities did not have a journalism or news media program or sequence, or they did not have a separate webpage for journalism. In these instances, the homepage of the department or college was instead used as the unit of analysis. One page was selected for each school, and a screenshot was downloaded for analysis. The screenshots were downloaded in April 2019, so they reflected the state of the homepage at that moment. All sites were examined in English; Google Translate (https://translate.google.com/) was used when this was not available. Because it was difficult for
the researchers to confirm those translations, those sites were included in the analysis but were not included as specific examples in the Results.

**Content and thematic analyses**

The homepages ($N = 113$) were then examined through content and thematic analyses. Multiple close readings were conducted to explore the ways in which journalism programs promote themselves. Researchers identified themes using the constant comparative method (McCracken, 1988). In the first round of open-coding, one researcher noted initial trends across homepages, including a heavy focus on skills and job placement. In the second round, two researchers read the sites carefully and noted discussions of journalism and statements regarding education, curriculum, and mission statements; they also noted depictions of technology and discussions of modern industry struggles. Here, the researchers also recorded whether the homepages had any photos, videos, or embedded social media feeds. If there were photos, they also noted whether the photos had visible racial and gender diversity. This mostly qualitative approach gives readers more direct access to the data (e.g., Maxwell, 2013; McCracken, 1988), which, in this case, means verbatim excerpts from the homepages, as shown below.

**Results**

Analyses revealed consistent themes across multiple countries and types of schools. The homepages had similar ways of promoting the journalism programs and discussing the industry.

**RQ1: How do journalism programs promote their majors to undergraduate students?**

The homepages consistently portrayed journalism as a skills-focused major that prepares students for workforce employment. This included emphases on internship and job opportunities, alumni profiles, student media experiences, and faculty members’ professional expertise.

Some schools specifically noted this skills-based emphasis in their program descriptions. For example, Arizona State University’s Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication (2019) labeled itself as a “teaching hospital” that sought to “transform you into a professional.” Additionally, the University of Georgia’s Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication (2019) describes its program as follows:

The journalism major prepares students for jobs in news organizations including broadcast and multimedia reporting, writing, editing and producing. Journalism majors work in photojournalism, video journalism, social media, web and publication design, media innovation and entrepreneurship, and news management.

These descriptions are representative of a wider theme of journalism schools and programs being places for career preparation, rather than providing a holistic college experience.

Few programs described a journalism major as being part of a liberal arts tradition or receiving a well-rounded education. There was little discussion of teaching media studies or media effects. The few programs that did discuss journalism as part of a liberal arts education were those found in
colleges of communication — rather than colleges of mass communication — and those that did not have a separate homepage for their journalism programs. The journalism program within the University of Kentucky’s College of Communication and Information (2019), for example, discussed job training within a broader educational experience:

The journalism major prepares students for leadership roles in rapidly changing media by requiring a strong core of journalism courses within the rich context of a liberal arts education. Courses are designed to foster analytical and critical thinking skills and to teach students to communicate effectively with a media audience.

Many of the programs supplemented their messages of hands-on learning by describing or depicting student media. Some of the schools displayed work from these outlets, provided descriptions or linked to them from their homepages. Notably, other student classroom activities (such as research papers or exams) were not discussed. Additionally, journalism programs emphasized that “experienced faculty” would deliver the hands-on learning in the classroom. Buffalo State (2019), for example, noted: “Our faculty average 13 years of professional experience and 15 years full-time teaching.” Multiple homepages also mentioned that professors are in constant contact with practitioners and are constantly updating their professional skills. While the homepages highlighted faculty members’ journalism experience, few universities outside of major research institutions described the research their faculty conduct, the conferences they attend, or the fact that they often have master’s and doctoral degrees.

In terms of demographics, the homepages promoted the programs as fairly diverse. Of the 100 homepages that had photos of people, 72 had images of both men and women (7 were all male, 21 all female), and 73 suggested racial and ethnic diversity (25 did not, and a determination could not be made for two webpages). In all, this suggests that the journalism programs want to be seen as inclusive spaces.

**RQ2: How do journalism programs’ homepages describe industry principles and ethics?**

The homepages frequently mentioned journalism principles and ethics in passing; however, most did not go into much detail regarding what that entailed.

California State University, Chico (2019) was a notable exception. According to its homepage, students in the News Option of its Journalism and Public Relations Department:

... are trained to: Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;

... Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity

CSU Chico’s statement highlighted another key journalism principle connected to ethics: accuracy and fairness. Again, few sites noted training regarding fact-checking or verification.
Although general discussions of principles and ethics were limited, some homepages did mention journalism’s role in supporting democratic ideals and monitoring those in power. The opening sentence of Middle Tennessee State’s journalism (2019) homepage, for example, states, “Journalists provide news, information and commentary that help citizens make decisions affecting their lives and participation in a democratic society. Because of this responsibility, the press is the only institution mentioned by name — and protected in the Constitution.” However, references to journalism’s watchdog function and importance to democracy were most often found on sites where journalism majors were combined with other programs.

**RQ3: How do journalism programs’ homepages depict technology?**

Homepages gave significant attention to the programs’ technological resources. Multiple schools highlighted their facilities and media labs in images, videos, and text. They used terms such as “multiplatform,” and they placed a heavy focus on hardware rather than software. They also placed minimal emphasis on social media.

Michigan State University’s School of Journalism (2019), for example, showcased its technology with a massive image of a busy student newsroom. The newsroom included mini-desks where students worked on laptops. It also included television sets, teleprompters, and big flat-screen monitors broadcasting news channels on the walls. The text underneath reinforced the message the school was promoting: “MSU’s School of Journalism is a nationally-accredited program that is light years ahead of the rest in its creativity and imagination.” The message in the text and in the image is that Michigan State’s journalism program is state of the art. Many of the other journalism programs in this study also described themselves as providing students with the technology they needed to know in order to thrive in modern newsrooms.

Michigan State’s newsroom image also typified programs’ portrayals of “multiplatform” journalism. Homepages frequently used terms such as “multiplatform,” “digital,” and “convergence” to describe technology trends in the journalism industry. Some schools went even further, by specifically noting that a journalism degree does not teach solely writing. For example, the University of Alabama’s Journalism & Creative Media (2019) homepage describes its news media degree as the following: “Students majoring in news media learn to gather, assess and communicate information to help inform the public. In addition to writing, students develop critical skills in digital media, information technology and design.”

Programs routinely linked a journalism education to being able to use various hardware. The technology shown on the homepages stood out for their complexity and seemingly expensive equipment. Programs often displayed television-style video cameras and professional photographic equipment to indicate technological prowess. The programs, themselves, highlighted this emphasis. About 25 percent of the homepages included videos, which, again, suggests that the journalism programs want to be seen as technological spaces.

Notably, students were not shown using their mobile phones or tablets for journalism, despite the increased popularity of mobile journalism (Westlund, 2013). The only mobile technology hardware shown were laptops. Additionally, programs rarely mentioned any software the students would use or need to learn. Similarly, programs rarely mentioned social media. In fact, programs tended to ignore social media, except for instances where they linked to their own social networking sites or
the social networking sites of their student media outlets. Even as a promotional tool for themselves, however, the sites’ uses were minimal. Only about 10 percent embedded their own social media feeds on their homepages. Perhaps more importantly, most programs did not discuss if or how social media fit into the students’ futures or the curricula.

**RQ4: How do journalism programs’ homepages address modern industry struggles?**

Most pages did not overtly mention journalism industry struggles, though there were a few notable exceptions. However, most programs did seem to implicitly be arguing against negative perceptions of the industry, especially in terms of employment opportunities, ethical practices, and technological skills.

Buffalo State (2019) was one of the few programs to specifically and bluntly address journalism’s employment troubles. Its journalism homepage reads: “Perhaps you have heard that it is difficult to find employment with a journalism degree because ‘people don’t read the news anymore.’ However, this isn’t true.” A common thread across colleges and universities, including Buffalo State, was highlighting employment opportunities in and out of journalism. As discussed regarding RQ1, most programs focused on the degree in terms of job preparation. It could be that, by promoting their programs in this way, schools are implicitly defending themselves against concerns of employment opportunities. Many programs highlighted alumni, in terms of testimonials of the importance of the degree, as well as their current places of employment and their employment history. Some specifically talked about the percentage of graduates who are employed within a year. The strong emphasis on internship and job opportunities, alumni profiles, and student media experiences could be the programs’ attempts at implicitly addressing employment anxiety.

Most journalism programs did not explicitly mention the criticisms of biased news, fake news or the credibility issues that the media industry is facing. Iona College (2019), which has a bachelor’s degree in mass communication with a journalism concentration, was a notable exception. It said on its homepage: “... in a world of ever-shrinking news cycles, ‘fake news,’ and vigorous attacks against the press, the need for highly trained journalists is greater than ever.” Although most did not address this concern as directly, numerous programs seemed to implicitly discuss this concern by emphasizing the fact that they teach students how to be “ethical” practitioners. As discussed in relation to RQ2, these ethical references did not provide much detail or outline those practices (such as fact-checking or verification). However, it could be that journalism programs are using these more generalized statements to push back at those who deride the profession.

Additionally, numerous schools referenced the changing nature of journalism jobs, often implicitly discussing the technological changes that the industry has undertaken. There were multiple discussions throughout the sample of preparing students for current jobs, while also giving them the skills for future jobs. For example, Arizona State (2019) says it “prepares students for the media jobs of today and tomorrow.” Howard University’s Department of Media, Journalism and Film (2019) says it “strives to instill in students a sense of professional and intellectual curiosity, critical-thinking skills and a commitment to life-long learning, given the ever-changing communications technology.” As discussed in relation to RQ3, homepages gave significant attention to the programs’ technological resources. Overall, the commentary regarding “state-of-art,” “current,” journalism of “today,” might give the unintended appearance that journalism programs ignored trends or did not always teach students necessary skills for employment. The programs’ current
emphasis on technology could be their attempts at implicitly addressing concerns that the field is outdated.

Conclusion and Discussion

Through content and thematic analyses, this study found that journalism programs’ homepages are promoting journalism as a skills-focused major that prepares students for workforce employment. This study suggests that, overall, journalism programs are relying on their strong connection to professional practice as their homepages’ primary recruitment tactic.

Interpretations and implications

These findings reflect many of the struggles that journalism programs have historically faced within academia. As discussed earlier, tensions regarding journalism as a skills-based or liberal arts-based curriculum date back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as do discussions about whether journalists even need college degrees (Folkerts, 2014). This analysis suggests that this tension still exists and that — at least on their homepages — skills are currently “winning” in this ongoing debate. It could be that the emphasis on professional skills is intentional; perhaps the programs are using professional applicability as a way of distinguishing their programs from other liberal arts programs. Perhaps clear connections to industry help to make journalism programs stand out from others. In the United States, in particular, the cost of college has increased significantly (Maldonado, 2018), which has caused many to question whether it’s even necessary (Perna, 2019); it could be that these programs are emphasizing their professional orientation to justify the expense and time commitment. Considered this way, journalism programs could be positioning themselves well for the challenges of current struggles in higher education. However, they also could be limiting their scope. There are plenty of students who would conceivably be interested in taking journalism courses or even majoring in journalism but don’t necessarily want to be journalists. Many students would arguably benefit from the courses; by marketing themselves in this way, the programs could be deterring prospective students. They also could be limiting themselves in terms of respect within academia; perhaps journalism programs are being undervalued within universities because they are seen as vocational, rather than academic. This could be something for programs to consider moving forward.

Other questions of audience arose during analysis, as well, particularly during analysis of technology. The homepages used language such as “multiplatform,” “digital,” and “convergence.” They noted the “media jobs of today and tomorrow,” and specifically assured readers that they do not teach solely writing. Journalism programs might want to consider who the audience is for these discussions. Incoming college students for the 2019-2020 academic year are unlikely to have been born in a pre-digital era, so, to them, the sites could be justifying something that doesn’t need to be justified. Students ages 18-24 would likely assume that journalism is about technology; defensive language explaining that modern-day journalism is about technology could be having a backlash effect by making it sound as though the programs are out-of-touch. Young students could be further drawing such conclusions based on the sites’ lack of social and mobile media portrayals and discussions. If the intended audience is parents or donors, then this approach could be perfectly fine; if not, then it might be helpful for such sites to reconsider. Focus groups with prospective students could better assess reactions to such content.
The notion of journalism’s “modern industry struggle” differed across the sites. Many implicitly addressed struggles of employment opportunities, technological skills, and ethical practices. However, there was little talk of media freedom or journalist safety. They mentioned journalism principles and ethics, but most did not explain what that included. They somewhat address concerns of inclusivity through gender and racial representation in photos; however, it was difficult to assess the gender and diversity in some of the photos, and overrepresentation in promotional photos does not mean actual diversity on campus (Pippert, Essenburg & Matchett, 2013). There was also little talk about legitimizing the profession, particularly in response to backlash from political leaders. It could be that the programs are trying to avoid alienating prospective students or donors by appearing to be too political or partisan. It also could be that sites are not able to be updated very frequently, so avoiding current events and current struggles could be an intentional way to keep the content relevant and timely. Programs might want to further discuss the advantages and disadvantages of bluntly addressing industry criticism.

Based on this project, it is clear that some programs devote more resources to their websites than others. The factors for such differences are likely numerous, including scope of a specific journalism program, size of a university, procedures for site updates, and overall budget. Because websites are key recruiting spaces (e.g., Bidell et al., 2007; Yeo, Erickson Cornish & Meyer, 2017), though, it might be beneficial for journalism programs to more carefully consider the emphasis they put on their sites. Some might want to reconsider their site updates — in terms of frequency and type — as part their overall recruitment and retention strategies.

**Limitations and future research**

ACEJMC schools were used as the sample for this study. They were chosen because of their high commitment to journalistic excellence, their mission statement, and their international reach. However, it could be that member schools are measurably different than other programs, particularly in terms of their professional focus. Future studies that look at a wider range of schools could address the concern that these were not adequately representative. Similarly, only one page for each school was analyzed. The researchers selected the one that seemed to most reflect a “homepage,” but it’s possible that some information missing on that page was actually on another subpage. Future research could consider multiple pages for each school to ensure that the full program is being assessed. As mentioned, Google Translate was used for the websites that were not available in English, but it was difficult for the researchers to confirm those translations. Future studies could be conducted with additional researchers to allow for more rigorous analysis.

The analyses in this study also lacked comparison. That is, other programs and fields were not assessed, so it is unclear how journalism programs compare to other academic programs. Future studies could look at how journalism programs compare to more traditional academic areas of study, such as history, to see whether they differ. Similarly, it’s unclear how much control individual programs have over their websites. It could be that content is updated by information technology staff or administrators, rather than journalism faculty. If that were the case, then perhaps programs within a school are promoted similarly, where programs at other schools differ. That is, patterns seen here might be more school-specific, rather than discipline-specific. Future studies could look at the workflow process to better address this concern.
Finally, this study looked at homepages as a proxy for promotional materials. Websites are certainly key recruitment tools (Bidell et al., 2007), but programs also market themselves in other ways. Researchers could examine social media feeds, print marketing materials, or even campus tours to determine the ways in which journalism programs are marketed in other contexts. Program directors and student media advisers could also be interviewed to determine how they promote their programs, as well as whether they are satisfied with those efforts.

Future research that addresses such concerns could help journalism programs better represent and promote themselves in this arguably difficult climate.

**About the Authors**

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spent almost 20 years in newsrooms, including 17 at the Cincinnati Post and its sister publication in Kentucky.

References


Journalism Students’ Self Reports Of Reactions Evoked By Trauma Related Teaching Materials: Results Of A Pilot Study

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Abstract:

In early 2019, a pilot survey of journalist students at Lincoln University, UK gauged participants’ (N=108) self-reports of reactions evoked by teaching materials representing critical incidents and trauma and their impact on personal adjustment. Survey returns indicate limited impact and student resilience. Evoked reactions were unrelated to levels of perceived social support, year of study or gender. Students evince a capacity to integrate the content of teaching materials into their everyday lives. Recommendations are made for professional training policy, monitoring of students’ reactions and departments’/universities’ duty of care obligations. Improvements to the conduct of future surveys are suggested.

Introduction

This pilot study explored journalism students’ self-reports of reactions evoked by exposure to trauma-related teaching materials used for professional training purposes at the University of Lincoln, UK. Exposures arise when students are shown a range of potentially distressing materials/stimuli to write stories about. They can also make their own selections from online or social media sources as prompts for discussing practical, professional and ethical considerations arising from reporting on critical incidents and traumatic events. The survey recognises that risks may arise for students from emotional reactions evoked by these vicarious exposures, for instance as evidenced by impaired capacity to pursue studies in journalism and by compromised day to day coping with the demands of their everyday life.

These are risks which co-exist with the overriding aim of these teaching modules which is to prepare qualified journalists to report professionally on disasters, crimes, war, violence and accidents without suffering adverse personal consequences in the acute, intermediary or longer term of their careers or their lives in general. The pilot study sought to collate evidence to clarify the merits or otherwise of suggestions that journalism educators do not sufficiently recognise the special considerations which appertain to learning about reporting upon trauma and critical events. Linked to the same, survey results might inform discussions about the role of journalism educators may have in monitoring and responding to adverse reactions evoked in some of their students. Survey results not only provide a provisional evidence base for journalism education policy but
also clarify duty of care obligations of journalism departments and Universities vis à vis this group of students.

Using The Impact Event Scale (IES-R) and The Psychological Outcome Profile (PSYCHLOPS) we collated self-reports of reactions evoked by the critical incident and trauma related curriculum across all three year levels during the 2018/19 academic year. The possibly moderating influence of social support was examined using The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). Returns indicate a limited incidence of adverse psychological reactions as measured by these instruments, in this sample of students. Extent of evoked reactions was not consistently linked to MSPSS scores. However, the survey returns indicate, in some cases, students who report levels of impact which fall within a clinically significant range.

Discussion focuses on how the survey results clarify the levels of risk to which journalism students are exposed in connection with exposure to these teaching materials and how these can be minimised through teaching policy and having appropriate care arrangements in place. Experience acquired with this pilot survey prompts recommendations about improved methods and methodologies to be adopted in future student surveys. Recommendations are also made about student support initiatives which comply with journalism departments’ and universities’ duty of care obligations laid down in law.

**Journalism Curriculum and Trauma**

The impact of technology on journalism practice could be traced to the invention of the printing press in the 15th century. Each stage of technological development has impacted on journalism in terms of new skills acquisition, ethical norms and professional standards vis-à-vis the perception of the role of journalists, respect for the privacy and dignity of subjects, awareness of the consequences of publicity, and honesty in the collection of information and dealing with sources (McQuail, 2013:7–8). However, the advent of the internet and social media presents journalism educators with new opportunities and challenges of preparing students for a time in their professional lives when they will report upon critical incidents and potentially traumatic events. Not only do these assignments engage with survivors who are likely to be profoundly distressed by their experiences, but journalist themselves are also risk of being adversely affected, both physically and psychologically, by what they witness and what they report upon (Specht and Tsilman, 2018; McQuail, 2013).

Being a journalist in training and also a field operational carries risks which in some instances may compromise functioning to a degree that is clinically significant and meets formal diagnostic criteria for generalised anxiety disorder, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995; Feinstein et al, 2002; Matloff, 2004; Strupp and Bartholomew, 2003; Kataoka et al, 2012;). Consistent with the above, a Reuters’ survey of war correspondents found that more than a quarter struggle with some of the symptoms which are found among survivors with a PTSD diagnosis (Reuters, 2010).

Therefore, the question arises about the degree to which journalism students are placed at risk by curriculum-led exposures to images of dramatic misfortunes endured by others. A line of research into this aspect of students’ experiences is fairly well developed. Hans (2006) surveyed 133
medical students to gather their self-report of reactions evoked 6 and 9 weeks after the 9-11 terrorist attacks. Conducting similar investigations with journalism students is pertinent because they are, as part of their training, expected to vicariously witness, read about and then engage in discussions about events which are distressing to most of us, and then competently complete academic assignments prompted by what they have been exposed to. To date, the possible effects of such exposures on journalism students’ physical and emotional wellbeing has been largely overlooked in scholarly studies.

What is now increasingly acknowledged among journalist educators and qualified reporters is that journalism training often leaves graduates ill-prepared for early career assignments which involve reporting upon disasters, crimes, war, violence, abuse and any trauma which engages public interest (Simpson and Boggs, 1999). A survey of journalism educators in the UK found that the courses on which they lecture largely overlooked risks of being untutored about the risks arising from vicarious exposures to critical incidents and trauma (Specht and Tsilman, 2018). Compared to other subjects to be covered in journalism studies, many educators gave low curriculum time priority to this arena of training, did not consider the topic sufficiently relevant to establish a stand-alone teaching module and did not feel competent to describe or recognise adverse reactions that might be evoked by emotionally overwhelming experiences. (Specht and Tsilman, 2018; Keats and Buchanan 2009).

In these regards there are some notable exceptions. For instance, The University of Washington, USA, has run a journalism and trauma module since 1994. Evaluations of its impact show that its graduates have increased awareness about traumatic stress and qualify with improved interviewing skills (Maxson, 1999:8).

All the same, the typical scenario within journalism education is that university educators have but scant awareness of vicarious trauma and give low priority ranking to this subject. For instance, a study of the content description of 63 journalism-related courses from a total of 61 UK universities conducted by Specht and Tsilman (2018) found no trauma-focused programmes or modules and only a small number of lectures are dedicated to the subject. A similar trend was found in a survey of university journalism courses in the USA where 75 percent of respondents reported no teaching about trauma for their students (Melki et al, 2013). Other investigators found that trauma is typically raised in the context of familiarising students with legal and ethical frameworks in journalism, with emphasis placed on how to gather and report stories unobtrusively rather than on risks arising to reporters in the field (Dworznik & Grubb, 2007; Duncan & Newton, 2010; Melki et al, 2013). Furthermore, journalism research into aspects of trauma is nascent.

These findings are also at odds with demands that the introduction of social media networks, the internet and the facility of newsroom journalists to work from user generated content, requires journalists not only to be good reporters but also to demonstrate high levels of social media literacy, skills, knowledge and understanding (Hermida, 2014). To this end, Amend et al (2012) argue that instructional classroom simulations can bridge the gap between the theory of reporting and the realities journalists face when covering events that are by nature, chaotic, unpredictable and distressing (Specht and Tsilman, 2018).

Our pilot survey is the first attempt to survey students’ experiences of these curriculum-related materials and their reactions to vicarious exposures. Its aims are to gather first impressions of
evoked reactions of journalism students at the University of Lincoln, UK to vicarious exposures to distressing situations, to critically assess the appropriateness of the survey methods used in this investigation and to address duty of care responsibilities of Journalism Departments and Universities who have established training modules to prepare students for assignments which carry risks to their physical and psychological health status.

**Method**

Participants in this study, conducted in January and February 2019, are 108 journalism students at the University of Lincoln. Of these, 36 were in their first year, 37 were second year students and 35 were in their graduating year. In total, 144 students are registered on this course, giving a response rate of 75 percent.

On attending timetabled lectures, students were asked, to complete a pen and paper self-report questionnaire which incorporated The Impact of Events Questionnaire (IES-R) (Horowitz, Vilner and Alves, 1979; Hyer and Brown, 2008), ‘The Psychological Outcome Profile (PSYCHLOPSVersion 5 (Ashworth M, Evans C, Clement, 2009) and The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al., 1988). These instruments are widely used to gauge current subjective reactions evoked by exposure to stressors deemed to be potentially traumatic. Social support from friends, fellow students, family and significant others, is considered a preventive and moderating influence upon the course and development of reactions evoked by such exposures and the outcomes after such exposures. Questionnaires returned were scored manually and analysed using SPSS statistical software.

**Results**

*Content of material, and range and intensity of emotions evoked*

Students’ reports of the kinds of teaching materials which had evoked some emotional impact indicate wide personal variations. 19% reported no emotional impact at all whereas 43% cited film/documentary materials and 15% referred to printed media as having had an impact. Photos were cited by 7% with attending news conferences or social media being selected by 1% respectively.

The nature of incidents and experiences in teaching materials cited as having created an emotional impact also reveals considerable personal variations. Most frequently mentioned themes were abuse and violence (24%), accidents and fire (19%), terrorism (13%), war and school shootings at 10% respectively.

On the question about the nature of the emotional reactions evoked by these teaching materials, 21% stated that none was worthy of note. As seen in Table 1, others acknowledged specific feelings which they attributed to the materials used. Distress’ and shock was reported by 18 %, anxiety/fear/panic by 14% and 12% felt sadness. Unease, feeling desensitised, anger and helplessness featured in the range of 3% to 5%.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evoked feelings</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Reaction</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distress</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shock</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety/fear/panic</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unease disturbed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desensitise</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpless</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>108</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 summarises the degree of intensity of the emotions which journalism students felt they had experienced by their exposures to the material. 51% reported no effect at all, whereas among the others 14% acknowledged being a little affected, 19% were somewhat affected, 13% were quite affected and 2% reported being considerably or severely affected. No statistically significant differences were found when the extent of being affected was cross-tabulated with students’ age (grouped in 10 year intervals), year of study (Pearson Chi-Squared p=. 375) and gender (Pearson Chi-Squared p=. 194).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent affected</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little affected</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat affected</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite affected</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerably affected</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severely affected</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>108</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nature of difficulties caused

Responding to a question about what might have become difficult to do in the aftermath of exposures and evoked emotional reactions, 42% of students reported no particular difficulties whereas others had noted difficulties with concentration (11%), difficulties with being objective (10%), being fearful of re-exposure (10%) and having difficulties processing information (10%) or remaining positive (7%). Of the remainder, which included fearfulness in public places, and difficulties with making decisions and living without fear, endorsements ranged from 2% to 5%. See Table 3. When cross-tabulated for gender and year of study the analysis is not statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Square p=. 372 and p=.844)

Table 3
When comparisons are made between students according to year of study, a statistically significant skew is found, in so far that the 3rd year group is more likely to report that it is harder to concentrate, to be objective, to avoid fearing re-exposure and to assess risk than reports from their junior students (Pearson Chi-Square p = .018) indicate. This trend does not generalise to students’ gender (Pearson Chi-Square p = .126). This finding is represented graphically in Figure 1.

Figure 1

However, when year of study and gender are cross-tabulated with how students view themselves (feeling good to bad) at the time of completing the survey the group differences are not statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Squared p = .309 and p = .232). (Figures 2 and 3).
Statistical significance of results

With respect to survey returns about reactions which are commonly found in populations of trauma survivors, IES-R total scores are skewed towards the lower, non-clinically significant range of between 0 and 8 (58% v 42%). From a statistical point of view, this holds true to a similar degree for year of study and gender (Pearson Chi-Square p=.498 and p=.788). See Figures 4 and 5.

Figures 4 and 5
Impact of Events and Social Support

Scores on the MSPSS provides a gauge of journalism students’ perceived levels of social support (MSPSS). It is clear that the skew is towards higher levels of perceived personal support (Figure 6). No significant link was found when students’ total IES-R scores were correlated with scores on the MSPSS (Pearson Correlation = .633). The trend is towards these two measures being largely independent of one another in this student sample.

When total MSPSS scores, which range from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 84 were clustered into 10 points ranges (0 to 9, 10 to 19 etc), it is again clear that the skew is towards higher levels of support. The apparent independence of these measures is further strengthened when clustered MSPSS scores are cross-tabulated with IES-R scores grouped into either clinically significant or not significant, as shown in Figure 9 (Pearson Chi-Squared p= .574).

Figure 6: MSPSS Total Scores Clustered
Figure 7: Social support recorded in tens
Figure 8. Scatter plot Of Total IES-R And MSPSS
Figure 9: IES-R High-Low Impact And MPSS Recoded

Conclusions and Recommendations

This pilot study of journalism students at the University of Lincoln documents their actual reactions evoked by teaching materials used in modules to prepare them for exposure to work-related critical incidents and trauma. This includes emotional reactions and their impact upon their journalism studies and life in general. The role of perceived social support in mitigating evoked reactions was also explored.

While questionnaire returns confirm that a wide variety of exposures used in connection with their journalism course evoked a number of reactions, self-reports indicate that these are typically limited in extent, intensity and intrusiveness and have no deleterious consequences for the way they feel about themselves. The low incidence of clinically significant adverse psychological reactions points to resilience within the student sample, at least for the types of teaching materials that have been used on the journalism course at the University of Lincoln, UK. Such impact as is acknowledged is, as a phenomenon, fairly evenly distributed within this student sample. It is noteworthy that demographic variables like age, gender, year of study are not consistently linked to greater or lesser impact.

This pilot survey brings into question suggestions that during the training of journalism students the reporting of critical and traumatic events for a time involves fostering a professional attitude of physical and emotional detachment (Specht and Tsilman, 2018:424). Compartmentalisation of evoked reactions may be required to deliver professional services, especially in a crisis or in the short term (Cote & Simpson, 2000) but enforced distancing is unlikely to be conducive to satisfactory personal adjustment in the longer term.
To help students prepare for difficult assignments in future, journalism courses are well advised to complement specialist modules with input from professionals who can advise on risk reduction, self-monitoring and adaptive adjustments following exposures to critical and traumatic events. This should complement education on reporting and working in hazardous environments and on how to interact with vulnerable or traumatized victims and witnesses of catastrophic events. Also important is teaching which addresses ethical decision-making, best practices, personal safety, coping and self-care (Ananthan 2017; Kataoka et al, 2012). In these regards, students’ awareness of Human Rights legislation is particularly helpful when trying to make sense of extreme incidents that unfold in front of reporting journalists.

If it is assumed that an important aim in journalism training is for students to recognise the possible personal impact upon themselves of having to report upon highly distressing situations or events then we cannot use the results of the survey to be sure about the effects of the use of distressing material during training. However, we can say that experienced exposures appear at least not to obstruct this overriding aim. A point commented upon by some survey participants is that vicarious exposures through social media and the internet constitute more depersonalised experiences than actual face to face encounters with trauma survivors and others who are living through periods of adversity. It is likely that having to participate in and report upon some press conferences, attendance in court personalises experience and evokes stronger emotional reactions. Furthermore, for training purposes the gains for journalism students might well be greater if more emphasis were to be placed upon personal contact with actual trauma survivors and on personal experience of critical incidents.

It is nevertheless clear from this pilot survey that the apparently and relatively innocent act of viewing graphic images on social media and the internet can evoke distressing reactions including those associated with traumatic stressors (Wendling 2015). For most students, these acute reactions are transient and cease to be disruptive beyond the short term, for instance one month.

Participants’ total scores on the formal screening instrument for reactions which typically follow in the aftermath of trauma exposure (IES-R), confirm limited impact and students’ resilience. Also worthy of note is the finding that extent of impact is not consistently related to personal perceptions of social support (MSPSS). In this regard, this student sample differs from results reported for other actual trauma survivor populations.

The impression to emerge from this pilot study is that the impact of teaching materials used on the Lincoln course is so limited and undifferentiated that it is not readily distinguished from those stressors and challenges which journalism students face as part of their everyday lives. This might in part account for the finding that third year students report a higher incidence of things that are difficult to do. Presumably, this arises for reasons of preparing for final year examinations etc. Therefore, the emerging view is that students’ reports of evoked reactions is that they add to their general everyday challenges. Furthermore, evoked reactions do not typically obstruct or compromise students’ day to day adjustment. A further consideration is that timing of exposure may be important for students’ experiences of evoked reactions, given that recency effects are likely to give rise to particularly acute reactions. With time, there is reason to believe these will fade for most students so that any adverse reactions cease to be disruptive to their day to day functioning.
While these pilot survey results are reassuring in respect of concerns that the teaching materials used may impact negatively on journalism students, the screening instrument also identifies a small number of participants who appear to struggle to achieve a level of adjustment commensurate with that of their peers. It is possible that their vulnerabilities, perhaps rooted in developmentally disruptive experiences before attending university or during years of studies, not only result in their having high impact scores independent of teaching materials used but also compound reactions to the materials accessed for purposes of professional training.

Results suggest that duty of care responsibilities of journalism courses and Universities involve making journalism students aware of the possible impact of course-related exposures. They should also be helped to know that self-monitoring of reactions is important and should be encouraged to make choices about which kinds of materials they wish to work with and which they should avoid. Beyond these special course-related considerations, duty of care obligations are as for all students attending university as laid down in local statutes or national laws.

The suggested measures are to help to protect the teaching institutions from accusations of neglect or failure to address duty of care responsibilities. However, special monitoring is called for in respect of those considered to be most vulnerable given their past experiences and adverse responses to recent life events. Staff in journalism departments may not be well placed to assess the quality of students’ psychological and social adjustment, but they are uniquely well placed to respond with concern for students who do not prosper or appear to have difficulties coping with course requirements. Discussion with these students should, as a matter of formal practice, include a discussion about the extent to which course materials add significantly to the stress burden of student life. If confirmed, a recommendation for counselling is strongly indicated. When made, this should be formally recorded in department records, for possible future reference.

From a research perspective, the experience of conducting this pilot study of journalism students, has prompted a number of reflections for improved quality of future surveys. They are that given that acute, initially intense but transient reactions may follow from recent exposures the ideal survey method and methodology for future investigations should be longitudinal, may be over the full three years of undergraduate training and, if possible, beyond.

The limited extent of reactions to teaching materials used in connection with this pilot survey and students’ apparent resilience, suggest recommending that self-report instruments incorporated in future investigations should be drawn from the pool of questionnaires designed to gauge variations in everyday adjustment rather than the more specialist instruments used on this occasion which aim specifically to monitor for reactions known to follow for actual survivors in the wake of critically disruptive life events and trauma.

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References:


Ethical Challenges for Teaching and Undertaking New Forms of Journalism

Ken Pratt
West of Scotland University, Paisley, UK

Abstract:

This paper springboards discussion around a style of journalism with no taut intros, news leads or spin - designed to help staff and students circumvent ethical and legal barriers in practice based work. The project was inspired by the work of the late American journalist Studs Terkel (1912-2008) who won the Pulitzer Prize in 1985 and whose book Working was described by critics as a combined work of art, social science and journalism. Participants don’t follow a conventional set of news values. They instead engage in a detached style of interviewing encouraging student journalists to think existentially about their interviewees.

Introduction

It is a truism to say that post-Leveson ethics combined with the rise of social media and citizen journalists has revolutionised the way we report and how our reportage is formed (Lee-Wright, Phillips, & Witschge, 2011). But many traditional ‘hackademics’ in the UK maintain that new ethics and new ethical regulations must dictate how The Press, particularly the mainstream, conducts itself (Bradshaw & Rohumaa, 2013). This paper challenges this view and argues that by thinking existentially about the growing array of imposed ethical codes and accompanying standardised interview techniques staff and students can realise their full potential as reporters litteraires.

I’d like this conference to think for a moment of well-meaning ethical codes as well as la censure des medias. And this censorship not merely impacts on practising journalists but on us as educators and the manner in which we teach our students. The censorship also throws into question the frameworks we use to structure our news writing (Randall, 2000) and, as I go on to note, its impact on applied journalistic truth. I will argue that the inverted pyramid is past its sell-by date. And that not only does it restrict freedom of expression, it, either by design, or inadvertently, restricts our ethical approaches to interviewing in the field, across the mediums (Allan, 2010).

I am proposing a new style of interviewing which has at its heart l’esprit d’egalitaire, one that juxtaposes the traditional power-relations between interviewer and interviewee. This is a direct challenge to the central tenet at the core of traditional journalism – the ethical interview (Temple & Temple, 2008). I will argue that egalitarianism, in every shape and form, is pivotal to the free-thinking of both journalists and the free expression of their interviewees, both of which in turn will consequently challenge the traditional news structure that we have come to know as the inverted pyramid (Harcup, 2009). So this paper stands for a call to action, led by well-informed journalism academics, and supported by the new generation of student journalists.

Conference, on one assignment to a leper colony in India for The Sunday Times, I found myself in a place called Beggar’s Colony near Bangalore. Beggar’s Colony is a slum which lies at the foot of the leper colony. It is a place where lepers beg priests to get in to the colony for the little
treatment that is available within the barbed wire compound that houses a wee hospital. One Friday evening I found myself drinking cheap wine there with the lepers of Shadnipurum. The chapter appears in my PhD from Glasgow University entitled ‘Hunting Captain Henley’ – Drinking Wine With The Lepers of Shadnipurum.

Sevagram, near Wardha Station: the village where Gandhi built his ashram and, officially, the hottest place in India. In the nearby city of Nagpur open sewers flow into the curry and chapatti shacks, uniting, in a common culinary concoction, the scent of food and hot spicy faeces. Suffering cheerfully endured ceases to be suffering, the Mahatma once said. It is transmuted into an ineffable joy. Mamamamama cried the tiny one-legged baby by the sewerside. A skeletal dog casually walked over and licked her head, pausing to pant and briefly guard the abandoned infant. But the beast has no reason and wandered north along the Pandit Malviya Road, a road that stretches deep into the darkness past makeshift shantys, pitted and putrid it meandered like some sullied stillbirth of a mother monsoon, its pungent trail leading who knows where – to the very heart of Henley himself perhaps. Yet the blackness of the fast approaching Wardha night held no fears for Billy. In its place, more than anything, was the desire to confront him. As night descended he felt his ever nearing presence pulling him towards him. And as it did so, the crowing of the cocks and the cries of the naked babies diminished. He picked his way through them, his footprint larger than their feeble brown bodies. The Englishman was here (Pratt, 2009).

Down here in the gutters of Shadnipurum the leper head found something amusing. And there were other stirrings. Behind the cloth door of his house, others made their move, reaching out, touching me all over with their stumps. One of them spoke a little English. He offered his stump as a handshake. My name is Krisinappa, he says. He tied a spoon to his right stump tea scoop sour milk into his mouth. He offered me some but I’ll stick to the wine wee man thanks any roads. His stumps were smooth but crinkled at the points like law links sausages. He sometimes chewed them when he was bored, or when asleep. He picked roses with his teeth and tried to sell them outside the colony but the thorns pricked his wounds. By night he thought he was a boxer, thumping his stumps into my stomach and doing the Ali shuffle. I slapped him back, tweaking his only ear between my forefinger and thumb, but only part of it falls off, small remnants of skin smelling like old grey cannabis ash. Where is the Englishman? I asked. Henley. Captain George Henley. Where is he? Where is the Englishman? Mimicked Krisinappa, mocking my question, offering no answer, no clue (Pratt, 2009).

His friend Damal was once a proud hunter until leprosy stalked and captured him. Now, he believed, he was cursed by god, condemned to live in Beggar’s Colony for eternity. He wore a crucifix upside down, grinding it into my face for a laugh. I drank more wine from the communal bottle. Three furra pound, three furra pound old boy, I say, here, sticking the point of the crucifix up his rotten nostril, dragging it sharply down across his reeking cheek, and pressing it into the jawbone, you’re deid if ye dae that again. He crawled to his corner with a tormented snigger and sat twiddling it, glinting it off an open bottle by the open fire (Pratt, 2009).

But this call isn’t made as some sort of plea for journalism academics to begin teaching forms of ethnography or participant observation (Newkirk, 2002). The formula is much more simplistic. To understand it let me introduce to you the work of the late Studs Terkel (1912-2008). Terkel won The Pulitzer Prize in 1985 for The Good War and his book Working was described by critics as a combined work of art, social science and journalism. Terkel was strongly influenced by the British director Denis Mitchell, who made Morning in the Streets (the classic 1959 documentary shot in
working-class districts of Manchester and Liverpool, still from time to time repeated on UK television (Terkel, 1997). ‘That film is magnificent,’ says Terkel. ‘Probably the best documentary ever made. Denis taught me that you didn’t need a narrator. And that little things were important (Chalmers, 2007). That silence was important. And that, those people on the streets….they just spoke poetry.’ There is an important observation to be made at this stage. While the l’esprit d’egalitaire in ‘Drinking Wine With The Lepers of Shadnipurum’ exemplifies an experimental non-patronising ‘eye for an eye’ approach to interviewer/interviewee relations Terkel was able to shift the power relations even further by in effect virtually removing himself from the interview process to ‘allow the poetry to be spoken.’

The Working Project I am piloting explores the concept of citizen witnessing (the world of work) and offers a platform to the contributions of ordinary people in a way that can hopefully help to reinvigorate journalism’s responsibility within democratic culture. Two main considerations were taken into account before piloting the first interview with a school cleaner Jeanette Braidwood. Firstly, the routine journalistic approach of researching previous stories around school cleaners in Scotland was ignored. This approach is designed to limit the impact of spin and resultant inverted pyramid structure. Secondly, leading questions were strictly limited, in-fact virtually non-existent, in an attempt to remove the reporter/interviewer from the interview process. Firstly read the interview. Following this I will examine the success (or not) of the technique in terms of journalistic credibility.

Jeanette Braidwood (54) School Cleaner

I have different shifts, Monday and Tuesday it is quarter to four to quarter to seven. The Wednesday, Thursday, Friday is three to six.

Basically, you go in, you start your shift, you sweep up the corridors. You do the dusting, empty your bins, just basic things like that. We buff on a Wednesday. Wednesday is a buffing day. Just one day a week you buff.

There are about fourteen of us and we all have like an end, but I work in a Secondary School, so I work like in the Home Economic Department, where I just work there and do all the stuff there. Basically, just cleaning.

I have one corridor and two classrooms, a staff base and a toilet. That’s it. There will be the halls as well. Basically, your day would be that you’d be cleaning the walls, you’d be sweeping the floor, emptying bins, doing the toilets.

It’s the same bit every time just now. Just up to about three weeks ago I was doing like two shifts, so I was doing two ends, just wherever the supervisor puts you. If somebody is off, obviously you’re covering, so you’d be going to cover somebody else’s end, along with the other girls, because we all work together as a group.

Aye, we all get on well. We get on well, we can have a laugh, we can get on well and we work well together. We all work well.

We have three men that work for us as well, aye there’s three men. One comes from Syria. Yes, he’s over from Syria.
Well I think maybe, the best is obviously that I’ve made a lot of friends in the place. Like that kind of thing. We get on with the teachers, we get on with everybody. I think maybe the worst part is that maybe you could walk into mess.

Well, I said that probably the worst mess is maybe like they’ve thrown maybe their water or ginger or they can have like sweeties or maybe just a lot of like mess that way, they can trample on it and you’re left with quite a lot of mess.

We’ve got a trolley that the stuff goes on. We’ve got the mop, a bucket. We’ve got cloths. We don’t use chemicals.

We’ve been doing that for maybe about the past couple of years. Only on a Friday, we can use the liquid on the tables. That’s only one time we can do that, because children have allergies and if you’re using that it could maybe affect them with their allergies. So just only on a Friday we can use that, but any other time it’s got to be just water, just plain water.

A duster, a feather duster type thing, we’ve got that as well. An obviously we’ve got bags for emptying your bins, you’ve got that, but we do carry like a spray, if there’s maybe like a spillage or somebody’s been sick or whatever, maybe in the toilet, you’d need that, you would put that down as a deodoriser, just put that down. You’ve got that if you need that.

You do have a Hoover, but the Hoover just gets pulled behind you. It’s one of they like Henry Hoovers, so you would just take that with you as well.

It’s a wee tiny Hoover with like a long hose that you’d pull like a wee round thing with a wee face on it. It has a face, you pull that, you’re doing that with you as well and then obviously that would be all you’d have on that. We have a scraper as well. A scraper. It looks like a wallpaper scraper. You would use that to get maybe like the chewing gum, that’s been stuck onto the ground, you’d use that and that would help.

I’ve been doing it for fourteen years now. Aye, fourteen years. I’ve been quite lucky because I mean most other people can maybe, they would maybe have to clean up sick or whatever, things up their wall. You do get a lot of maybe the juice up the wall. You’ve got to clean that, but luckily enough where I’ve been it’s never happened to me, so I’ve been quite lucky.

In the place where I am, I’m using like a washer that would clean the floors, it’s a machine that washes the floors. Like on a Wednesday, that’s my wash day, because I’m doing that plus the buffing, and I’ve got a big long corridor. And then at the end of that, obviously I come back in quite tired. It can be bad and it can be quite physically a heavy job, heavy in the muscles. You’d be quite tired after it, you get a sore back, sore legs with doing that. And you would need to be physical, you need to be physically fit to actually maybe do it, aye.

I have trained people when they come in. They walk in, I think when somebody comes into a school, a cleaning job, they actually think that all you do is just walk in, they are just going to be dusting or they’re just gonna Hoover, but they don’t actually realise what the job involves. Because it is actually more physically heavier than they think and that’s the first thing that they’ll say, as soon as they’ve started using the buffer they’ll say, “Oh how can you do that, that’s awfully heavy, I don’t know how you can do it.” But it’s now as, well I don’t think it’s as hard because I’ve been doing it for all these years. That’s what they basically find, they find when they walk, people
think when they walk in they’re just gonna use a duster or just Hoover, do the toilets and that’s it, but there’s actually more to it.

It did take, it does take a, I’d say probably it takes a few months to really, you know, get into the routine, being able to do it and then being able to, you walk into it and oh, I’ve got to buff today, I’m not gonna be well after it, but once you actually do it, I think once you’ve been doing it for so long, it just comes natural.

It’s like basically you’ve got to have the buffer at a certain angle, but you’re actually swinging so that when you’re moving it you’re actually walking with it and it can be quite bad on your back and your shoulders and the knees as well.

They always do complain about it, that’s the first thing they complain about, “Oh, it’s Wednesday, it’s buffing day.” At the end of the day they say, “Oh my back’s killing me” or “My legs are killing me.” That always happens on a Wednesday.

Well it doesn’t affect me, but I know it can affect other people. They can come in and say, “Oh, I can’t be bothered.”

Aye, it’s just like, ooff, and you do get it like they can come in and they can say, “Oh, just wanna get started and get home.” They just want, “I wanna get on with it.” Or even ones that can walk in and say, “Oh, what we gonna walk in to today?” That’s the first thing you think of because you say, “What is the end going to be like?” When I walk into my department to do my cleaning, what am I walking in to? Cause you don’t know what you’re walking in to, cause you don’t know what’s been going on during the day, but obviously I am with cooking, so I’m gonna have a lot of like food on the floor and things like that.

And I think the other thing as well, especially in this weather, the hot weather, when you walk in they’ve had the ovens on all day, so you’re walking outside, you’re coming in, you are warm and then you walk in and you’re walking into a warm environment. That actually makes it harder for you to work, because the heat kind of pushing you back, but you know you’ve got to go forwards, you’ve got to do it. But you do do it.

It is like a workout because you can come back, I’m actually bright red, I’m actually quite tired by the time I’m finished. So by the time you come back home, you do actually just feel drained, because you’ve been working so hard.

Sometimes you see the kids, it depends if they’re in for maybe extra study, they might be in, but we can’t touch, we can’t go into that classroom when the children are in, cause we can’t be in. We can maybe, if there’s a teacher in you can maybe say to the teacher, “Can I come in and empty the bin” but if you see a class with no teacher you canna walk in, cause we’re not allowed to walk in if the children are in the class.

Sometimes, if there’s maybe an event on, the kids do kind of tend to come along the corridor but they’re not supposed to be in.

Awe they don’t say anything, just run about. Aye, they just run about. That’s it.

Some of the teachers are alright, others you don’t even pass the time of day. And I’m just the type if I see a teacher come by I’ll say hello, but some of them don’t give you a hello back, they just walk by you. Aye, they just walk by you. But some of them do just speak to you, they’ll maybe say hello, I wouldn’t say they would pass the time of day, or it’s a lovely day or whatever, or thank goodness that shift’s over or have a nice weekend, you know, things like that.
Aye, I would say some of them (the teachers) can be nice but some of them not. I don’t know, I’ve always felt that because some of them just look down, because I’m a cleaner, I’m not a teacher. So I’d see it that way, you know, they don’t want to, I just feel that they look at me in the uniform and they see me in a different way. They just don’t, I don’t know why but, I just feel that way, you know.

I just feel that we don’t get paid enough as we should for what we have to do. Cause I know that other Council workers even get paid a lot more than us and they do less, which I don’t think is actually fair.

Well you get people that are maybe like bin men and they don’t, well years ago they physically lifted things but all they’re doing is just pushing a wee bin and it goes into the bin lorry and it does it all itself, you know, that kind of thing. You’ve got receptionists, you’ve got people that just work at the front, but they’re not really doing anything. Even the, oh, I don’t know. Teachers don’t do a lot, I know they’re not Council workers but they don’t exactly, I feel that they don’t do the physical work, they just basically, you know, they’ve got a job just sitting down, just working away and talking, you know.

INTERVIEW ENDS

The main news story over the past year in Scotland about school cleaners in Scotland referred to cleaners doing the work of five in Glasgow school staff crises. The intro spoke of stressed-out cleaners quitting the job due to excessive workloads. If we briefly re-visit the interview with Jeanette Braidwood we can see this is a fundamental concern of hers too. Yet the news element grows organically by using the Studs Terkel technique without the use of leading questions or the inverted pyramid style. In addition, because the angle isn’t forced we actually learn more about the life of a school cleaner without necessarily sacrificing the news element.

There are other points to note. Using this technique there are no taut intros, no news leads and no spin. This in turn circumvents ethical and legal issues in practice based work. More importantly perhaps for our teaching of journalism in a disruptive age the style is easily able to harness both Broadcast and Press cultures and in so doing address issues of absolute truth within the field of journalism ethics.

There is of course other new thinking about interview technique. Literary nonfiction writers such as John Krakauer (Under the Banner of Heaven) employs narrative devices such as vignettes and storytelling, often from the perspective of his interview subjects, ‘as a means to focus attention on an interview and capture the essence of an argument or situation.’ (Boynton, 2005). ‘Krakauer’s narrative is heavily focused on these interviews, and extensive quoting of his interviewees throughout the book enhances the reader’s personal sense of these subjects and provides concrete points of departure for further discussion and analysis.’ (Boynton, 2005). “Great reporters are great listeners,” says Carl Bernstein of the WoodwardBernstein reporting team that exposed the Watergate coverup that led to President Nixon's resignation.

The good listener hears good quotes, revealing slips of the tongue, the dialect and diction of the source that sets him or her apart (Widmer, 2015). In the Jeanette Braidwood interview this is demonstrated on several occasions throughout, most notably.
Well you get people that are maybe like bin men and they don’t, well years ago they physically
lifted things but all they’re doing is just pushing a wee bin and it goes into the bin lorry and it does
it all itself, you know, that kind of thing. You’ve got receptionists, you’ve got people that just
work at the front, but they’re not really doing anything. Even the, oh, I don’t know. Teachers
don’t do a lot, I know they’re not Council workers but they don’t exactly, I feel that they don’t do
the physical work, they just basically, you know, they’ve got a job just sitting down, just working
away and talking, you know.

Aged 28, Larry King found his first job interviewing people on the radio. But he wasn’t with CNN,
he was in a deli in Miami, interviewing whoever happened to walk through the door. His guests
were waiters, tourists and a plumber (Littlefield, 2017). King went on to conduct over 30,000
interviews across his 60-year career. He built a legacy by asking questions and letting his guests
respond. He’s not renowned for his oratory skills, his writing, or his investigative chops. He’s
known simply for his ability to ask and listen (Littlefield, 2017).

But unlike Larry King’s technique or the ultra egalitarian technique used in Hunting Captain
Henley, the genius of Studs Terkel is in his discretion. ‘You never hear the crank of the machinery
that powers his work, and barely catch a glimpse of the man holding the levers.’ (Brooks, 2008).
‘His writing is deceptively stylish, and his interviews dance and flow. They capture the cadence
of the speaker, whether it be a signalman or a stockbroker, a politician or a prostitute, to the extent
that you can almost picture them sitting there, groping for the words as the tape-wheels turn. As
anyone who has ever attempted to write up a first person interview will testify, this is a fiendishly
difficult skill to master.’ But just how difficult and can we in the academy adapt to teach our
students this discretion? How difficult can it actually be to interview a diverse group of people,
provide them with brief, first person platforms, and teach students to restrict their own contribution
to the occasional italicised prompt? (Brooks, 2008). If we look again at the Jeanette Braidwood
interview, her cadence is regularly and accurately captured:

Some of the teachers that are all-right, others you don’t even pass the time of day. And I’m just
the type if I see a teacher come by I’ll say hello, but some of them don’t give you a hello back, they
just walk by you. Aye, they just walk by you. But some of them do just speak to you, they’ll
maybe say hello, I wouldn’t say they would pass the time of day, or it’s a lovely day or whatever,
or thank goodness that shift’s over or have a nice weekend, you know, things like that.

‘Studs was not a confrontational interviewer,’ says Alan Wieder in Listening With Respect: What
Made Studs Terkel a Great Interviewer (Karlin, 2016). ‘Yet, often people he interviewed responded
by saying that he got them to talk about things they didn’t even know they thought or felt. The
second lesson is one word – ‘listen’ – Crazy because Studs was such a talker (Karlin, 2016). He
never shut up, except, when he was doing an interview.’ Terkel had a mantra: ‘Let the person talk
about what they want to talk about and not talk about what they don’t want to talk about.’

And I think the other thing as well, especially in this weather, the hot weather, when you walk in
they’ve had the ovens on all day, so you’re walking outside, you’re coming in, you are warm and
then you walk in and you’re walking into a warm environment. That actually makes it harder for
you to work, because the heat kind of pushing you back, but you know you’ve got to go forwards,
you’ve got to do it. But you do do it.
In ‘Screw The Inverted Pyramid’ (The Journalist, Context Matters, 2015), Tim Knight writes: ‘The inverted pyramid has done even more harm to broadcast journalism than the invention of the news conference. Which is saying a lot. They still teach it in journalism schools – in spite of all the evidence that it simply doesn’t work for broadcasting. The inverted pyramid takes perfectly good stories and mutilates them.’ Some of Knight’s findings are of note (Knight, 2015):

- The inverted pyramid is the most difficult to follow of all possible story structures.
- It’s cleverly designed to prevent the viewer from retaining information.
- It forces the writer into ugly, artificial, often incomprehensible sentences.
- The inverted pyramid is a newspaper invention.
- It has nothing to do with broadcast storytelling.
- And yet, even today, it defines the structure of most stories in most broadcast news bulletins most of the time.
- You’d think it was invented for some clever journalistic reason.
- Actually it was invented to save newspaper publishers lots of money. (Knight, 2015)

In a comparison of narrative news and the inverted pyramid Emde, Klimmt and Schluetz (2015) point to previous research that shows a decreasing interest and low comprehension of traditional news, particularly in young audiences. They write: “Boring, repetitive and complicated—these are words used by many young people to describe the typical news they find in traditional media (Emde, Klimmt, & Schluetz, 2015). As several studies show, news consumption by adolescents has decreased in the last few years. Additionally, especially young recipients understand and remember only a small fraction of the information included in a newspaper article or television broadcast (Emde, Klimmt, & Schluetz, 2015). Altogether, these results constitute a problem for the public responsibility of news media to contribute to a well-informed society. Innovating the ways in which news is conveyed to young audiences has thus emerged as an important challenge to journalism and journalism research” (Emde, Klimmt, & Schluetz, 2015).

In Dominance Through Interviews Kvale concludes that a research interview is not an open and dominance free dialogue between egalitarian partners, but a specific hierarchical and instrumental form of conversation, where the interviewer sets the stage and scripts in accord with his or her research interest (Kvale, 2006) s. He writes: ‘The use of power in interviews to produce knowledge is a valuable and legitimate way of conducting research (Salmons, 2009). With interview knowledge jointly constructed by interviewer and interviewee, overlooking the complex power of dynamics of the social construction process may, however, seriously impair the validity of the knowledge constructed.’ The interview technique in Drinking Cheap Wine With The Lepers of Shadnipurum demonstrates what Kvale refers to as ‘alternative conceptions and practices to the warm personal and consensus-seeking research interviews. Look again at the following section (Kvale, 2006):

By night he thought he was a boxer, thumping his stumps into my stomach and doing the Ali shuffle. I slapped him back, tweaking his only ear between my forefinger and thumb, but only part of it falls off, small remnants of skin smelling like old grey cannabis ash. Where is the Englishman? I asked. Henley. Captain George Henley. Where is he? Where is the Englishman? Mimicked Krisinappa, mocking my question, offering no answer, no clue.
This is what Kvale refers to as ‘a confronting approach, radicalised by regarding the conversation as a battlefield – as suggested by Aaronson (1999) in her Bakhtin-inspired analyses of conversations (Kvale, 2006).’ Lyotard (1984) regards every statement as a move in a game, which is “at the base of our entire method, that to speak is to fight, in the meaning of a game.’ If we accept that the agnostic interview, as Kvale refers to it, is confrontational, as the interviewer ‘deliberately provokes conflicts and emphasizes divergences’ (and the above extract is a radical demonstration of this in that a physical confrontation is enacted) then we can also deduce that the theory of egalitarianism in interviews is also enacted to the extreme, the objective being to overcome the opponent both physically and in dialogue because that is the pretext set by the interviewee himself. There is a further contrast to harmonious searches for consensus whereby the research interview allows for competing perspectives to emerge, following the motto of “vive la difference (Kvale, 2006)”

In Qualitative Research in Journalism: Taking it to the Streets Cramer and McDevitt (2004) point to the The Hutchins Commission that has advocated the “projection of a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society” (Cramer & McDevitt, 2004). Responsible performance means “that the images repeated and emphasized be such as are in total representation of the social group as it is (Iorio, 2014). The truth about any social group, though it should not exclude its weaknesses and vices, includes recognition of its values, its aspirations, and its common humanity.” The commission expressed faith that if readers were presented with the “inner truth of the life of a particular group,” they would develop respect and understanding for that group (p. 27). Inner truth is a key concept because an understanding of a group on its own terms is the very purpose of ethnography (Iorio, 2014).

Cramer and McDevitt take it one step further. They write: ‘Durham (1998) advocates “standpoint epistemology” as an escape from “the intellectual quicksand of relativism and the indefensible territory of neutrality and detachment” (Cramer & McDevitt, 2004). Standpoint epistemology requires a reformulation of objectivity, directing it away from the unrealistic erasure of bias toward the purposeful incorporation of subjective perspectives. Borrowing from feminist theory (Harding, 1991) and sociological models of knowledge production (Mannheim, 1952), Durham argues that people inside the dominant social order collect and interpret information about those who are either inside or outside it (Cramer & McDevitt, 2004)’.

Feminist theory sheds further and important light. In ‘Interviewer and Interviewee Relationships Between Women,’ Ning Tang argues that ‘both the interviewer and interviewee’s perceptions of social, cultural and personal differences have an impact on the power relationship in the interview, which is not simply an issue of quality of the interview but the dynamics between the interview pair. (Tang, 2002)’. Tang’s hypothesis is of note. She writes: ‘Feminists in sociology initiated the discussion on the power relationship in women interviewing women in the early 1980s. Because of women’s general experience of gender subordination, a ‘non-hierarchical’ relationship in women interviewing women has been suggested (Oakley, 1981). However, some feminists have argued that despite women’s shared understandings of gender subordination, other social attributes also contribute to different power relationships in women interviewing women (Tang, 2002). More recently, while feminists insist on the empowerment of the researched it has been recognized that power dynamics in the interview are fluid, therefore the presumed dominant position of the interviewer within the hierarchical research relationships has been questioned (Doucet & Mauthner, 2012).
In *Drinking Cheap Wine with the Lepers of Shadnipurum* the ‘empowerment of the researched’ is clearly demonstrated in extremis. The interviewer fights back to redress the balance. However it is surely in the middle ground that the solution to our teaching of journalism in a disruptive age lies – an interview technique territory first mapped by Studs Terkel and waiting to be plucked from the journalism shelve to re-invigorate The Journalism Academy’s potential to instill a new passion for interviewing in our students, one that circumvents the traditional ethical and legal barriers that await us, and one that can unite both Press and Broadcast cultures in HE institutions not just in the UK, but globally.

**About the Author**

**Dr. Ken Pratt** is Lecturer in Journalism at West of Scotland University. He was previously news reporter and finalist at the Guardian International Development Journalism Awards for his disturbing reportage from DR Congo and Uganda. His work uses personal experiences to explore a hidden narrative behind the reporter’s prose. He received a PH (D) from Glasgow University for his novel *Hunting Captain Henley*, described by one literature professor as being as good as Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. It was selected by the American Comparative Literature Association for inclusion at its Vancouver conference where it was described as “insightful and inspirational”.

**References**


Strategies for Developing a Cross-Cultural, Global Ethics Mindset Among Journalism Students

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Abstract

This paper discusses existing pedagogy, codes and tools for helping students develop a global, cross-cultural mindset in the digital, global age, then offers a new approach, based on current ethical challenges. The paper addresses these questions: What ethics and practices can we teach students in an age of authoritarian regimes and new journalism defined by anyone who produces and disseminates information? Also, how do we honor indigenous values and practices in journalism? A new mindset about ethics is required, one that acknowledges that journalists operate in a contentious zone where traditional, Western-based democratic values and practices may not dominate. Consider the challenges when reporting within and about Indigenous communities, finding credible sources and gaining their trust. Consider reporting in China, where freedom of speech is forbidden. What is a mindset of truth-seeking and how can students adhere to this today? This paper explores the challenges that journalists face, then offers principles and practices as well as a curriculum to help students develop a global, cross-cultural perspectives.

Key words: Cross-cultural journalism, teaching journalism ethics, global media ethics

Introduction

An important lesson that’s frequently overlooked in journalism ethics classes is one that focuses on values and ethical standards beyond the students’ geographic borders. Accurate and truthful reporting begins with verification of information, but doesn’t end there. Journalists need to have an open mind and reach across borders, religions, culture and politics to learn about other communities and cultures so their stories can be more complete as well as avoid stereotypes. If the students and their professors haven’t grown up in a diverse community or lived in different cultures and societies, what education and training is needed to cultivate an open mindset and access the richness and diversity that’s available to help them be better storytellers?

This paper suggests that it is possible and necessary in journalism education to provide students with the knowledge and skills to operate in different journalism cultures within and outside their own communities as well as in a variety of social, economic and political contexts. First, students can engage in experiential learning in the classroom and local community; next they can extend that into international environments.

Literature Review

Numerous scholars have studied international journalism cultures in democratic, autocratic and semi-autocratic nations (Freedman, Goodman and Steyn, 2018). Their edited volume provides country-based or region-based case studies on how journalists cope with challenges, such as self-
censorship or even risk of imprisonment, in doing their daily jobs. The scholars also examine a variety of journalistic practices in different countries and political systems. They document that journalists around the world face a struggle to uphold the fundamental democratic values of the right to be informed, live in a just and egalitarian society, and promote responsive and transparent government (p. 18).

Still other scholars have studied journalism cultures in indigenous communities (Alia, 2009; Grixti, 2011; Hanusch, 2014) and what the world can learn from Indigenous people’s values and commitment to the survival of their diverse languages and cultures. Some scholars would argue that journalism values that are practiced in most communities are Western-based; others say these are universal values; and some say there are other models that need to be explored. Either way, Western-based journalism ethics are being disrupted by many in a movement to broaden not just journalism ethics but all media ethics in response to changes in our global society (Ward, 2014 & 2019).

Sobijiofor and Hanusch (2011) have examined practical and theoretical issues that underpin journalism across different cultures. They believe that “journalism can be taught, practiced and analyzed through different epistemological backgrounds and frameworks” that inform journalism education and training throughout the world (p. 1).

The authors propose that journalism is culture-based and contextual. Also, that it is shaped by technology, politics, society, history and the legal framework of the country. Technology has facilitated the globalization of journalism, and hence the transfer of the Western-dominated liberal democratic model as the ideal of journalism education to a variety of nations, without always adapting to the local culture. However, in order to survive, journalists in many countries adhere to local behavioral norms and rules, which has shaped their production of journalism.

Global media ethicist Stephen Ward argues that we could adopt global, integrated journalism ethics in some form (Ward, 2015, p. 216). He suggests that ethics for multiple forms of journalism could emerge, prompted by the challenges journalists face in different situations. He notes that it is “unrealistic to expect a global ethics for a free press to grow in undemocratic nations, although the ideal may inspire media reform” (Ward, p. 217). However, such a code with the practice of global ethics could first be adopted by major international news agencies and organizations, such as the BBC, Reuters and the Associated Press.

The implication from the research is that we should teach these democratic ethical values as universal ones because they aim to improve the human condition, but that we also need to acknowledge the contradictions in applying them in certain non-egalitarian societies and repressive political and cultural contexts. This paper offers some practical suggestions on studying and practicing journalism in different cultural contexts. It’s based on the concept that journalism is practiced best if done in accordance with local values and rules, yet keep the global context in mind as well.
Application & Learning Outcomes

This paper offers an approach for students in the United States in a traditional Western journalism education curriculum and who live in near or in a diverse community. The underlying belief is one of optimism — that journalists trained in a Western education system can learn to change their cultural expectations.

The overall learning outcome at the macro level is for students to achieve a more open and aware mindset through the study of diverse communities and systems. Another learning outcome at the micro level is achieved through application and journalism practice. Learning objectives:

1. Understand by using case studies how the production of journalism is influenced by different regions, countries and cultures;

2. Demonstrate open-mindedness, skills and techniques to produce journalism through culture-based immersive experiences, which include seeking story ideas and sources outside one’s culture and community;

3. Understand and articulate one’s own identity, how it has been shaped and consequently shapes one’s reporting.

U.S. efforts in journalism education and training to broaden students and professionals include diversity training and study abroad programs. But these are usually not requirements in journalism schools even though The Accrediting Council on Journalism and Mass Communication standards require that students should “demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society” (ACEJMC, 2019).

ACEJMC in its nine standards recognizes that each institution has its “unique situation, cultural, social or religious context, mission and resources, and this uniqueness is an asset to be safeguarded” (ACEJMC, 2019). The Council lays out standards for students in the U.S. and other nations. “ACEJMC will apply its standards and indicators in compliance with applicable laws and regulations and, where appropriate, with religious or cultural prescriptions and practices.” While this is an admirable goal, the laws of different countries with respect to free speech and support for democratic and responsive government make it difficult to apply some ACEJMC standards. However, schools may be able to apply for a waiver of a certain expectation.

In Professional Values and Competencies under Standard 1, ACEJMC requires that all graduates should be aware of the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in the country where they are located (ACEJMC, 2019). Students are also supposed to learn about the different systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to be watchdogs on those in power and to “assemble and petition for redress of grievances” — all are First Amendment core principles. Students should also “demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.”
But many powerful countries, such as China, don’t allow instructors to even talk about free speech and democracy (Carlson, 2013). The Communist Party of China in 2013 banned discussion of “dangerous Western influences.” The seven no speaks or forbidden values are:

- Universal values, such as freedom, equality, human rights;
- Freedom of speech;
- Civil society;
- Civil rights;
- The historical errors of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP);
- Crony capitalism;
- Judicial independence.

Even posting these seven would be censored. These were sent out after Xi Jinping became president in 2012 to protect the CCP and promote patriotism (Anderlini, 2015). China’s journalism students and practitioners know what they can and cannot report on, effectively engaging in self-censorship. When they study journalism in the U.S., it’s possible that they will not show up to class on the days when the First Amendment is being discussed. In his study of journalism education in China, Han (2017) calls this “serving two masters.”

With so many different forms of journalism, what values, then, is global journalism rooted in? Is journalism simply the practical craft of gathering information and writing a story? Or does it include the pursuit of democratic values as supported by UNESCO Professional journalistic standards and ethics? (UNESCO 2019). Historically in the U.S. journalism has been grounded in Western ethics and values, particularly to “seek the truth and report,” act independently and do no harm; give voice to the voiceless. But these values all run contrary to what’s allowed in China, for example, as well as other dictatorships. However, sometimes instructors, particularly foreign ones, can talk about certain things in the classroom, but never outside the classroom. In fact, China is ranked near the bottom (177) of 180 countries listed on the World Press Freedom Index. This non-governmental organization believes in media freedom, and that it is a basic human right to be informed and to inform others. UNESCO discusses key ethical questions as well as media legislation and regulation in various countries and regions and notes that state interference should be kept to a minimum. Perhaps, then, journalism based in these values is an ideal that journalists and instructors can aspire too. At the same time they must make sure they and their students are aware of the laws and customs of the country where they are teaching to be safe or retain their visa, particularly if they are foreigners. But they may be able to push the boundaries if they know how.

This paper proposes several key subjects that could be included in a journalism curriculum, as well as added to a journalism ethics class. The curriculum suggests topics and lessons to help students cultivate a global mindset students while also providing opportunities for them to interact experientially with others outside their cultural and social groups. This approach involves having students study about diverse journalism as well as practice it. It also reflects some of the principles identified by the World Journalism Education Congress in 2007 as standards for journalism education.
Macro-Level – Knowledge of Global Media Systems, Ethics and Constraints

1. Overview of media systems in different regions of the world. These would include Western Liberal Democratic systems; media systems in Africa; Latin America, Europe, Asia, with China as a dominant force, Middle East, and Australia/New Zealand and the Pacific. Special attention could be paid to the colonial export of Western-style systems and how they’ve been adapted to local cultures and legal frameworks.

Also included would be a discussion of government-controlled media systems, propaganda and the role of media in different societies; plus case studies, such as those provided by WJEC and other studies. UNESCO provides resources on media ethics in different countries as well as the role of media legislation and regulation, even to the extent of self-regulation, on its website: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/freedom-of-expression/professional-journalistic-standards-and-code-of-ethics/.

EthicNet (2008), led by Professors Kaarle Nordenstreng and Ari Heinonen also provides codes of ethics from European countries, and African, Latin American and ASEAN countries also participated in creating a list of standards: International Principles of Professional Ethics. These 10 principles created international common ground and at the time were “a source of inspiration for national and regional codes of ethics” (Ethicnet 2008). It is left up to individual professional organizations to decide how to apply the principles “through ways and means most adequate to its members.” Principle VIII covers respect for universal values and diversity of cultures. The website also provides a code of conduct for journalists.

In the WJEC Principles of Journalism Education, journalism is a global endeavor (see No. 10); journalism students should learn that despite political and cultural differences, they share important values and professional goals with peers in other nations. Where practical, journalism education provides students with first-hand experience journalism practice in other nations. (WJEC, 2007).

2. Global experience and language requirement: Students should learn a foreign language; go on study abroad or get reporting experience abroad. Students who have studied abroad and learned another language are more likely to more culturally sensitive and competent. Their experience will be enhanced with study of the politics and society of a country, including its media system. Is it government-controlled or commercially controlled, or a hybrid? How does the system affect the production and dissemination of information?

As an example, a study of about 274 journalism programs in China claims that China alone has evidence that journalism courses include compulsory study of a major global foreign language specifically for journalists (in this case, English). The study suggests that this makes their students more “globally mobile.” (Cokley, Wen, Liu & Xie, 2018).

3. Students review and report on Codes of Ethics or Codes of Conduct that are produced in a variety of countries. According to Adrian White, director of the Ethical Journalism Network on the Accountable Journalism website, all codes have five core values or principles in common that make journalism different and distinct from other forms of communication:
• Accuracy, instead of “truth,” which can lead to a discussion on what’s true and what isn’t. No deceptive handling of the facts; fact-based information.

• Independence. The work that you do is your own work but not on behalf of anyone else. Not as a spokesman for the government, business, or special interest group. Transparency.

• Impartiality. Reporters recognize that there is more than one side to a story, and need to find and listen to those other opinions to make the story whole. Finding credible sources to report these other sides may require additional time and effort, particularly if journalists have to go outside of their comfort zones. This is where associations, such as NAJA, can help in finding credible sources to interview.

• Humanity. As journalist you are expected to show humanity. Aware of the consequences of what you publish and broadcast. Aware that sometimes the words you use and the pictures you show can do damage and be harmful to people. It’s not our job to do undue harm; it’s our job to protect people; it’s important that we don’t indulge in hate speech; show obscene images or unnecessarily explicit images of violence. We are part of a humanitarian process.

• Accountability. We are not a humble group. But we need to admit our mistakes. We have to engage with the audience and be prepared to provide remedies when we get it wrong and do damage.

Some ethics codes from around the world can be found at a Columbia University website, albeit somewhat dated: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/journalism/j6075/edit/codes.html

Under the auspices of UNESCO, journalists have expressed support for UNESCO Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to strengthening Peace and International Understanding, including the promotion of human rights and fighting racism. As such, they have developed 10 principles on these rights – to be informed accurately and truthfully, act responsibly, respect for universal values and diversity of cultures and so on. All of these principles are based in a set of values that are founded on basic human rights. The question becomes how to apply and operationalize these values in terms of specific teaching lessons. We can begin by examining specific countries’ codes to see them in practice, which is one of the suggestions offered later in this paper for a new curriculum. Codes of ethics can be found on the Accountable Journalism website, which monitors journalism around the globe. Some codes of ethics and codes of conduct are particularly focused on the portrayal of aboriginal people and their rights, such as in Australia and New Zealand. For example see the New Zealand Media Council and in Australia the Australian Television Industry Code of Practice.

Micro-Level: Application

1. Develop cosmopolitanism through intercultural immersion experiences, either in their own country or abroad. (Larson, 2018). Immersion reporting involves short-term reporting projects on a topic involving race, class and/or gender. Jan Larson (U. Wisconsin Eau-Claire) created such a course with a 10-week project during a 15-week courses that immersed students in the events of
the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s. The students first studied history of the Civil Rights Movement, then went on a Civil Rights Pilgrimage. They went to museums, historical sites and talked to foot soldiers involved in the movement, telling the story of the movement, the communities and people along the trail. Grant funding helped make this possible.

Other immersion experiences could involve collaborations with immigrant and Native communities to tell their stories. Students in the class with ties to particular communities would be a great resource for the project. It’s particularly important that students get out of existing monocultures in their journalism schools and newsrooms and into a broader, more diverse community – immigrants and indigenous people.

2. Creating a Resource and Style Guide to use in covering a particular non-dominant communities, such as indigenous people, immigrants or other minorities in their area. What are the top 10 questions you would ask to learn about that community? What are the stereotypes they’ve seen in media coverage? Is their language being used correctly by media? How do they report on themselves? What are their values and practices, and what can we learn from them to be better storytellers? Are they telling their own stories? For example, this author is working with Hawaiians to create a Hawaiian Journalism Resource and Style Guide that includes Hawaiian values, language and culture (Auman, 2019).

3. Study resource websites produced by a variety of associations of U.S. minority groups. These resources explain the issues in media practice and coverage of different groups in America.

- Asian American Journalists Association
- National Association of Black Journalists
- Native American Journalists Association (najanewsroom.com)
- Maynard Institute - Promotes diversity in the news media through improved coverage, hiring, business practices and training programs that equip journalists with leadership, multimedia skills and subject expertise for news organizations across platforms.
- National Association of Hispanic Journalists
- South Asian Journalists Association
- National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association

Always look at different perspectives and put yourself in both the mind and the place of the person witnessing the events and creating the content you are looking at. How do you balance “do no harm” with “seek the truth and report it?” Are you more likely to protect the victim in your society or the opposite — tell the story for the greater good, even though the victim may be harmed?
4. **Global Integrated Ethics:** Even though digital media are global in reach, some are blocked by their governments. What do students need to know when reporting for a global audience? If we pay too much attention to differences, we may be paralyzed. So what do we all have in common? Is there a way to create global ethics?

Ward suggests different ways to think about what he calls the Ward Code for Global Integrated Ethics (2015, p. 223). In the pre-digital era, the focus was on objective reporting and promoting democratic values. But the digital era has created new forms of non-objective viewpoint and advocacy journalism. He wonders which ones promote democratic values (Ward, 2015, p. 174-175). What about viewpoint journalism that is racist or intolerant of differences? He suggests that integrative ethics needs to articulate aims and values as well as provide criteria for judging digital-era journalism (p. 175). Then he takes it a step further and articulates aims of journalism that go beyond politics — that focus on helping humanity flourish and building global democratic structures (p. 197).

All humans share the need for accurate, timely, fact-based information, but not all live in countries where that is available. People need to know that the information they are getting is credible. But what makes information credible? The answer lies in the quality of sources in the story, whether the journalists follow an ethics code or code of conduct and are independent, impartial and accountable for their work. News organizations that are government-controlled need to be transparent about that.

5. **Culture and language.** Be sensitive to cultural differences, which can vary dramatically and affect how you do your reporting, particularly if you are working in multiple languages. In some countries, such as Japan, hierarchical differences are important and affect how people communicate with one another. For example, in Japan you use different forms of a verb depending on the level of person you are talking to. Some countries have gender issues too, and women may not be able to enter some places or have contact with certain people. In another country, you might not make eye contact with a superior. Also, you may be offered a gift or food, and it would be rude not to take it, which might cost you an interview. Sometimes it may take hours or days to gain trust in order to line up an interview. It’s an attitude about time.

Focus on what your audience has in common. Reporters writing in English likely share values common in English-speaking countries. Use words that are internationally understood. Slang terms might not be; or words peculiar to a specific region. If you use local dialect or native languages (e.g. Hawaiian), explain them.

But remember that your language might also be translated into another language. Some websites provide tips on writing for translation (Globalme, 2018).

6. **Students should see themselves as global citizens, but also need to develop cultural competency in their own diverse communities.** However, first they need to know who they are and what they bring to a story. Students first examine their own identity.

a. The best way to understand others is to first understand yourself. Make a list of what you value and where that came from (parents, family, institutions, culture, language). What’s your ancestry?
In Hawai‘i where whites are a minority, many people have interesting ancestries, such as Hawaiian, Portuguese, Chinese and Filipino (and more).

b. Write a profile about yourself. Where did you grow up? What languages do you speak? What were the greatest influences on your life? What is important to you? (What’s permanent?) What feeds you? What makes you tick? Things that shape who you are: Generation, gender, geography (small town; city; country), education, socio-economic level, personal background/culture, race and ethnicity/ancestry. Have another student interview you and write a profile about you. Compare.

c. Physical appearance: What do you look like? How do others see you? In Hawai‘i a person could be blonde and blue-eyed but have significant Hawaiian ancestry – e.g. a grandparent who is Hawaiian.

7. **Develop cultural competency.** The Society of Professional Journalists code suggests that we examine our own cultural values and avoid imposing these values on others; also avoid stereotyping. But how do you do this? One example that we can learn from is Hawai‘i: **Hawai‘i example of developing cultural competency:**

In this example, student journalists in Hawai‘i would study and experience Hawaiian history, cultural values and practices, then do stories that reflect these. There are five categories:

a. Study Hawaiian history.

Hawai‘i has experienced a cultural renaissance since the 1970s, and particularly with language revitalization in schools that began in the 1980s, resulting in new scholarship and knowledge. A new generation is now fluent in Hawaiian and able to read and translate Hawaiian newspapers from the 1800s, as well documents, letters and other texts written before the suppression of Hawaiian language and culture. This occurred after the overthrow of the constitutional government and queen of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i in 1893.

b. Learn about Hawaiian values and perspectives.

Practicing Hawaiian values such as humility (ha‘aha‘a), hospitality (ho‘okipa), caring for Hawai‘i and the land (malama ‘aina) and aloha as well as cultural practices could help transform journalism in Hawai‘i. These and other indigenous values could be inform journalism ethics and the practice of journalism in other communities as well. Hawaiian students, particularly those who speak at least some Hawaiian, have an advantage because culture is embedded in language, and they may intuitively have these cultural attributes already. In addition, traditional Hawaiians live in a collective where the individual doesn’t exist. When the collective succeeds, the individual succeeds. Hawaiian journalists infused with their culture would know how to gain the trust of sources and have access because of their Hawaiian genealogy and cultural knowledge.

Journalism students can first learn to be humble (ha‘aha‘a) about what they don’t know and ask the source whether there’s anything they should have asked. They could also participate in cultural activities, such as working in a traditional Hawaiian fish pond or lo‘i (taro patch), to soak in these
values such as malama ʻaina (sustainable care for Hawaiʻi and the land) and learn the language. In a land dispute over water rights or cultural sites, they could also take time to talk to different people to understand all the perspectives and not simply frame the story stereotypically in terms of native-vs-non-native, because the issue is often more complex than that, with native and non-native on many different sides of an issue.

c. Seek credible sources. Reach out into the Hawaiian community.

As for sources, not everyone living in Hawaiʻi is Hawaiian; only those of Hawaiian ancestry. The Associated Press Style Book and the Mirriam-Webster dictionary have been updated to reflect that, thanks to the efforts of several Hawaiians to ensure accuracy. President Obama, for example, was born in Hawaiʻi, but he’s not Hawaiian. So students who are not Hawaiian should first check with kupuna (elders) or well-known Hawaiians for credible sources on an issue. The Native American Journalists Association’s website, najanewsroom.com, offers excellent resources and reporting guides, including how to find a credible source.

d. Avoid stereotypes Students would also learn to avoid stereotypes of Hawaiians as being homeless, poor and involved in crime. Hawaiʻi is also often portrayed through the lens of tourism as a laid-back paradise with hula girls, palm trees and mai tais. But the reality for those who call Hawaiʻi home is the highest cost of living in the nationa and a daily struggle with the crush of tourists invading their communities, beaches and sacred places. Examples of stereotypes to avoid would be provided.

e. Correct language use.

Hawaiians are deeply concerned about correct and accurate use of Hawaiian language. Cultural competence and being accurate also require that all journalists use Hawaiian language correctly, including pronunciation and use of diacritical marks. For example, the popular diced raw fish, poke, is pronounced po-kei, not poki, which is commonly heard more and more as the food becomes more popular. An elder, grandparent or ancestor is a kupuna, not kapuna (Hawaiian Word of the Day, 2018), and kūpuna is the plural form. The town of Hilo on Hawaiʻi Island is pronounced Hee-low, not High-low, as one CNN anchor said in 2018 during the eruption of Kilauea volcano near Hilo.

**Conclusion**

The suggestions in this paper can be incorporated into a class or offered as an independent class. Journalism programs could develop new strategies that incorporate steps to cultivate in students a global mindset through study abroad programs, international reporting experiences or provide an immersive program or class about an issue or a specific minority community. For example, Developing global awareness among students is a task that is complex and specific to each situation and community. Yet we need to acknowledge its importance and take steps toward that future.
About the Author

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References


Journalism and Media Education During Civil Wars in the Middle East: The Cases of Syria, Libya and Yemen

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Abstract

Arab countries’ media landscape and structure of journalism and media teaching has changed irrevocably in the aftermath of civil war that Arab countries including Syria, Libya and Yemen have witnessed. Since 2011 these countries have experienced political, economic and social instability yielding divisions and turmoil among different opposition groups. Partisanship has taken its toll on journalism and media education in the countries of question. This paper briefly outlines how journalism and media education in these countries has transformed to reflect more interaction with the media, the different political groups, and the broader society over the last decade. The authors first examine these countries’ journalism and media landscape, as well as past and present ideological underpinnings of both the news media systems and journalism education programs. It then discusses the current challenges of journalism education programs within political systems still in the making, and that are coupled with uneasy relationships between governments and the media profession. The paper will attempt to highlight both the strengths and shortcomings of journalism education in these countries today. It will also look into new telecommunication developments to explore how innovations can be adopted to improve journalism education in these countries post war era.

Keywords: Arab, Media Education, Journalism Education, Civil War, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Secondary Research, Media Landscape, Partisanship, Telecommunication, Innovation

Introduction

It has always been debated whether journalism as a profession typically seeks professionals with solid journalism educational background; or if practitioners who come from different disciplines (economics, politics, social studies…etc.) make better and more knowledgeable journalists. Yet, it can still be said that formal education on the university level, in addition to specialized training centers do play vital roles in providing journalists with tools and skills needed every day on the job. This is especially true when it comes to dealing with evolving technologies, platforms and new media, and how they are harnessed for news-gathering and packaging news pieces (Ziani, Elareshi, Alrashid, & Al-Jaber, 2018).
Having said that, and despite formal education’s attempts in preparing journalists for the real world, there still exists a tremendous gap between academia and the journalism industry – and this can easily be said for many countries around the world. The problem being mainly that the journalism education offered to students provides utopic and idealistic principles based on theories and codes of ethics or best practice that may generally not be rigorously implemented within the news platform. In fact, upon graduation, students stumble into new editorial guidelines and policies enforced by each outlet and that are not necessarily unified everywhere. One way to address this challenge and narrow this gap is perhaps through regular upgrading of academic programs to align with what is needed on the job. What educational programs should be doing is emphasize performance characteristics such as adequate writing skills, well-rounded knowledge, an inquisitive personality, and a strong work ethic. Furthermore, academic curricula must evolve all the time with the mutating industry landscape (Allam & Amin, 2017).

**Statement of the Problem**

It seems that most studies in mass communication focus on media performance during times of war or in times of conflict, but never pay close attention to journalism and media education during these times. The paper addresses the importance of examining media education programs and analyze the impact of the outcomes of journalism and media programs in three Middle Eastern states that are witnessing civil wars, polarization of different groups of the population in relation to the conflicted political ideologies, as well as control of the different geographical zones of each country. It will attempt to analyze how journalism and media education is affected partially and/or entirely by these divisions or conflicts.

**Journalism and War**

Scholars and social studies researchers have always been intrigued by how war is covered and packaged to be presented to the world. Audiences often switch between different outlets in search for the voice that supports their side, as well as what the ‘other’ is saying. The question of objectivity becomes key, and issues of bias and ethical coverage always withstand. In fact, over the past decades, new forms of journalism have emerged in light of the many wars and conflicts around the globe. Where there was once ‘war journalism,’ there is now ‘peace journalism,’ ‘responsible journalism,’ and ‘constructive journalism’ among others. In his paper on *Peace Journalism*, Galtung (2013) differentiates between two ways of witnessing war or conflict; the high road and the low road. The low road, prevailing in the media, often views conflict as a sport, typically involving two parties. “The reporting model is that of a military command: who advances, who capitulates short of their goals; counting the losses in terms of numbers killed, wounded, and material damage. The zero-sum perspective draws upon sports reporting where “winning is not everything, it is the only thing” (Galtung, 2013). The same notion even applies to war negotiations framed as verbal battles with a party that outsmarts the opponent. It can be said that sports or court journalism serve as models for war journalism. The high road on the other hand, represents peace journalism that emphasizes conflict transformation, or how conflicts become a challenge to the world to address. Since people and countries stand in each other’s way – creating conflict-, eminent risk of violence becomes clear. However, in conflict, opportunities arise for human development, using conflict to be resilient, creative and innovative in ways that allow these opportunities to take the upper hand – which is what peace journalism entails covering (Galtung, 2003).
Journalism Education in the Arab World

Journalism in the Arab region is definitely not a new discipline, but rather one that has had origins in ancient Egyptian and Arab manuscripts. The evolution of journalism in the past three decades has transformed how some Arab countries view and deal with news and journalism. Arab journalists have over the years learned their practices and skills on the go upon completing secondary- or high school education. It was with the recent technological advancements that led to a more structured university education for aspiring Arab journalists. In 1939, the Egyptian Higher Press Institute was considered the first institution to offer mass-communication courses, later to be rebranded as the Editing, Translating and Press Institute in the Faculty of Arts at Cairo University. Starting 1954, this Institute developed into a more academic unit that offered bachelors, masters and post-doctoral degrees in communication and journalism. In 1969, this unit further evolved into the Independent Media Institute and by 1974, it became the first Faculty (School) in the Middle East (Abd El Rahman, 1988) to teach and offer degrees to professionals. According to Reynolds (2013), the political idiosyncrasies of Arab countries have made it difficult a “culture of journalistic professionalism that is faithful to one liberal model” to develop. One reason he presents is that almost all Arab countries witnessed some form of colonization be it from by the Ottomans in the 16th century, to more modern occupations like the United States, Britain, France and Italy. Even after Arab countries have gained their independence, they still implement colonists’ agendas, laws and regulations (Allam & Amin, 2017).

Furthermore, when it comes to Arab media systems, it can be said that Arab governments place a heavy influence on news and information, and Arab journalists are aware of such restrictions so they engage in self-censorship practices. Despite views of some that Arab journalists exhibit a lower level of professionalism because of that, they are not less educated or trained than their Western counterparts. According to Ziani, Elareshi, Alrashid and Al-Jaber (2018), many Arab journalists are more likely to have received their professional qualification (university or college degree) from Cairo. In fact, journalism as an occupation in Arab counties, does not mandate a high education degree, formal certification or prior training. Anyone can become a journalist as long as they abide by the platform’s editorial guidelines (Ziani, Elareshi, Alrashid, & Al-Jaber, 2018).

Not only has journalism become a graduate occupation, but there is also a significant upsurge in the number of university journalism courses and degrees (Frith & Meech, 2007). According to Tweissi (2015), there are approximately 135 university media or journalism programs in the Arab World, most of which were established over the last two or three decades. 19 programs are taught in Egypt, and seven are taught at Jordan. The main challenges facing this field are that academic programs often fall short of practical application and focus more on theories (Tweissi, 2015). Moreover, most of the university programs are argued not to keep up industry developments. For example, most Arab journalism programs on the university level do not offer digital media, media management or new technologies, yet. This is partially because many Arab countries do not have the means of resources to get their programs accredited. The journalism program at Qatar University, for instance, is one exception that is recognized by many Western universities. These challenges and more result in a poor quality of journalism graduates who later suffer in the real world. It is argued that many Arab universities do not adequately prepare their graduates for the realities of the journalism industry after graduation. To overcome some of these difficulties, some Arab higher-education systems send qualified graduates to study journalism abroad to acquire better professional skills.
Egypt – it can be argued that journalism programs in Egypt are among the most lucrative in the region. Public and private universities combined provide more than 30 academic journalism and mass communication programs. The programs differ in how theories and practice are taught, as well as what educational tools are used. The Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education runs four academic programs, and some of the country’s major newspapers have in-house training centers, such as the Al Ahram Regional Press Institute, for example. Other training centers are governmental and offer training through the Higher Press Council, the Press Syndicate, and the Middle East News Agency, the state’s national news agency. The National Media Authority (formerly Egyptian Radio and Television Union) also hosts an additional training center. The effectiveness of these programs, however, in yielding sufficient quality journalists is debatable (Allam & Amin, 2017).

**Journalism Education and War Zones**

• **The Situation in Yemen**

The war in Yemen began in 2014 in Sa‘ada and started off as a conflict between government army and Zaidi militia, led by Hussein al-Huthi. In September, 2014 Hussein al-Huthi was killed by the Yemeni government forces, and the conflict was later led by his father, Imam Badr Addin al-Huthi (Imam Badr al- Huthi has been the Imam of Yemen’s Zaidi sect since 1972 after receiving consensus or bay’a to assume this post. Violence in Yemen’s city of Sa‘ada has taken the lives of thousands of Yemenis, and the war has seen some periods of intense fighting since 2014 that were followed by breakable ceasefires.

The brutal war in Yemen has devastated the country since early 2015. Twenty-one million people (around 75% of the total population) require humanitarian aid, with 7.3 million being extremely short of food, and 3.3 million are displaced inside the country. Yemen’s health-care system has almost collapsed with around half of health facilities being only partially functioning or destroyed completely, leading to a rise in epidemics, diseases and famines. The situation is made worse by airport closures, fuel and other resource shortages such as drinking water and medication, government employees have not been paid their salaries for 15 months since September 2016. Sewage pipes and drainage systems are blocked and piled rubbish worsen the health situation in the streets (Al-Mekhlafi, 2018).

In March 2015, the Houthis seized the capital of Sana’a and moved south toward the Gulf of Aden; an air strike led by the Saudis was launched to reinstate Yemen’s government that is internationally recognized. These complications and more have disrupted peaceful political transitions, and resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe. Currently, analysts worry that rising foreign intervention can result in sectarian conflict – civil war – similar to the fighting in Syria and Iraq. In fact, experts question if Yemen can ever become a sustainable, unified state (Laub, 2016).

• **The Situation in Libya**

Libya is one of the largest countries in Africa sized 1.77 million sq. km with a small population of 6.4 million people. The country is oil rich, and withstood a 42-year dictatorship by Colonel Muammar Gadhafi who was captured and killed in 2011. Since the civil war that erupted in 2014, the power in Libya has been divided among three main players; the National Army headed by
General Khalifa Hafta who controls Eastern Libya; the House of Representatives HoR, also known as Tubrk Government; and Islamic group that found the Libyan conflict as an opportunity and moved to control of some coastal cites of the Mediterranean like Sirte (Libya Country Profile, 2019).

Before the civil war, the main media function in Libya was to serve Gadhafi’s regime, and all were nationalised when he came to power. He did not allow private media to exist and stated in his Green Book that the press is a means of expression for the Libyan society. The situation remained static until 2004 when his son, Saif Al-Islam took some role as the country’s liberal player who did not object to the introduction of the Internet and the development of satellite channels (Musa, 2019). Since the uprising in 2011, Libyan media became diverse in terms of audience and content. However, the Libyan print media got limited distribution due to the fact of the civil war and restricted accessibility to conflict areas. New and old newspapers represent the three different groups who exist in Libya today. Private and independent newspapers started to appear, however, journalists are still targeted by different underground militant groups. There are dozens of radio and satellite television networks owned by the state that serve the Libyan population. However, some play a role in the polarization between the different groups and parts of the country. Among the state television stations is Al Watanaya established in 2012. On the other hand, a number of pro-Islamist and pro-revolutionary groups in Western areas of Libya support Al-Nabaa TV, a television station that was established in 2013 and is allegedly owned by Jihadist Libya Fighting Group. Another popular television channel is Libya Al Hadath founded in 2016, by Marshal Haftar (Musa, 2019). Journalism and media education also affected not only by the civil war but also by the fragmented society that is polarized between the three current power players (Musa, 2019).

Although there are twelve major public universities with Media departments or schools of Mass Communication in Libya but the number is considered reasonable taking into account the small population of the country. Among the top journalism programs founded in Libya are the ones offered by University of Benghazi, Tripoli University, the University of Zawia, Azzaytuna University, and the Omar Mukhtar University in Bayda. There are also smaller private programs, but all these offerings suffer from lack of facilities and trained faculty. Furthermore, the curricula that were introduced during Gadhafi’s era still exist until now in most schools (Musa, 2019). The curricula are old and do not serve the fast and innovative changes in the media landscape, with particular reference to digital media (Musa, 2019).

• **The Situation in Syria**

The Syrian Arab Republic is a country located in the Western Continent of Asia, with borders with Lebanon to the southwest, the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south, and Palestine to the southwest. Syria has a population of 21.1million (2019) with diverse ethnic and religious groups, but Syrian Arabs are the biggest part of the population and the Sunnis make up the largest religious group (Syria Country Profile, 2019). In 2011, an uprising resulted from high unemployment, need for political freedom, and complaints about corruption against the political system resulted in a full-scaled civil war with more than 360,000 people dead, 200 media people killed, millions of displaced people from war territories, and destruction of many cities. The war in Syria is entering its ninth year and until now, there is no light at the end of the tunnel.
Although there have been many efforts by international organizations to stop the violence that was defined by the UN as the worse since World War II, the Syrian situation remains the same. This makes research regarding changes in journalism and media education very difficult with reference to data gathering, conducting interviews, and examining journalism performance. Another problem is that Syria is not looked at at least for the time of this research as one state and/or one media system. In fact, Syria is divided into three different political/media areas or zones where each zone is different than the other either partially or generally. The first zone is government controlled; the second is the opposition possessed territories; and the third is the Kurdish majority areas (Price, Gohdes & Ball, 2015).

The three journalism and media education programs in these areas differ in nature; the government system is completely authoritarian and media channels are considered extended propaganda arms of the government, journalism education in public universities remain to serve this fact. In government-controlled zones, the Syrian media are mostly directed by pro-government news agents, a system that enables the Syrian government to be up with events and never remain behind. Today, there are three state-run political daily newspapers (Al-Thawra, Tishrin and al-Baath,) and two private daily newspapers (Al-Watan and Baladna). Headlines of all newspapers usually come from SANA, the Syrian News Agency (Trombetta & Pinto, 2019).

However, another form of propaganda was documented; Islamic propaganda. There is a distinction between journalism and media education between propaganda and Islamic propaganda; the latter was found in areas that were under the Islamic State’s (IS) control where all media messages promote Islamic propaganda and are driven from Islamic Jihad principles that aim at recruiting young people in its forces. IS relies heavily on the media - and calls it "media jihad" – much like the rest of the various types of "jihad," and intensify their campaigns, that have surpassed those of "Al Qaeda" or other "jihadist" organizations. From ISIS’s news agencies, the most important is the A’maq News Agency. Others include Moata, the provinces’ News Network (WNN) and Al-Qarar (Amin, 2018). As for institutions for the production and distribution of propaganda material, the most important would be al-Hayat, the production wing of the Central Media Department. The most popular of ISIS-affiliated websites is Akhbar al-Muslimin. Another is al-Sawarim. The main internet magazines for ISIS is the weekly al-Nabā’, and a less important one is al-Anfāl. ISIS’s main internet radio station is Radio al-Bayan. In addition, there are media platforms, some of them important, which discontinued their operations; these include the Haqq website; the monthly magazine, Rumiyah; the magazine Dabi;, the al-I’tisam Media Foundation, and the al-Ansar site. Some of these platforms will return to operations since ISIS’s media network was forced to reduce and later completely end its presence on popular social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. That was mainly the result of actions taken against them. As a result, ISIS and its supporters often use the encrypted Telegram application which enables groups of ISIS operatives to communicate anonymously. That provides a certain solution for communication with ISIS operatives and provinces around the globe, but at the price of the difficulty of disseminating propaganda to a larger audience and spreading its messages through general discussions on social networks.

The messages produced by ISIS’s media network indicate that even after the fall of the Islamic State, ISIS remains, in its own eyes and those of its provinces, a global jihadist organization whose activity is not limited to Iraq and Syria (Amin, 2018).
In zones where Kurdish people are the majority, it was documented that division arose between the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party, PYD, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). This division was reflected in pressuring journalists. Kurdish language was banned until 2011, so as the practice and or expression of Kurdish cultural identity, but there is a boom of independent media where Kurdish issues are slowly introduced.

Journalism education is limited and suffering in all three zones in Syria; limited in human resources, capital investment, academic freedom, and suffering from lack of job opportunities and career development.

Challenges and Opportunities

It can be argued that with the vast loss of jobs, decline in readability of print media, lack of IT and trained human resources, the field of journalism is in crisis. This transcends down to journalism education that also becomes in a state of crisis for these reasons and more. Jobs at legacy newspapers and television are shrink, and salaries are not competitive. The evolution to digital and new multimedia, while creates new roles and job descriptions for journalists, has resulted in a severe decline in full-time employment in the field with the rise of freelance and non-contracted journalists or one-man crews (Zachary, 2014).

Scholars argue that ‘good’ journalism practice mainly relies on expertise gained on the ground, from deep engagement with other disciplines, and multidisciplinary skills. As some journalism schools attempt to add digital tools to the curricula to meet needs of the market, it is still the case that the type of daily journalism consumed by the wider audience is often created by experts with direct mass reach through “TED talks, blogs, articles, and tweets,” among other platforms (Zachary, 2014).

On the other hand of the spectrum, other scholars argue that through incorporating new and digital tools into university classrooms and labs, this can result in setting up students for failure since "[j]ournalism schools have tended to orient themselves too much toward the profession and too little toward the university" (Zachary, 2014). One argument in support of this view can be said that the tools students learn how to use today will not remain updated for long. However, requiring university students to learn about subjects such as physics, political science, economics, or computing would yield a journalism education that is more intellectual, and would promote how to recognize the value of "knowledge of how to use knowledge," argues Thomas E. Patterson in his 2013 book, Informing the News: The Need for Knowledge-Based Journalism (Zachary, 2014).

In ideal situations, the media serve vital roles in any democratic society; they inform, act as watchdogs, set the agenda, and offer a platform for opinion expression. Moreover, they facilitate building communities by helping people find common causes, and engage in solving societal problems (Owen, 2018).

New media can disseminate information directly to audiences without minimal or any intervention by editorial or political gatekeepers, or fact-checking mechanisms, thus, introducing levels of instability and unpredictability into the communication process (Owen, 2018). Moreover, new media are more affordable allowing content to spread without borders. This is why individuals who lack prior journalism education or proper training can still reach audiences at lightning fast speed (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017).
In the past years, journalism schools or newsrooms never prepared fledgling journalists, reporters or photographers on how to understand and deal with war trauma, how to comprehend its effects on both victims and survivors, and how to deal judiciously with trauma especially when reporting on a breaking story. This obvious gap in training has lately come to the forefront of discussions about the industry given several factors such as 24/7 news operations that place reporters live in situations that are often gruesome. Journalism educators and former reporters, William Coté and Roger Simpson, emphasized the consequences of an absence of proper trauma training for reporters and journalists, and showed how it negatively impacts the profession (Simpson and Cote, 2006).

Conclusion

The three countries mentioned in this paper extremely suffer from either lack of proper journalism and media education programs or poor programs that need to be completely revamped. Civil war situations in the three countries complicated the development of journalism and media education programs since at least a minimum of three groups control territories in each country. These groups would like to develop media enterprises supported by well-educated and well-trained media personnel that favor their group. Today, with the increased prominence of multi-platform journalism skills, and multi-disciplinary programs that educate students on print, broadcast, multimedia and social media platforms. Needless to say, this increased emphasis on new telecommunication and media technologies requires resources for equipment, software, and facilities, in addition to qualified and trained human resources as teaching faculty and staff. There is a lot down the road for the development of journalism and media education in Yemen, Libya, and Syria. However, with online education, blended education, dual degrees, and International Branch Campuses in the field of media and communication, these new forms of education can serve as a bridge for these countries to overcome the constraints and challenges that they face and find new models to develop their journalism and media education programs.

Since analysis of media reporting showed that in countless conflicts media coverage had significant influence on the course of events, often fanning the flames, it is important to introduce and equip journalism students with new forms of journalism, such as peace journalism, while maintaining core functions of journalism.

Journalists are responsible for the way, for how they report; and even the creation of "opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent responses to conflict," as called for by Lynch & McGoldrick (as quoted in McGoldrick 2006, p. 4), is not an external goal imposed on journalism from outside. The obligation to create these opportunities results directly from the role assigned to journalism in democratic societies. Of course professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict. They seek to present accurate and impartial news coverage. But it is often through good reporting that conflict is reduced (Howard, 2003), and what is demanded is no more than responsible journalism. Without responsibility, good journalism is inconceivable.

Teaching peace journalism becomes crucial in a time where conflict escalates at different levels and this resonates with Hussain (2019) who found that introducing a critical pragmatic approach to peace journalism is better suited to address queries because it accommodates the retention of peace as a value and at the same is pragmatic and hence honors the requirements of journalistic
profession. Hlabangane (2018) found that Peace journalism has a role in limiting sensationalized coverage and polarization of views during time of war and conflict.

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References


ONE JOURNALISM OR MANY JOURNALISMS?
CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH MULTIPLE CONCEPTIONS AND WAYS OF WORK
Multiliteracies: A Practical Theory for Journalism Educators

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Abstract

This paper puts forward multiliteracies as a versatile and theoretically sound framework for journalism educators. Multiliteracies was developed as a response to the failure of traditional literacy pedagogies to recognise the cultural and linguistic diversity of learners and the emergence of multimodal literacies. Like literacy, journalism is a socially mediated practice which takes place in environments where economic interests, political ideologies, social values and norms, influence how it is carried out; education and training are variables which are mobilised in times of need, such as meeting the demands of new technologies. The pedagogy of multiliteracies directly addresses the key challenges facing journalism educators in a disruptive age: the multimodality of modern media, the importance of critical framing, and the need for inclusive journalism education. Multiliteracy pedagogy is based on four key elements: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed action or practice. Separately each element represents a different educational orientations to curriculum: transactional, transmissive, transformative. Linked together they represent a coherent and critical educational framework organising the three interrelated message systems of an educational knowledge code: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Situated practice recognises the need to provide opportunities for learners to experience the new from the perspective of the known. Overt instruction involves identifying and conceptualising knowledge gaps by naming and theorising, and, where necessary, adopting strategies that will close the knowledge gaps through formal instruction or the support of a more capable others either human or electronic. Critical Framing interprets the social context and new learning by analysing it critically and functionally with reference to learner’s life world. Together these elements link the learner’s existing knowledge and experience to the new and unfamiliar to produce transformed practice or action which is demonstrated by learners’ ability to apply new knowledge and understandings appropriately and creatively. The multiliteracies approach can be used both as a guide to identify activities which support the development of journalism expertise in a variety of contexts, and, as an evaluative tool to classify those activities in educational terms.

Introduction

New forms of media production, and the work practices they demand, have challenged our understanding of what journalism is (Nash, 2016); what a journalist does (S. Young & Carson, 2016); and, the way that they do it (Spyridou & Veglis, 2016). Although the author recognises that it is important to acknowledge the economic, political and social impact of digital information and communication technologies, globalisation and media convergence on news production and industries, and also journalists as workers, these thing are discussed extensively elsewhere (Deuze & Steward, 2011; McKercher & Mosco, 2007; Mosco, 2008; O'Donnell, Zion, & Sherwood, 2016; Pavlik, 2000). This paper focuses instead on multiliteracies, an approach to learning developed by language and literacy educators, as a useful theoretical framework to help journalism educators navigate a field that is neither stable nor predictable.
Before discussing multiliteracies in greater detail it is worthwhile to briefly consider this field. Journalism is a socially mediated practice which is shaped by its social environment (Hanitzsch et al., 2011), in other words its field. A field is “the totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent” (Lewin, 1951, p. 240) that is, all the immediate experiences, activities, and contacts that make up the world of an individual or corporate life. An individual or organisation’s position in any given field is always relative to others operating in the same field (Burnes & Cooke, 2013). Kurt Lewin’s field theory is perhaps less well known than Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas of habitus and cultural reproduction but has the same basic premise: to provide a conceptual framework for analysing patterns of interaction between individuals and their environments.

Journalism is a complex institutional; economic interests, political ideologies, social values and norms all influence how it is carried out. This can be expressed diagrammatically:

![Figure 1 Tippett’s organisational model](image)

The axial and diagonal lines indicate the connections between specific elements; all elements are present at any given time but their dominance varies in relation to the dominance of other factors in the field which act as driving or restraining forces. For example when technology is the driving force of an organisation this affects the organisation’s management systems (structure) and deployment of resources (people). Education and training are mobilised in times of need, such as to meet the demands of new technologies.

Journalism education is also a complex institutional field affected by economic interests, political ideologies, social values and norms. Journalism programmes often compete for resources in their academic organisations at the same time as they attempt to satisfy student and industry demands and expectations (Powers & Incollingo, 2016). While academics discuss the changing nature of journalism education, journalism educators are still required to prepare aspiring journalists and practitioners for challenging and constantly changing work environments. Journalism educators have been aware of the need to adapt to the changing media world since the early 1990s (Quinn,

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1. This model was developed by Professor Helen Tippett, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, School of Architecture (1979-1999) to illustrate organisational dynamics. It represents a post Taylorism understanding of organisations incorporating the ideas of Rensis Likert (management systems/structure) Joan Woodward (technology) Mary Parker-Follett (people) within a social field.
and have responded by exploring different ways to teach journalism, however to do their work effectively, journalism educators need to be supported by sound educational theory. Journalism itself is very well theorised, indeed it could be said that journalism scholars have been theorising journalism since its inception, frequently drawing on other disciplines such as history, sociology and political economics, to do so (de Burgh, 2005). However, apart from a few recent forays into learning theory (see for example Cochrane, Mulrennan, Sissons, Pamatatau, & Barnes, 2013; Greenberg, 2007) journalism education is relatively under theorised (Deuze, 2006). This is not to say that journalism educators do not examine their practice, on the contrary, the level of activity of professional forums and gatherings like the World Journalism Education Congress make it clear that many journalism educators are reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983), actively engaged in exploring new and innovative ways to help aspiring journalists develop multimedia expertise. However, most of the published research and literature about journalism education is either descriptive (how we did it) or normative (how you should do it). And, while there is more frequent use of language associated with education theory in journalism education literature (Quade, 2016), there is little discussion of the theoretical basis of the different educational practices employed in journalism education from an educational perspective (Mulrennan, 2017).

At a time when there is a renewed interest in critical media literacy and calls for journalism education that serves journalism in its all emerging forms (Rupar, 2016) it is perhaps a good time for journalism educators to go to the source and examine what language and literacy educators have to offer journalism educators in the way of theory.

'There is Nothing so Practical as a Good Theory'

Theoretical is often equated with academic, the converse of practical, and therefore not useful. As an educator I subscribe to the opposite view and agree with the adage that “there is nothing so practical as a good theory” (Lewin, 1951, p. 169). Theories are constructions which attempt to make sense of not just what we experience, but also how we think things work and how we would like them to work (Fay, 1987). They offer a way of making sense of experience and have the potential to shed new light on a practical problem or help to understand some social process through a critical interpretation of that experience (Abend, 2008). Literacy theory refers not only to how people construct knowledge, but also the values, attitudes, beliefs and feelings people associate with different literacies and, how they use those literacies in their lives (Gee, 1990; Street, 2003). This is because literacy practices are social practices developed and grounded in the social and cultural contexts in which they exist (Freebody & Luke, 1990). The same is true of journalism.

Although journalism has long been recognised as a demonstration of literacy it is only recently that it has been identified as a literacy practice (Hartley, 2000; van Hout, 2010). There are strong parallels between learning journalism and language learning for this reason language and literacy studies. Like languages the communicative competences associated with journalism are learnt through education in formal settings or acquired on-the-job as a result of constant practice in authentic environments. Language proficiency combines implicit and explicit knowledge about what things mean and how they go together with processing speed (Hulstijn, 2010), so does multimedia expertise.
Language and literacy educators were among the first to recognise the importance of technological literacy for communication (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Luke, 1997). As communication is increasingly mediated by digital communication technologies, technical literacy, and not merely technological competence is vital for journalists as knowledge workers and producers. Although all education is aimed at bringing about a desired outcome, not all educators have the same objectives. Critical educators are concerned with identifying the social conditions which prevent or frustrate educational goals in order to eliminate them, or at least reduce their impact, rather than simply to critique them (Dewey, 1916; R. E. Young, 1990).

A basic assumption of critical education theory is that the relationship between theory and practice is dialectical, that is, one informs the other (R. E. Young, 1990). This dialectical relationship is expressed in praxis or informed action (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). American educationalist John Dewey (1859-1952) maintained that the validity of any educational theory can only be determined by reference to the purpose of an educational activity (Dewey, 1938), in other words, if it doesn’t help achieve the desired educational aim, it’s not a good theory. This paper suggests that multiliteracies as a good theory which has the potential to support journalism educators and workplace managers to do their jobs more effectively from a theoretical sound base.

**The Multiliteracies Project**

The multiliteracies project was begun in the early 1990s by an international group of literacy and language educators in response to the failure of traditional literacy pedagogies to adequately address the linguistic and cultural diversity of learners from indigenous, migrant, and impoverished communities. Or, to recognise the emergence of new literacies linked to multimodal forms of meaning-making (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The New London group as it was known set out to develop an approach to language and literacy learning that would reduce the knowledge gaps experienced by marginalised groups, and a metalanguage to describe that approach which they called multiliteracies. Multiliteracies draws on the work of a wide range of theorists including John Dewey (1916), Dell Hymes (1972), Lev Vygotsky (Moll, 1990) and Paulo Freire (1985), all of whom are well known for their contributions to educational theory.

The social purpose of multiliteracies is to foster the critical engagement necessary for learners to access the evolving language of work, power, and community through a more inclusive approach to cultural, linguistic, communicative, and technological diversity; in other words to ensure they have the skills and resources to design their own social futures as individuals, citizens and workers. This identifies multiliteracies as a critical education theory. This also aligns with the purpose of many journalism educators who are seeking to identify more inclusive educational strategies that support learners to develop multimedia expertise to meet the demands of competitive news media environments in a culturally diverse world.
The pedagogy of multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) was developed to anticipate what educators needed to do to prepare learners for an uncertain future. To do this multiliteracies offers three conceptual tools

- Multimodality – diverse forms of meaning making
- Designs of meaning – how meaning is made
- Multiliteracies – multiple forms of literacy

**Multimodality**

Multimodality recognises that meaning is always communicated through combinations of two or more modes. These different modes of communication are brought together as ‘a set of resources’ for meaning making which, through a word, a sound, a visual or an animation, achieve an effect (Rowsell & Walsh, 2011). This is undeniably true in modern media. Today few would dispute that journalism is multimodal and journalists need to know how to tell stories in all media (Quinn, 2005).

**Design of meaning**

Design was adopted by the New London Group in the mid-1990s as an alternative to the more restrictive concept of ‘grammar’, to describe the process of and resources for learning. Since then the term design has become ubiquitous. The concept of design is used (and often misused) in a wide variety of fields, most notably in business where the essentially creative process of design has been co-opted as a process management style. Despite this, design remains a useful term to describe how meaning making (learning) within a multiliteracies framework works. At the heart of multiliteracies project is the idea that meaning making and communication are a continuous multi-layered process of designing in which available designs are used as resources to create redesigned (multimodal) presentations of meaning.

As a meaning making process, design has three aspects; the first is identifying available designs. These are the pre-existing (known) forms of communication and all their associated features. In the context of journalism education this means identifying existing and historic examples of best practice. Second, is the act of designing, which is the process of re-interpreting and reshaping available designs into new forms to become the redesigned (the new). This corresponds closely to what journalists do when they gather, interpret and craft different communication elements into new communication forms.

**Multiliteracies**

Multiliteracy means the ability to identify, interpret, create and communicate meaning across a variety of visual, audio, and textural modes. Including as it does gestural and spatial communication, multimodal meaning making predates digital communication technologies, however increasingly it is mediated by those technologies (Kress, 2009). Multiliteracies recognise that there is linguistic diversity within and across cultures, and further that there are multimodal forms of linguistic expression and representation within and between cultures.
Multiliteracies also recognises that all literacy practices are inherently ideological, maintaining and reproducing as they do different social discourses (Gee, 1990). It is because of this that the New London group first proposed *A pedagogy of multiliteracies* (1996).

**Why Pedagogy?**

Pedagogy is premeditated action for educational purposes (Compayré, 1909). Pedagogy provides the theoretical framework which guides educational activities in any particular context (Lusted, 1986). Most commonly this is in a formal setting such as a school but workplaces are also educational sites. Further, all instructional design systems are grounded in a cultural context and that context is a variable (Henderson, 1996). The primary role of pedagogy is to link desired knowledge (curriculum content) with desired learning outcomes. This is more than simply organising instructional sequences; it includes consideration of what is taught and how people learn, what Mary Kalantzis, a founding member of the multiliteracies project, calls “appropriate, purposeful choices from a repertoire” (2018).

Education is not a neutral activity and because of this educators are always involved in a political act through what they count and value as knowledge, and the way that they manage and support learning (Apple, 1990). Any given pedagogy represents a particular approach toward teaching and learning, including underlying assumptions, which is perhaps why it is often under-defined, with a focus on teaching style rather than its coordinating function. However, if pedagogy is reframed as the management of learning, rather the science of teaching, the focus is shifted from teachers to learners. This framing recognises the continuous, incidental and self-directed learning which characterise adult and workplace learning, and which are an increasing part of institutional learning. This reframing is both a more accurate description of the role of pedagogy and overcomes some of the objections to pedagogy as a teacher centred practice.

**Multiliteracies pedagogy**

Multiliteracies pedagogy has four key elements: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice. Situated practice has two aspects, it refers to the learners' life world (the known) and the world the learner seeks to engage with (the new). These elements are not sequential but are part of an iterative process. Linked together they create a framework which can be used to organise the three inter-related message systems of an educational knowledge code: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment (Bernstein, 1971).

Situated practice, direct instruction and critical framing also represent three different curriculum orientations: transactional, transmissive and transformative (Miller & Seller, 1985). This is one of the things that make multiliteracies useful as an educational framework. While it provides a guide to practice it is not prescriptive; as an educational framework it is not limited to a specific context or a single set of teaching strategies. On the contrary it recognises that some approaches are more effective than others in different subject areas, for example learning specific technical skills will require more overt instruction than learning how to work in a group. Within an overall framework, the different elements may be adapted to suit different curriculum content and learners’ needs.

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2. Borrowed from David Lusted’s (1986) influential essay on the topic.
The four elements of multiliteracies pedagogy are often presented as quadrants of a whole however; because of the dynamic nature of multiliteracies pedagogy, I prefer to present them as an iterative process which more accurately shows their relationship although it should be stressed that all elements coexist.

**Situated practice**

Situated practice is the basis of experiential learning, that is learning which occurs either through participation in a range of social practices in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) or as a result of unfolding circumstances which arise from real world or simulated situations (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). Journalism educators already recognise and support situated learning through project based learning, running student news rooms and facilitating internships and work experience. However it is important to recognise that experience alone does not create knowledge (Lewin, 1946). Situated practice can be counterproductive if learners receive mixed messages about what is important to know (Sligo, Tilley, Murray, & Comrie, 2010). This is true in journalism where there continue to be ‘competing interpretive repertoires’ about what it takes to become a journalist and formal learning continues to be regarded as secondary to vocational inclinations, natural abilities and aptitude even among journalism educators (Reardon, 2016).

 Nevertheless, while in and of themselves communities of practice do not produce emancipatory educational outcomes (Gee, 2000) the opportunity to experience authentic practice is vital for encouraging inclusion. Feminist researchers identify exposure as an important factor in developing technological literacy and overcoming disparities in participation (Luke, 1997; Rothschild, 1988). Intercultural situated practice, combined with technical and diversity training (Woolley, 2015) is being used by journalism educators to create integrated learning opportunities.
Overt instruction

Overt instruction is the basis of much traditional pedagogy, including journalism, where educators and/or workplace mentors transmit the language rules of journalism by providing feedback and models good practice. Through overt instruction unfamiliar concepts are made explicit. This is vital to bridging knowledge gaps for learners from indigenous cultures (Nakata, 2001).

Overt instruction may be as simple as saying what needs to be done and how to do it or it may involve identifying how actions and outcomes are linked. For example, the instruction ‘keep the VU metre below the red’ is more meaningful once the concept of noise to signal ratio is identified and understood. Vygotsky (Moll, 1990) considered this active intervention by a more capable other to be an important part of the learning process but the capable other does not need to be a teacher or trainer, it may be a mentor or a peer. It is increasingly supplied by an online text or community. Overt instruction helps learners contextualise concepts and deepen understanding. However, overt instruction alone cannot bridge radically different life worlds.

Critical framing

Critical framing interprets social contexts by analysing new and possibly unfamiliar ways of doing things critically and functionally with reference to learners’ pre-existing knowledge and understandings. By doing this, multiliteracies directly address questions of inclusion, exclusion and diversity. Diversity is much more than demographics, diversity refers to the life worlds of learners, their life experiences, stories, identity and affinities, their family cultures, orientation to the world and communication styles. The life world includes the value frameworks, political and social point of view an individual has as well as the contacts, networks and work cultures of the societies in which they live. Critical framing enables learners to make sense of the new and unfamiliar but also to determine their relationship to it on their own terms.

Transformed practice

Transformed practice or action is evidence of learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). It is both the objective and outcome of learning; evidence that the learner can apply new knowledge and understandings appropriately and creatively in a variety of contexts or cultural sites. Transformed practice shows that a learner has moved from a position of ignorance and inability in a specific context to a condition where they are able to apply knowledge and understanding in a demonstrable way. Achieving transformed practice is the goal of all education activity; knowing what to do, how to do it and being able to do it are the measure of success of education.

Transactional, transmissive, transformative

Different educational practices imply different understandings of how knowledge is produced and reproduced. Multiliteracies pedagogy incorporates three different orientations to curriculum within a single overarching theoretical framework.

Situated practice is largely transactional, that is learning occurs through the interaction between novice learners and more experienced practitioners. Overt instruction is transmissive;
corresponding to more traditional education practices but is also the strategy best suited to learning specific skills. Overt instruction can also be the key to participation. For some learners the distance between the new and the known is not great (Gee, 1996), for others, the new is the equivalent of a new language which they need to learn in order to participate (Nakata, 2001).

Together overt instructions and critical framing create the basis for transformed practice by linking learners’ pre-existing experience and understandings, gained through immersion in their life worlds, to new and possibly different understandings gained through their experience of the unfamiliar through situated practice. However it is worthwhile noting that although critical framing is the basis of transformative education, the extent to which any learning activity is transformative, in the sense that Mezirow (2003) and other critical educational theorists conceive transformation depends on the amount and quality of critical framing available to the learner.

**Journalism education and multiliteracies**

Multiliteracies theory has already been used as an explanatory device to illustrate the multimodal literacies required for multimedia news storytelling (Song, 2016). Two of the key elements of multiliteracies pedagogy: situated practice and critical framing which contribute to meaning making have been used to promote greater tolerance and mutual respect among and between divergent peoples in the context of journalism education (Hochheimer, 2001).

Critical framing also overcomes some of the inherent problems of competence based education associated with technical training. Although one-dimensional frameworks of competence are giving way to multi-dimensional frameworks of competence (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005) competence based education and training remains an essentially an instrumentalist approach in which the ends are more important than the means (Harris, Guthrie, Hobart, & Lundberg, 1995; Stevenson, 1995). Without adequate critical framing, even explicitly learner centred approaches to learning like constructivism can be co-opted to serve instrumental ends within competence based frameworks (Wheelahan, 2009). This is where the combination of critical framing and overt instruction is important.

There is no doubt that technical competences are increasingly important for media work (Worlds of Journalism Study, 2016) however, there is a danger that an overemphasis on technical competences is at the expense of the normative values of journalism. Concern about this is perhaps why journalism values are sometimes framed as being under attack from new technologies. However, digital technologies are only the latest technological development to affect journalism beginning with the printing press. Journalists have always had a close and sometimes defining relationship with technology (Örnebring, 2010). In their day the telegraph, typewriter, telephone and computer all had a profound impact on how journalism was done. What the multiliteracies approach can do is help put this latest wave of change in perspective.

**Conclusion**

Adopting a multiliteracies approach is no quick fix to the challenge of teaching journalism in a disruptive age but the multiliteracies framework provides a productive way to talk about journalism
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education and a range of tools which journalism educators can use to help learners prepare for media work education in an increasingly globalised world.

Multiliteracies is a multi-layered and multi-dimensional critical theoretical framework which translates very easily to journalism. The assumption of multimodal meaning as a given makes it particularly relevant to contemporary journalism.

As an educational framework it can be used to guide educational activities. Through critical framing journalism educators can discuss different understandings of journalism in a way which recognises that learners’ life worlds and different cultural realities may be other but they are never lesser. This makes it a practical schema for more inclusive journalism. The multiliteracies framework can also be used as an evaluative tool to classify activities in terms of their educational implications.

About the Author

Trained as a film editor in New Zealand, Victoria Quade became interested in education while completing a graduate diploma in journalism at RMIT in Australia. This led to work in community radio and further study at James Cook University where she first encountered multiliteracies. She has a Master of Education (Adult Ed.) from Massey University and currently works as an English language and literacy educator with migrant and refugee learners and a community broadcaster for the Wellington Workers’ Education Association in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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The Challenges of Teaching Journalism in the World of All-Inclusive Journalism Practice

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Abstract

This paper examined the relevance of and challenges of teaching journalism in modern days where people of different backgrounds, without journalism training are involved in reporting news information through various online platforms. The study used both interview and library as data collection instruments. Data generated for the study were predominantly based on Nigerian environment. Unethical practices associated with all-inclusive journalism practice (citizen journalism), resulting from a lack of training was identified. The advocacy of the paper, thus, is that since all-inclusive reportage of news information has come to be part of the human society, institutions where journalism is offered should prepare online packages of key courses, especially those that address unethical and legal practices, for subscription by online information reporters.

Background

Journalism practice can be traced back to what Bittner (1989) has stated that “in Italy, messengers disseminated news as early as 59 BC with the publication of daily event bulletins called Acta Diurna written by Julius Caesar” (p. 23). According to Bittner (1989), the bulletins were posted in a public place for all to read and were kept in file as official record of historical events. What is important here is that right from time, humans have been seeking trusted information that would help them to advance their cause. Udoudo (2013) states that “Technological advancement in printing across Europe made possible for the mechanical production of newspapers in the 17th Century” (p. 17). The invention of movable type of printing press attributed to Johannes Gutenberg in 1439, led to the wide dissemination of the Bible and other printed books and in the 17th Century, the first newspapers appeared in Europe. Many newspapers were produced in the century. News writing and reporting indeed, flourished in England, the Scandinavian countries, France, Germany, and the United States of America (Bittner, 1989). Mecurius Gallobelgicus was the first periodical to be published in Germany. The early beginning of newspaper stories is a sign that newspaper has at all times been a dependable mass medium and a platform for newswriting and reporting. After newspaper, came radio and television. Newspaper, magazine, radio and television are what we call today, “traditional media” because of the advent of the social media which are labelled the “New Media”.

As noted above, journalism practice is fraught with great expectations from members of the society, often beyond what the journalists themselves can expect. Some of these expectations are real while
others are imaginary. Often, the quest to develop, especially, in the Third World countries, engenders people to ascribe omnipotence to journalism, the journalists and even the media in general (McQuail, 2005). These attributions are, however, sometimes, misplaced. Similarly, journalists are accused of what they can do but have not done, as well as what they cannot do and have not done. These expectations which is a product of society’s dependency on journalism, thus, place journalism above other professions and practices in every human society. The acceptability of all-inclusive journalism by the society may not be isolated from the dependency that the society has on journalism.

When a reporter understands the value the society places on him because of the work he does, to reciprocate, the reporter should ensure that he has moral and professional obligations not to abdicate the responsibility upon which the trust is placed. But this position seems not to be the thrust of all-inclusive journalism practice since ethics of practice does not often count while the practitioner discharges his or her duty, especially as this is practised in Nigeria (Udoudo and Osere, 2017).

Journalism practice as claimed to be practised by social media users, has been variously described as citizen journalism, democratic journalism, participatory journalism, grassroots journalism, community journalism, social journalism etc. (Asadu, 2017). For the purpose of this study, this kind of journalism is here tagged as “All-inclusive journalism” and so, all-inclusive journalism shall be the term used all through in this paper. All-inclusive journalism is the kind of journalism practised by users of internet-based media, not necessarily founded on training or professionalism. It is made possible by ownership of internet-based devices such as computer and mobile phones and the availability of internet services at the user’s (Jensen, 2013). Media platforms for all-inclusive journalism include personal blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegraph, Podcast, etc. (Udoudo & Osere, 2017).

Problem

The Internet has opened the floodgate for users to report what happens around them second-by-second round the clock, each day, each week, each month and each year, and these reports have made information available to users in abundance. This is quite the opposite of the era of information generation that was solely the responsibility of the traditional mass media, when information took days to be gathered and processed as news. One feature of the Internet-based reporting is the user reporter-audience in one. This is the product of social media which are used as interactive forums to report information by a user on the one hand, and on the other hand, receive information from others. In doing this, those who share information through social media have claimed the responsibility of journalists.

This practice is what is known in this study as all-inclusive journalism but one of the attendant challenges posed by the current practice is that most of these reporters do not believe that journalism training is necessary to guide them in the practice while others may not have recognized that journalism is based on training. It is through this training that the principles of ethical practice and laws guiding the practice are taught, no wonder the recklessness observed in all-inclusive journalism. Often, issues such as false information, invasion of individual’s privacy and obscene reporting have been identified in all-inclusive journalism practice. In spite of these observed shortcomings, it is a given that all-inclusive journalism has come to stay. The puzzle is that since
all-inclusive journalism has become part of society’s phenomenal communication components, what is the relationship between the practice and journalism training in institutions where journalism is taught in Nigeria?

Research Questions

• In what ways does all-inclusive journalism practice affect the teaching of journalism in Nigeria?

• How do institutions offering journalism courses in Nigeria design their curriculum to address deficiencies identified in all-inclusive journalism practice?

• What is the attitude of students of journalism in Nigeria towards all-inclusive journalism in relation to the training they receive?

• How does all-inclusive journalism practice affect the admission of students to journalism programme in institutions where journalism is taught in Nigeria?

• Regarding membership, how does the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) treat all-inclusive journalists?

Scope

The study is based on Nigerian environment. In other words, data and examples provided in the study are based on Nigerian environment.

Theoretical Foundation

The study is premised upon technological determinism theory of Marshall McLuhan. Technological determinism theory places emphasis on technology being the determinant of the way messages are transmitted by the media and received by the audience (Griffin, 2000). Griffin (2000) quotes McLuhan as stating that “We shape our tools and they in turn shape us” (p. 315). Griffin (2000) adds that “McLuhan regarded communication inventions as pivotal because he considered every new form of innovation to be an extension of human faculty” (p. 315). In his book *Understanding Media: The extension of man*, McLuhan (2001) states:

Let us return to the electric light. Whether the light is being used for brain surgery or night baseball is a matter of indifference. It could be argued that these activities are in some way the “content” of the electric light. This fact merely underlines the point that “the” medium is the message” because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action. The content or uses of such media are as diverse as they are ineffectual in shaping the form association. Indeed, it is only too typical that the “content” of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium (p.9).

At the time of McLuhan, the invention of television brought into communication sphere, both the visual and audio elements which portrayed significant realities of human communication through a mediated form. McLuhan saw this as the medium shaping and controlling its contents, thus, extending the human environment. Although McLuhan’s prophetic theory was based on television
as the electronic medium of communication, the relevance of the theory to the modern forms of electronic media cannot be questioned. This is so, because the types of messages that are sent and received through modern media (online media platforms) are shaped by the media. For instance, because of the media through which all-inclusive journalism is practised, the practitioner becomes a reporter-receiver journalist. In other words, the media have made the users able to produce, as well as able to receive messages simultaneously. This is a remarkable deviation from even the television that serves as the root of McLuhan’s technological determinism theory.

Literature

Journalism practice

Ududo (2018) describes the significance of journalism practice with illustration as he states “Assuming all newspapers (hard copies and soft copies), all magazines, all the radio stations and all the television stations in any society were shut down for one day, what would the picture be? Darkness – very dark society that many would be afraid of leaving their homes” (pp. 65 - 66). In their description of journalism, Rudin & Ibbotson (2002) state that “Journalism covers a huge range of output across all media and is recognizable as a form of communication in almost every country of the world” (p.1). The phrase “in almost every country of the world” seems to limit journalism to some countries. Journalism practice may vary in the ways it is practised, according to the socio-economic and political systems of the various countries but there is no country that can be excluded from the practice of journalism. Ududo’s (2018) assertion quoted earlier, puts Rudin & Ibbotson’s (2002) in a clearer perspective. Journalism is so inevitable because mankind is inherently information seeker and so, would always seek information for satisfaction. From history of journalism as presented by Bittner (1989), in Italy, as early as 59 B.C., the bulletins “were posted in a public place for all to read and were kept on files as an official record of historical events. The bulletins may have been copied and reproduced by hand for distribution to other countries by messengers and ship” (p.23). The narrative by Bittner is an indication that right from the early existence of man, journalism has been playing irreplaceable role in human society.

This importance of journalism does not, however, preclude the fact that journalism has been practised differently in accordance with each era. This is why Bittner (1989), again has stated “Obviously the ability of the publication to transmit messages to a mass audience was minimal based on today’s standards. The number of ‘subscribers’ equalled the number of persons who happened to read the poster. Almost 1800 years later, posted bulletins were a source of news during American Revolution” (p. 23). Since then, journalism practice has undergone various phases until now that all-inclusiveness made possible by the Internet, has had inroads into the practice.

Practitioners of all-inclusive journalism

Who are practitioners of all-inclusive journalism? What qualifies one as an all-inclusive journalist? Hartmann (2013) sees the relationship between affordances of relevant technology and the use of social media. This is pointing to the fact that those who practise all-inclusive journalism are those who can afford the technology that makes all-inclusive journalism possible. Such people may be bloggers who have used theirs as platforms for disseminating news. Others may be users of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegraph, Podcast, etc. (Ududo & Osere, 2017) and have interest in disseminating what they have observed around them.
These users on the one hand, are producers of the messages sent to others and on the other hand, consumers of messages sent by others or by interacting with others through feedback process. This is why they are tagged as prosumers (indicating that they are both producers and consumers of the internet-based messages). Often, the practitioners of all-inclusive journalism operate without by-lines and are masked while working as journalists. This is a deviation from the traditional practice of journalism in which the reporter’s by-line would glaringly present the personality of the reporter to the audience. This practice thus, adds credibility to the news. Ohiagu (2017) states that news attribution and by-lines would always keep the traditional news reporter on check from spreading spurious and harmful messages. This, however, is not the case with internet-based news where the anonymity of the source “can become a shield that protects miscreants of not misleading others either inadvertently or otherwise” (Ohiagu, 2017, p.162).

Contents of all-inclusive media

As the name goes, all-inclusive journalism is made possible basically by social media which themselves are accessible by anyone who has internet-connected technology – computer, mobile phone, tablet, etc. The implication is that as many as there are those who have these gadgets and are interested in reporting what they find in their environment, are practising all-inclusive journalism. Nyekwere & Adakole (2018) argue that all-inclusive journalism is a rapidly evolving form of journalism where common citizens take the initiative to report news or express views about happenings within their community. They see the contents of all-inclusive media as news of the people, by the people and for the people. Probably, all-inclusive journalism being referred to as “democratic journalism” could be traced to this kind of assertion. Asadu (2017) asserts that messages found in all-inclusive journalism centre around gossip, sex, entertainment, politics, etc. Describing mobile communication, Jensen (2013) emphasizes on the fundamentals of the social contexts in which communication takes place. He adds that in this kind of communication, “entire configurations of social relations move about at an accelerated pace” (p. 27). In other words, the contents of all-inclusive media are delivered in unimaginable speed that makes them available to a great audience that are in touch with the platform through which the message is transmitted. This is why the news may be consumed before the message is edited.

One major question against the contents of all-inclusive journalism is credibility. Because the practice is open to everyone who accesses social media platform and has the interest of reporting what seems to them of public interest, there is no impediment that checks such reporting. There is no code of ethical practice that helps to control the practitioner in the way he reports. This is in line with Shirky’s (2009) observation that in traditional media, news is based on a filter-then-publish model while the news in social media is based on publish-then-filter model. This publish-then-filter news could lead to what Udoudo & Osere (2017) have stated that “False news on social media is not only a Nigerian problem. The world is fraught with instances of false news stories on social media” (p.3). The current spate of “fake news” syndrome - which is, however, contestable because some scholars have argued that news is news or it is no news (Udoudo, 2018), - is a product of all-inclusive journalism. The issue of fake news which one can accept when it is associated with all-inclusive journalism shows that all-inclusive journalism still has basic deficiency compared to professional journalism practice. This again, is made manifest in the fact that some all-inclusive journalists deliberately choose to report falsehood as news. This is terrifyingly against the professional ethics of journalism practice. Udoudo & Osere (2017) have given an example of all-
inclusive journalists who, with no source reported how a bird that was electrocut ed in Port Harcourt, Nigeria became a body of a witch. Their finding is put thus:

In Port Harcourt, there was a news story on the social media of how a bird flew and perched on a high-tension cable around Mile Four area. The bird was said to be electrocut ed and it fell off the cable, only for the dead bird to turn a body of a woman suspected to be a witch. This news went viral in social media but it turned out to be sheer falsehood (Udoudo & Osere, 2017, p.3).

Similar situation occurred when the wife of former President Jonathan was sick and all inclusive journalists cashed in on her absence from the country to declare her dead. It also happened to former Governor Sulivan Chime of Enugu State in 2013 when he travelled for medical treatment abroad and was not seen at public functions. The governor was reported dead by all-inclusive journalists. Many similar instances are rife, perhaps, not just in Nigeria.

**Challenges in teaching all-inclusive journalism**

Quinn (1999) opines that “ethical awareness and clear thinking need to be the foundation stones of any journalism course in the digital age, along with the ability to learn how to learn” (p.165). Ethics has become quite an issue in this era of all-inclusive journalism. It is easy with the click of a mouse to spread falsehood in just a matter of seconds. This is obviously why Quinn (1999) advises that “journalism educators need to return more than ever to inculcating the core attributes of respect for accuracy along with clarity of thought” (p.165). In more specific terms, Laws and Utne (2019) make a very strong case for ethics in immersive journalism and by extension, all-inclusive journalism.

**Journalism education in Nigeria**

Journalism education in Nigeria started with Jackson College of Journalism (now Department of Mass Communication) in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in September, 1961. Since then, Nigeria has had journalism taught in the Departments of Mass Communication, Departments of Communication Arts, Departments of Language Arts or Departments of Linguistics and Communication Studies in some universities in the country. Communication courses are taught in more 71 universities in the country. Although the National Universities Commission (NUC) has recommended that communication courses should be domiciled in the faculty of social sciences in any university where communication is taught, some universities in the country domicile communication courses, by extension, journalism in faculties of humanities and management sciences (Mojaye, 2009). The National Universities Commission also pegs the curriculum for the teaching of communication courses, which invariably means that journalism as taught in the country is based on the prescribed curriculum by the NUC (Aghedo, 2019).

Apart from journalism being taught in universities, it is also taught in polytechnics in the country. Curriculum for courses in polytechnics is provided by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). That polytechnics in Nigeria also offer journalism courses means that those who practise journalism in Nigeria are not only university graduates; the minimum qualification acceptable for the practice of journalism thus, is National Diploma.
Whether in university or polytechnic, the official language of teaching journalism in Nigeria is English. In many of the universities, communication courses are taught up to PhD. level and in some universities, specializations start at the postgraduate level, where some people can specialize in journalism or any other communication area. However, with the NUC’s new approach to re-organizing communication studies in universities in the country and making it a faculty, journalism has been proposed to be an independent department (Aghedo, 2019). This means the country’s universities will offer degrees in journalism if the proposal is acceptable.

Methodology

This is an ethnographic study because since the researchers are teachers and a student of journalism. They formed part of the field sources to the study. Their experience as teachers of journalism and library study formed the basis for the results and discussion presented in the study. In addition, interviewing key practising journalists, especially officials of Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and students of journalism was useful in data collection. Data collected are presented qualitatively.

Results and Discussion

Results are presented and discussed based on the research questions.

**RQ 1: In what ways does all-inclusive journalism practice affect the teaching of journalism in Nigeria?**

As teachers of journalism in Nigeria and from interview with our colleagues, the practice of all-inclusive journalism does not significantly affect the teaching of journalism courses in the country other than the fact that it serves as a springboard to research such as this one. Because the current curriculum for teaching journalism in Nigeria does not include all-inclusive journalism, it is difficult for it to directly affect the ways journalism is taught. However, the application of the Internet and online services to journalism practice has been taught as part of journalism courses. A course like this, only prepares the students on how to use online services at different levels of journalism practice until the media output is consumed by the audience. For instance, in *Principles of Editing* taught in the Department of Linguistics & Communication Studies, University of Port Harcourt, “the use of online services by editors and reporters” is part of the course contents (Udoudo, 2013). This means that students of journalism have been taught how they can use online services in practising journalism even while in school and when they work as practising journalists.

What is not taught is the composition of all-inclusive journalism and how it is practised. This perhaps, is mainly because all-inclusive journalism is unorganized and is difficult to control and is an admixture of the need and anti-social practices of the society.

**RQ 2: How do institutions offering journalism courses in Nigeria design their curriculum to address deficiencies identified in all-inclusive journalism practice?**

Curricula for undergraduate programmes in Nigerian universities are designed by the National Universities Commission (NUC). All universities in the country have the NUC prescribed courses as the benchmark upon which they plan their programmes. In line with this, communication
curriculum (including journalism), is also NUC-approved. So far, NUC curriculum for communication programmes in the country does not have any provision for all-inclusive journalism. In 2018, the National Universities Commission (NUC) in conjunction with UNICEF started a review of communication programmes for undergraduate students, aiming at making communication a faculty while courses like journalism, public relations, broadcasting etc. will be made independent departments in which graduates will be qualified to obtain degrees. The proposal does not contain any suggestion for inclusion of all-inclusive journalism if the proposal is adopted for use in the universities in the country. This, in other words, is an indication that all-inclusive journalism has no place in Nigeria’s journalism curriculum, at least, for now. Quinn (1999), however, suggests that journalism educators must provide students with intellectual equipment to enter the internet-based journalism practice and that they must introduce more on ethical issues connected with the blurring boundaries of journalism practice which is made possible by the Internet.

That universities in Nigeria are yet to consider all-inclusive journalism in their curriculum, does not mean that the practice is neither recognize nor is in existence. It is practised all over the country and sometimes, relied upon by the traditional mass media as sources of news. However, such news have to be subjected to further investigation for source credibility. Some researches on social media and source credibility have been carried out by scholars in Nigeria but these do not translate into the teaching of all-inclusive journalism (Ududo & Osere, 2017; Onwuchekwa, 2018; Osuagwu, 2018; Isika, 2018).

RQ 3: What is the attitude of students of journalism in Nigeria towards all-inclusive journalism in relation to the training they receive?

Nigerian students of journalism interviewed, saw all-inclusive journalists as bloggers who owned blogs through which they contributed to social discussions. They agreed that people who use known social media platforms to share information with other users, only do so because they wish to pass information and take part in the discussions of issues that strike their interests. They hardly agreed that those who practise all-inclusive journalism are practising journalists, especially since all-inclusive journalists do not have to be trained before they practise.

Students of journalism also admitted that information provided via all-inclusive journalism can be reliable but many times some information provided via all-inclusive journalism is lacking in source credibility. Another issue raised by the students was that since journalism is not just reporting news but that the news must indeed, be news and reported ethically and professionally, it is hard to see all-inclusive journalism as professional journalism. Thus, the existence of all-inclusive journalism cannot be seen as a threat to students’ urge to get trained as journalists. Some of the students admitted that they were bloggers but that did not make them feel that they were practising journalists even though they shared information they had with other users of online contents. They stated that they would regard themselves as journalists when they must have graduated, registered and started practising journalism.
**RQ 4: How does all-inclusive journalism practice affect the admission of students to journalism programme in institutions where journalism is taught in Nigeria?**

This research question seeks to find out if admission to journalism-related courses has reduced since journalism has been open to even those who do not have any training in journalism. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, admissions to journalism-related courses (communication studies) was between 40 and 56, a mean of a little above 50 but as at 2019, there is no department of journalism-related course that does not an average of 120 students in each class in public universities. In University of Uyo, for example, admission to the Department of Communication Arts in 1989 was about 50 and at graduation in 1994, it was 46. The same department in 2015/2016, had 161 students take examination in 200 Level. In the Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies, University of Port Harcourt, the final year class (400 Level), of 2016/2017 had 374 students take examination. Although the Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies, University of Port Harcourt, is a bi-stream department - Linguistics and Communication Studies, – the majority of the students in the department are communication-biased. Being communication-biased, further explains that journalism is the most interesting of the communication courses taught in the department. Comparing the number of students who have opted to study journalism-related courses currently with the number about three decades ago, it could be inferred that admission is rather progressing. In Nigeria, the number of students admitted to universities each year is often a small fraction of the number that has applied and is qualified for admission because of limited vacancies for admission to public universities in the country. This means that each year, the number of those who wish to study journalism-related courses but could not secure admission may be large.

Granted that many students who have chosen to study communication are not likely to practise journalism, yet the major focus of communication on the minds of prospective students is journalism. Therefore, if all-inclusive journalism had had any adverse effect on admission to journalism-related programme, it would indeed, have reflected on those seeking admission to communication studies.

**RQ 5: Regarding membership, how does the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) treat all-inclusive journalists?**

According to the Chairman of Nigerian Union of Journalists, Port Harcourt Chapter, Stanley Job Stanley, the Union for now, has not admitted any all-inclusive (citizen) journalist to its membership. He added that if any of the practitioner of all-inclusive journalism would seek to register as a member, the applicant’s certificates would be screened to ensure that he is qualified for registration. He also stated that journalism training would qualify applicants for registration as a member of the union even by those who practise all-inclusive journalism.

Stanley agreed that although the Union did not completely, write off the credibility of all-inclusive journalism information, members had been strongly advised to crosscheck the credibility of information they received via all-inclusive journalists. Other journalists interviewed on this position, agreed that they did not take information from all-inclusive journalists at face value. This position conforms to Udoudo & Osere’s (2017) study which shows that journalists in radio houses in Port Harcourt do not totally rely on information via all-inclusive journalism until such information is subjected to further investigation. Similarly, Nyekwere & Onyebi (2018) carried out a study on the reliance of some newspapers on citizen journalism for news sources and the
credibility of such news sources. In their findings, they noted that the newspapers relied mostly on staff by-lines, and wired sources, leaving only 22.1% for non-attributed sources, which signified a great deal of professionalism and less dependence on citizen journalism.

In sum, the Nigerian Union of Journalists in Nigeria does not recognize practitioners of all-inclusive journalists as part of journalists qualified to practise even though it acknowledges the fact that all-inclusive journalism has come to stay and has contributed to the practice of journalism. The Union’s emphasis on training before one can be registered as a member, makes it practically impossible for all-inclusive journalists to be registered as members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) at least, for now.

**Conclusion**

The study has indeed, examined challenges facing the teaching of journalism in an era of all-inclusive journalism when very many people who have not had any background in journalism training have laid claim to practising journalism once they have acquired internet-facilitated devices to make them share information at their disposal with other users. Based on the findings, it can safely be concluded that the major challenge associated with all-inclusive journalism and the teaching of journalism in institutions in Nigeria where journalism is taught, especially universities, is the lack of curriculum to accommodate those who practise all-inclusive journalism. All-inclusive journalism as practised in Nigeria, has credibility question and perhaps, based on this, both the National Universities Commission (NUC) and institutions where journalism is taught, see it as one of those practices associated with social interactions.

Although there has not been any identified challenge in terms of drop in admission of students to institutions where journalism is taught, it must be stated that since established media organizations make use of information that is provided via all-inclusive journalism, the latter has the capacity of interfering with source credibility of professional journalism practice. This is why journalism training institutions should be concerned about what to do to improve the quality of all-inclusive journalism practice in the country.

**Recommendations**

The advocacy of the paper thus, is that since all-inclusive reportage of news information has come to be part of the human society, institutions where journalism practice is offered should prepare online packages of key courses, especially those that address unethical and legal practices, for subscription by these online information reporters. This, as a matter of fact, will enable the online reporters to disseminate their news information within the ambit of standard and ethical practices. Similarly, course contents that address the weaknesses of all-inclusive journalism practice should be developed for regular students in schools where journalism is taught to serve as a benchmark for online practice to those who wish to be online journalists.
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References


Redefining Doctoral Education: Preparing Future Faculty to Lead Emerging Media Curriculum

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Abstract

New tools that accommodate data, multimedia, virtual reality and other emerging platforms influence our concept of what it means to be a storyteller and have influenced varied levels of curriculum change in academic programs. The education of doctoral students, however, has not progressed to support the demand for educators and scholars who are confident in and adept at emerging concepts. This study compares the requirements of academic position descriptions with students’ and graduates’ attitudes about their preparedness for these roles. It concludes with a case study designed to identify approaches necessary to develop the digital scholar-educator of the future.

Introduction

Media industries have experienced massive change due to emerging communication technologies. The Internet, web, mobile devices, social media and the proliferation of tools to accommodate data, multimedia, virtual reality and other emerging platforms influence our concept of what it means to be a storyteller in the traditional fields of journalism, advertising and public relations. At the same time, the technology industry continues to merge with communication media, creating opportunities for careers that integrate strong communication skills with technology savvy and problem solving. These changes not only require those who are technologically proficient, but also those who can comprehend a digital mindset about strategy and how these technologies integrate with an organization’s mission and responsibilities to their audience.

These industry shifts have influenced varied levels of curriculum change in academic programs, particularly in schools of journalism and mass communication. Programs have introduced new degrees, concentrations, courses and workshops at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. And these industry shifts, along with profound changes to the ways that humans communicate, lead to a critical need for new types of scholarship.

Has doctoral education progressed to keep up with these changes? Is it preparing graduates for the requirements of available academic positions? Are doctoral graduates being prepared to lead curriculum change as they progress through the tenure track throughout their careers? This study compares the requirements of academic position descriptions with students’ and graduates’ attitudes about their preparedness for these roles. It concludes with a case study of a program designed to identify approaches necessary to develop the digital scholar-educator of the future.
Background

Doctoral education is the cornerstone of academic life. It not only prepares future faculty for a career in scholarship in its respective disciplines, but it generally serves as the training mechanism for those who will teach. "Research is the dominant focus of the doctorate, and it defines the life of most research university faculty, but it is not the primary work activity of most faculty at American colleges" (Golde & Dore, 2001). In mass communication, PhD students work with mentors, perform original research, work as graduate assistants and often teach their own sections and courses. This preparation helps improve their chances on the job market upon graduation with their terminal degree.

The mass communication profession has experienced profound change in the past two decades due to the proliferation of technology that has disrupted the traditional models of professionalism, distribution, trust and the marketplace of ideas. The influence of the technology industry has caused media companies to participate in new types of economics, competition and engagement with the audience (Royal, 2014). These changes have led to curriculum modifications in some undergraduate and master’s programs across the country, with new courses, concentrations and degrees being developed to incorporate new methods of storytelling, including social media, data visualization, content management, multimedia, mobile applications, virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence and more (Castaneda, Murphy & Hether, 2005; Criado, 2005; Royal, 2005; Kraeplin & Mensing, 2010; Van Buskirk, 2010; Sarachan, 2011; Journalism, Computer Science, 2015; Jarvis, 2015; Royal, 2016; Royal, 2019).

The digital ecosystem introduces more than new skills to a program. It offers a new mindset about the role of a media organization that now manages a range of digital products and operates on a variety of platforms, engaging audiences and using data in storytelling and decision-making. Media organizations must recognize their role among the broader technology industry, where the activities of Facebook, Twitter, Apple, Amazon, Craigslist, Buzzfeed, Vox and more have an influence on media. The technology industry has introduced new terms and processes that are required to be comprehended in order to influence meaningful change in the profession and curriculum, including innovation concepts around product management, platforms, data, algorithms, engagement and other trends. But journalism faculty are often unable or unwilling to adapt to new digital concepts and skills (Bright, 2018).

Doctoral education, however, has remained fairly constant over the past twenty years. Most programs provide education in research methods and mass communication theory, allowing students to customize a program around their scholarly interests, working with mentors in their field. Few programs offer more than a single course on teaching or the pedagogy of the discipline. Combine this with the lack of a comprehensive appreciation for the role of technology in media, and the demand for scholar-educators who are prepared to address curriculum innovation greatly exceeds the supply of qualified applicants.

The tenure-track provides a process by which early career faculty prove their ability to publish meaningful scholarship in their field. It also provides the pipeline by which faculty progress to positions of authority and judgment in the administration of a program. Personnel, curriculum and search committees are often led by, or decisions approved by, tenured faculty. In the mass communication discipline, while many programs rely on the contributions of professionals in the
form of adjuncts and lecturers who provide valuable insight to professionalism, more strategic and comprehensive changes to curriculum are guided and approved by those with tenure. It is critical that these decision-makers have a strong appreciation of the modern media ecosystem.

This study is an analysis of the role of doctoral education in preparing future faculty to lead innovative curriculum. Using a mixed methods approach, the market for digital skills and mindsets is compared to doctoral students’ and recent graduates’ attitudes toward their preparedness for these roles. The study culminates with a case study of a program designed as a prototype and proof-of-concept to prepare future faculty to lead innovative curriculum.

Review of Literature

Disconnects between what Ph.D. programs in journalism and mass communication teach and what is demanded by both the professional and academic industries have been identified throughout the past two decades (Wilkins, 1998; Cohen, 1997; Reese, 1999). As early as 2000, researchers realized how an increasingly media-saturated and dependent culture is attracting greater attention toward the education of journalists (Reese & Cohen, 2000). There is, however, division in the identities of journalism schools being increasingly appropriated by different spheres of influence: the vocational identity influenced by the industry and the research identity influenced by academia. This dichotomy on j-school priorities, whether real or imagined, has landed journalism and mass communication research in an academic “no-man’s land” where it’s neither accepted by the news industry nor the traditional liberal arts disciplines (Cohen & Reese, 2000).

At the core of most doctoral programs is a fundamental contradiction: PhD students spend three to five years learning to conduct research, but journalism and mass communication departments focus on pedagogy when hiring (Wilkins, 1998). What a Ph.D. student can teach and how that future educator performs in the classroom has a significant bearing on almost all entry-level hiring decisions. While large, research-oriented universities grant tenure based on a dossier that emphasizes research, other institutions put teaching first, and even those research institutions don’t ignore teaching (Wilkins, 1998).

Journalism education was once seen as interdisciplinary, oriented both toward liberal arts and professional applications, but then faced mounting pressure to abandon academic ethos and embrace industry patrons, essentially rendering it vocational (Reese, 1999). Some argue the ultimate objective of journalism education should be to improve the practice of journalism by training skilled practitioners, teaching how journalism affects public life and illustrating critical, social issues. This creates not only better editors, writers and producers, but it also fosters a more media-literate press consumer (Reese, 1999).

Doctoral programs were found to offer little, if any, training in teaching, course development and curriculum building (Cohen, 1997). This research suggests that various improvements are needed in graduate and doctoral education and recommends requiring students to become well versed in the body of knowledge focused on curriculum and teaching careers, searching for job candidates who demonstrate experience in the scholarship of teaching and the establishment of a division within AEJMC dedicated to research about teaching and learning in schools of journalism and mass communication.
Nearly a decade later, practice and research training in graduate schools were separate, insulated and isolated, though they were adjacent in curricula (Thorson, 2005). A dichotomy of priorities exists between journalism academia and the news industry; the industry assumes academia will provide them well-trained students who can be hired into both general and niche news production roles, while academic institutions focus more heavily on research. Further, when the industry does need research, they seldom turn to academia and favor professional research companies for studies and analysis (Thorson, 2005). Those findings are rarely shared with academia nor do they become public.

There is a disconnect between academic research and its effect on reporting and editing. Being caught between these two cultures likely limits the conceptualization of what graduate courses, both masters and doctoral, might look like (Thorson, 2005). An analysis of doctoral education in mass communication found Ph.D. programs are expected to adequately train students in research and teaching, but not service to the journalism community (Christ & Broyles, 2008). It was found that, upon graduating, Ph.D. students should demonstrate the ability to teach undergraduate students, perform research and understand the importance of service in the academic and the professional world. While these were identified as the expectations, questions arise regarding how to accurately measure these outcomes and what successfully meeting these expectations means (Christ & Broyles, 2008). The areas of doctoral education that need attention were identified, but the means by which programs could improve remained a mystery. Thorson (2005) identified beyond these fundamental flaws a more general issue in Ph.D. programs of communicating innovative thinking about both news practices and research to both academia and the news industry.

To innovate or further the field of journalism and mass communication, scholars both inside and outside of the field have to re-ignite debates about what journalism is and should be, and postulate concepts, models and theories accordingly (Deuze, 2006). Some argue journalism must always be framed in terms of journalism and society, as it then can be situated in particular technological, economic, political and social contexts. (Deuze, 2006). Macdonald (2006) found North American journalism education has been tasked with teaching students traditional journalistic values, though this method is often criticized by scholars for allegedly contributing to public apathy around news media. To remedy, j-schools fostering students’ critical understanding of the role of media industries is recommended as a way to address the challenges of contemporary journalism (Macdonald, 2006). Ph.D. students, then, must be trained to appropriately criticize media and must be familiar with current industry practices.

Notable recent changes in the news media landscape compared to journalism’s 100-year history have left education programs behind and unprepared to respond to such structural changes (Mensing, 2010). Programs attempted to expand technology training and reorient sequence and media tracks, but a shift from industry-centered models to a community-centered model is recommended to re-engage journalism education in a more productive and vital role to the future of the field (Mensing, 2010).

Senior faculty often view Ph.D. students as “colleagues in training” rather than simply graduate assistants, and those with a Ph.D. believe a terminal degree is more important for faculty than significant work experience in journalism (Pardun, McKeever, Pressgrove, & McKeever, 2015). This supports the idea that mentees follow in their mentors’ footsteps, but if mentors are in
programs that do not focus on contemporary journalism practices, mentees will perpetuate the lack of modernization seen throughout the journalism industry.

Methodology

Diffusion of innovation is “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (Rogers, 2010). This study seeks to employ diffusion of innovation theory to understand the ways in which innovation and related digital topics are introduced in doctoral programs, thus preparing future faculty and ultimately influencing curriculum. A mixed method approach was used to first analyze faculty position descriptions and then survey doctoral students’ attitudes toward digital concepts, identifying gaps in supply and demand for stated faculty positions. A case study of a program designed to train future faculty on digital concepts provides a model for further consideration.

Analysis

**AEJMC job hub position descriptions**

An analysis of positions on the AEJMC Job Hub (http://www.aejmc.org/jobads/) was made for items mentioning digital skills and concepts. They date from March - August 2018. Positions were analyzed for mentions of terms to include digital, online, social and new media, as well as data journalism/visualization, multimedia, virtual reality, programming/coding and other emerging topics. The analysis included job descriptions, qualifications and requirements, but did not include paragraphs where schools described their existing competencies or general program or university descriptions.

A total of 108 positions for roles in Journalism, Mass Communication, Communication and other departments were identified and analyzed in this study. Of those positions, 65 or 60% were identified as tenure/tenure-track roles. Within the tenure-track positions, 46 or 71% of the position descriptions indicated a preference for candidates demonstrating digital skills and/or conceptual appreciation of digital topics.

Of the 46 positions that mentioned digital requirements, the following terms were the most frequently used (Figure 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytics</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key phrases used in job ads associated with digital

The following are examples of phrases used in AEJMC position descriptions associated with digital concepts. They range from phrases associated with multimedia and social media to game studies, virtual reality and analytics. Some descriptions were specific about the candidate’s ability to lead students in new concepts and drive change in the curriculum.

- “an emphasis in social media or data analytics”
- “data journalism and digital/ multimedia journalism”
- “experience incorporating digital technologies in the classroom”
- “evolving nature of journalism in the age of social media; the role of algorithms and infrastructure in the circulation of news”
- “experience using analytics; experience in coding is also desirable”
- “emphasis will be placed on big data analysis, computational propaganda, social media and branding, and algorithm/platform politics”
- “teach media audiences and analytics; audience and data analytics; social media applications in strategic communications; virtual reality; and audio or video streaming”
- “seeking a candidate with expertise in news writing and writing for digital environments and applications”
- “professional expertise in digital media to teach courses in at least two of these areas: digital storytelling for news and/or promotions, social media, media analytics, digital literacy & culture”
- “teaching in game design, writing for interactive media, gaming cultures, game industries and ecosystems, interpretive approaches to gaming texts, and/or psychological, social, or cultural impacts of interactive play environments”
- “emphasis can include the politics of AI, augmented and virtual systems of representation, human machine communication, and sentient technologies/robotics”
- “introduce digital media elements and teaching into curriculum”

The trends identified highlight a strong need for increased and improved exposure in doctoral programs to a range of digital concepts and topics in order to meet the requirements of a majority of available tenure-track positions.

Doctoral Curriculum Survey

During Spring 2018, an online survey was administered to doctoral students and recent graduates of doctoral mass communication programs to assess their ability to teach digital topics and the level to which they felt their programs prepared them to teach in these areas. Respondents were recruited through emails sent to graduate advisers and administrators at 44 ACEJMC accredited schools in journalism and mass communication with doctoral programs in the United States. A total of 70 respondents replied and 59 met the criteria of being a current doctoral student or having recently graduated from a doctoral program (since 2012). Respondents were not asked to indicate name, program or location, as to encourage candid responses.
Level and disciplines represented in respondents

Figure 2 demonstrates the level and disciplines represented by respondents to the survey.

Figure 2: Level and discipline of survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Student</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-assessed ability to teach digital topics

Figure 3 depicts the range of digital topics that could be introduced in a mass communication curriculum. Respondents were asked to rate their ability to teach these concepts on the following 5-point scale.

5 expert: could easily teach, or have taught, with minimal prep
4 above average: could teach with some prep
3 average: could teach with extensive prep
2 below average: could introduce topics in another media course
1 poor: no ability to, no interest in, teaching this topic

Figure 3: Self-assessed ability to teach digital topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>% 4/5 rating</th>
<th>% 3 rating</th>
<th>% 2/1 rating</th>
<th>Avg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Digital Concepts</td>
<td>79.66%</td>
<td>15.25%</td>
<td>5.08%</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photos/Video for Social Media</td>
<td>72.88%</td>
<td>16.95%</td>
<td>10.17%</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital research and theory</td>
<td>64.41%</td>
<td>22.03%</td>
<td>13.56%</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media marketing/analytics</td>
<td>62.71%</td>
<td>25.42%</td>
<td>11.86%</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Storytelling</td>
<td>59.32%</td>
<td>23.73%</td>
<td>16.95%</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>44.83%</td>
<td>29.31%</td>
<td>25.86%</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>44.07%</td>
<td>33.90%</td>
<td>22.03%</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Journalism/Visualization</td>
<td>42.37%</td>
<td>30.51%</td>
<td>27.12%</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of this sample of doctoral students indicate many topics in which respondents felt they had weak ability and little preparation to teach. They were least prepared to teach Basic and Advanced Web Development, Drone Journalism, Mobile Application Development and Virtual Reality/360 Video/Augmented Reality topics. Respondents were most prepared to teach Basic Digital Concepts, Digital Research, Photos/Video for Social Media and Social Marketing/Analytics.

*Attitudes toward digital preparation, teaching and research*

A second series of statements assessed the level to which respondents agreed or disagreed that their doctoral program prepared them to teach digital concepts, their enthusiasm for the topics, their ability to lead curriculum change in the future and the role and confidence of performing digital research.

Respondents were asked to rate their ability to teach these concepts on the following 5-point, Likert scale: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2) to Strongly Disagree (1).

*Figure 4: Attitudes toward digital preparation, teaching and research*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Avg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My doctoral program prepared me to teach digital topics.</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>41.00%</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My current program values and encourages the teaching of digital, emerging topics.</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>22.00%</td>
<td>11.00%</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am excited to teach digital topics in my career.</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>6.78%</td>
<td>3.39%</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident in my ability to help drive curriculum change in the future.</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>10.17%</td>
<td>5.08%</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My doctoral program prepared me to research digital topics.</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My current program values and encourages research on digital, emerging topics.</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>10.17%</td>
<td>8.47%</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident in my ability to perform research on emerging, digital topics.</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results in Figure 4 indicate a disconnect in how well respondents felt their doctoral programs had prepared them and their enthusiasm for teaching digital concepts. 61% did not agree with the statement “My doctoral program prepared me to teach digital topics.” But 89.8% indicated that they were enthusiastic to teach these topics during their careers.

**Case Study: Doctoral Student Workshop on Digital Skills and Concepts**

To address the disconnect between supply of candidates with specific digital sensibilities and the demand as stated in academic job descriptions and to explore the ways in which doctoral education could integrate digital scholarship and teaching, the idea of a workshop introducing digital methods was conceived. This program recruited doctoral students or those within two years of receiving their doctoral degrees to participate in a hybrid online/in-person workshop. With the support of a national funder of journalism projects, the program began promotion in December 2017. In February 2018, the program received 85 applications for 20 seats. The 20 participants were selected through a competitive evaluation process, identifying those with the highest potential and interest in learning about a range of digital topics.

In March 2018, the program began with ten online modules leading up to a one-week, in-person session. Product Management was used as an organizing concept for this program, introducing participants to a range of digital topics meant to lead toward a greater appreciation for digital skills and culture.

Topics included:

- Product Management, Platforms and Design Thinking
- Social Media and Analytics
- Web Development and Mobile Concepts
- Computational Data Analysis
- Data Journalism
- 360 Video, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality
- Drone Journalism
- Digital Curriculum Trends
- Digital Pedagogy and Scholarship

Each topic was represented in the online modules to efficiently prepare for sessions during the in-person workshop. Online modules consisted of video tutorials, exercises and discussion posts. The in-person bootcamp took place over the course of one week, with lessons corresponding to the preparation received in the online modules. During the in-person session, participants got hands-on experience with the platforms under study.

In addition to the topics above, guest speakers presented to the group, either in person or via Skype. Discussion with scholars included ways in which digital topics presented research opportunities and challenges. A field trip to local media organizations and professionals validated and confirmed many of the program’s concepts and allowed participants to interact with professionals.
The goal of the bootcamp was broad introduction to topics and not to create expert practitioners in any of these concepts. Digital products and platforms are in constant flux, and there will always be new technologies to learn and integrate into curriculum. A key mission of the bootcamp was to begin to establish a mindset of constant change and share strategies for staying up-to-date and integrating new skills and concepts into curriculum.

Assessment

The program was well received by participants. Self-assessed competency levels using the following scale were measured in a pre- (February 2018) and post-assessment (May 2018) for the 19 participants who completed the program (one participant dropped out due to personal reasons before the in-person bootcamp). Figure 5 shows the shift from pre-assessment to post-assessment for those indicating expert or above average competency. A two-tailed t-test for a non-paired sample assuming equal variances was performed on the raw assessment data to identify topics experiencing significant change during the bootcamp.

Most topics covered in the workshop indicated significant increase in self-assessed competency, with greatest improvement attributed in the areas of Frontend Web Development, Interactive Web Development, Digital Product Management Concepts, Design Thinking, Virtual Reality/360 Video and Digital Curriculum Trends. The Data Analysis item was the only item that saw a decrease in self-assessed competency, and this was attributed to introducing participants to new means of analysis (R-Studio) that were different than methods traditionally taught in doctoral programs.

Figure 5: Pre and post self-assessment
% expert(5)/Above average (4) Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Pre-Assess</th>
<th>Post-Assess</th>
<th>Point change</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frontend Web Development -- HTML or CSS</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>76.47%</td>
<td>41.47</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Web Development -- JavaScript</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
<td>42.94</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Languages</td>
<td>55.00%</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
<td>-13.82</td>
<td>0.706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive Design</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>47.06%</td>
<td>12.06</td>
<td>0.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile App Development</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
<td>24.41</td>
<td>0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Engagement</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td>82.35%</td>
<td>22.35</td>
<td>0.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Certifications</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>64.71%</td>
<td>34.71</td>
<td>0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Journalism and Visualization</td>
<td>65.00%</td>
<td>82.35%</td>
<td>17.35</td>
<td>0.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Product Management Concepts</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
<td>37.94</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Thinking</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>70.59%</td>
<td>35.59</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Reality/360 Video</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>94.12%</td>
<td>54.12</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drone Journalism</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>76.47%</td>
<td>51.47</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship and Innovation</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
<td>32.94</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Curriculum Trends</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>94.12%</td>
<td>44.12</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The average total point change for expert/above average ratings from pre-assessment to post-assessment on all items measured was 31.26 percentage points (34.29% pre-assessment, 65.55% post-assessment). This indicates a meaningful increase in exposure and confidence in the participants, adding to their qualifications for digitally focused academic positions.

Comments from participants

Comments on a final evaluation from those participating in the program included ways in which they planned to incorporate topics, improvements they anticipated to their career potential and the importance of integrating emerging topics into their research.

- I plan to use the resources on further developing my skills on data visualizations and computational data analysis. I also plan on using the project that we developed the last day. I want to expand on it and be able to use it for a possible future class.
- Teaching for me stems from my own interest in various topics, and each of the topics were so immensely exciting that I cannot wait to make myself better at the job.
- I was impressed by how much we covered in a week. It gave me the skills necessary to have a basic knowledge of many topics, and the resources necessary to expand that knowledge in the areas I am interested in.
- There is no other place where we can learn the new skills, and how to incorporate them into curriculum.
- While it is hard to become an expert in any of these things in this amount of time, it is a great place to gain confidence to move forward with these different concepts and tools.
- PhD programs in our field need to think about more than just research. They MUST also focus on pedagogy (we need to teach professors how to TEACH), and they must encourage and push students toward emerging technologies, especially as they will be the newest members of their respective departments.
- I was petrified of the term "Big Data" and the idea of immersive storytelling practices. Now I feel much more confident. And it took just 10 weeks of online modules and 1 week of intensive Bootcamp. This is definitely something that all doctoral programs can incorporate into their schedule.
- This Bootcamp makes me realize that theoretical and practical explorations are both important and inseparable, especially for researchers who study technologies and digital culture. Researchers need hands-on experiences to better understand how the given technology works and how it might affect society positively and negatively.
- The direct interaction with technologies that I had at this Bootcamp makes me a more open-minded person about the possibilities and new affordances of technology, which will inspire me for new ideas for my future research.

Discussion

This analysis discussed the disconnect between descriptions for faculty positions in journalism and mass communication with perceived candidate preparedness for these roles. A majority (71%) of tenure-track positions indicate a preference for candidates demonstrating digital skills and/or conceptual appreciation of digital topics. Topics mentioned most frequently were the phrases “digital,” “social media,” “data” and “analytics.” Many mentioned emerging topics, including
coding techniques, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, data journalism, game design and algorithmic thinking.

When doctoral students and early career faculty were polled, there was weak self-assessed proficiency in many of these areas. Fewer than 40% of those polled indicated an expert or above-average comprehension of product management concepts (37.04%), basic web design (22.03%), virtual reality/360 video (20.34%), mobile application development (13.56%), drone journalism (13.56%) and advanced web development (10.17%).

Only 39% of respondents agreed with the statement “My doctoral program prepared me to teach digital topics.” But 66.7% agreed that their programs valued and encouraged the teaching of digital and emerging topics and 89.8% said they were excited to teach digital topics. These results indicate a disconnect in candidate perception of their preparation for these roles.

The case study of the doctoral student workshop was used to assess the potential for a program to improve the preparedness of candidates for digital faculty positions. Self-assessed competencies were measured in a pre-assessment taken before the program began and a post-assessment taken immediately after the program’s completion. Most significant improvements were attributed in the areas of Frontend Web Development, Interactive Web Development, Digital Product Management Concepts, Design Thinking, Virtual Reality/360 Video and Digital Curriculum Trends. Overall, a meaningful increase of 31 percentage points in Expert/Above-Average ratings was witnessed across all workshop topics. Participants indicated marked enthusiasm and increased desire to implement and integrate digital concepts into their teaching and research. Given the success of this short program, imagine how more integrated doctoral programs, comprehensively addressing these topics, would influence faculty competencies and future curriculum strategies.

The workshop identified new topics, modules and formats for engaging doctoral students in emerging media skills and concepts. The lessons from this program can be used by doctoral programs in considering new topics and methods into their academic programs of study.

**Limitations**

The limitations of this study are in the non-generalizable nature of the data collected. The doctoral student survey sample was not randomly identified. However, the sample size was large compared to the relatively small overall population of doctoral graduate students. Recruitment through emails sent to graduate advisers assured direct access to the population under study.

The case study is limited in its ability to project results onto other programs, given its unique format and resources dedicated to it. It does, however, provoke insights to further the discussion on doctoral education in journalism and media programs. The self-assessed competencies are limited in their ability to predict actual competency. Future research should implement competency-based pre- and post- tests as another measure of success.
Conclusion

Demand is strong for those who can teach and research across a range of digital topics. This trend is expected to continue as digital and emerging technologies impose increasing influence on media and communication in the areas of social interaction, the veracity of information, the sustainability of the business of news, the influence of technology companies, the importance of privacy and information security and more. Doctoral programs in mass communication, however, have not produced enough graduates who are exposed to emerging technologies and who are competent and confident in their ability to direct teaching and research in these areas.

The results of this study have implications beyond those associated with doctoral education. A new model of preparing faculty is needed that develops a digital scholar/educator and creates a pipeline of academics who will progress through the tenure track and be able to influence future curriculum innovation across the discipline. The workshop model described in this study provides a proof-of-concept that can be used as a template for doctoral curriculum development, with the goal of fostering a mindset of innovation that can support the constant progression of emerging communication technologies. With these technologies influencing the future of media, we will need a discipline whose faculty are prepared to adapt and lead in order to best prepare students for emerging media careers.

About the Authors

Cindy Royal is a professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Texas State University where she leads the Digital Media Innovation program and is the director of the Media Innovation Lab. She teaches web design, coding and digital media innovation courses. She completed doctoral studies at The University of Texas in 2005. Her research interests include understanding the role of programming and data in journalism and the integration of technology in education. Her students have gone on to digital media careers at The New York Times, Austin American-Statesman, Blackbaud, Spredfast, Homeaway, SXSW, Texas Tribune and more. In 2013, Royal was accepted to the John S. Knight Journalism Fellowship program at Stanford University to work on CodeActually.com, a platform to teach journalists how to code. In 2013, she was named Teacher of the Year by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication/Scripps Howard and received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching at Texas State. In 2018 & 2019, Royal received the Everette Swinney Faculty Senate Excellence in Teaching Award and in 2019 was the University's Minnie Stevens Piper Professor nominee. More information on her background and activities can be found at cindyroyal.com.

Sean Smith graduated as top masters student from Texas State University's Digital Media program in May 2019, where he studied interactivity on the web, digital product management, web development and design, and journalism education and curriculum. He graduated summa cum laude from Sam Houston State University in May 2017 with a BA in Mass Communication, concentrating in multimedia journalism with a minor in political science. While at Texas State, Sean taught courses in Fundamentals of Digital & Online Media and Web Design & Publishing. He also took part in the annual SXTXState.com project, where mass communication graduate students attended SXSW Interactive and covered the event. In 2018, he was the project's web designer and editor, and was the content editor and a content creator under the Booz Allen...
Hamilton Futurist Grant in 2019. In June 2019, he became front-end developer at de//space, Gatehouse Media's innovation lab in Austin, Texas.

References


Challenges and Opportunities: In Search of Effective Ways to Teach International Media/Journalism to Students from Rural America

Jiafei Yin
Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, USA

Abstract

Informed by a review of recent research on teaching international media, journalism and communication and enriched by the author’s 20 years’ experience in teaching the subject, this paper explored what international media literacy and competence means, argued for the urgent need for teaching it, analyzed the structural challenges in teaching the subject, and searched for best-practice models in teaching the subject and assessing the impact of teaching. It focused on how we can effectively engage undergraduate students from rural areas in the outside world and spark their interest in world news and its production.

Introduction: The Challenges of Teaching International Media/Journalism

Imagine teaching international media and journalism to students from rural America when the world seems far away, when there are so many immediate needs and concerns for working students, and when their social media accounts clamor for constant attention, sometimes even in the classroom. Even without the international dimension, journalism educators are already struggling with their curriculum to stay current, trying to adapt to the digital and mobile media environment without weakening traditional journalism skills and attributes.

While some research criticized journalism schools too slow in adapting to the new media environment (Wenger et al, 2018), other studies alerted to an over-emphasis on technical skills at the expense of traditional journalism skills of critical thinking, news judgment and writing (Ferrucci, 2018; Álvarez-Arregui et al, 2017). There is also the added pressure for universities to graduate more students on time. In the curricular dilemma, what is often sacrificed is teaching international media and journalism, especially for undergraduate journalism programs in rural areas.

The academic challenges are reflections of a transformative news industry, which faces an existential crisis given the disruptive innovations in media technologies. Since digital and mobile media upended the business model of the news industry, the search for new viable business models has mostly been elusive, especially at local media outlets. Even college newspapers are fighting for survival. One Michigan college award-winning newspaper went from broadsheets to tabloid, and from three issues a week to two issues a week. The latest announcement was that when the school starts again in fall 2019, there will be only one issue a week, and the rest will be published online only. Groups of student journalists that were once bustling in the hallway outside the newsroom evaporated. Local media outlets keep shedding reporting staff. When the ranks of veteran journalists are shrinking in the newsroom, so does the size of journalism programs that serve the industry. Under such circumstances, teaching global awareness and knowledge sometimes becomes an afterthought.
Adding to the challenges is students’ lukewarm interest in world news and international media, reflected in news quizzes and writing assignments. Students often regard world news, as well as news that concerns the government, politics, policies, the economy, as “boring”. It has been challenging to engage students in world news, which requires extensive cultural, political and social background to comprehend, and even more challenging to try to engage them in different media systems, theoretical concepts and practices in producing world news.

Surveys (Mitchell et al, 2018) and research (Cunningham, 2001) showed that interest in world news remained flat since a brief spike after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The reasons often cited by students are that they are busy with their personal lives, that world news does not affect them, that world news is difficult to understand, and that world news is mostly depressing, leaving them feeling powerless about making changes. They also complain that world news is more difficult to find.

The socio-economic reality today adds more stressors to the life a college student: declining state education funding, higher tuition rates and student loan debt forcing many students to work at least half-time while carrying a full course load, some having to work full time, especially for students from rural America. When they have more immediate needs, world events become less important. The declining coverage of world news by the mainstream media as a result of substantial budget cuts (Enda, 2010) reduces world events to the bottom of news agenda, making them less visible and relevant to students’ lives. When students do not follow world news, they will be less likely to be curious about how news is covered around the world.

However, teaching global media literacy and journalism has never been more important than now (Strawser and McCormick, 2016; Mihailidis and Moeller, 2010) as it helps produce better informed and more competent global citizens and journalists with global awareness, provides more career opportunities for our students.

The Objectives of the Paper

Informed by a review of recent research on teaching international media, journalism and communication and enriched by the author’s 20 years’ experience in teaching the subject, this paper explores what international media literacy and competence means, argues for the urgent need for teaching it, analyzes the structural challenges in teaching the subject, and searches for best-practice models in teaching the subject and assessing the impact of teaching.

It focuses on how we can effectively engage the students, leaders of the next generation, in the outside world and spark their interest in world news and its production. Students have to be motivated and inspired to learn as motivated and inspired students are the most eager learners.

More specifically, this paper attempts to find answers to the two questions below:

• What are the effective ways to teach global media literacy and journalism?

• How can we assess the effectiveness of our teaching on the subject?
What Education on Global Media Literacy and Journalism Means

In order to do a good job of teaching the subject, we need to understand what it entails. In a project report where students went abroad reporting, Lee Duffield (2014) introduced two educational movements – Internationalization of the Curriculum in Higher Education and Work Integrated Learning. Duffield reviewed the definition of internationalization by De Wit (2002), which was interpreted as a “process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension … into academic institutions.” Duffield highlighted two key elements in the project: 1) an enduring faith in intensity and diversity of experience to advance awareness and personal growth, especially in intercultural contexts; 2) growing interest on the part of universities in enriching and extending the range of their students’ programs. Research and experience show that direct experience of international cultures tends to have a major impact on intercultural learning.

In another report, Mihailidis and Moeller (2010) introduced the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change that recruits worldwide and focuses on global media literacy, which is specified as media literacy, global citizenship, and freedom of expression. The academy also developed the 5A’s of “global media literacy” – access, awareness, assessment, appreciation, and action, which aimed to turn out students who “are aware of the world and their own role as a global citizen, respect and value diversity, understand how the world works,” participate in and contribute to the local and global communities, “are willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place,” and “take responsibility for their own actions”. What is unique about this program is that students produce not only media products, but also a model curriculum for others to adopt and that the goals and standards of global media literacy were developed through intercultural dialogue among the faculty and students from around the world.

Reviews of research on the subject show that business communication is at the forefront of intercultural communication. Strawser and McCormick (2016) introduced a framework as globalized communication pedagogy created by the International Association of Business Communications. The authors cited the 2016 Open Door report by the Institute of International Education as evidence that communication is a global discipline. Central to the framework was a global Communication Certification Program, which promotes six principles of universal communication success – ethics, consistency, context, analysis, strategy and engagement, also known as the “Global Standard”. The authors saw the program as a solution to an international problem of cross-cultural communication competencies and encouraged the integration of the program into communication curriculum, using the six principles as “pillars” of assessment and pedagogy.

In another report on using online debates as a tool for promoting global awareness of cultures and sustainability in business and communication, Trushnikova et al (2015) cited Chen and Starosta’s (1996) triangular model of intercultural communication competence, representing three dimensions of cognition, affect, and behavior, focusing on the abilities of intercultural awareness, sensitivity, and adroitness. Chen (2014) further explained intercultural competence as “knowing their own and their counterparts’ cultural conventions, demonstrating a positive feeling of acknowledging, respecting, and even accepting cultural differences, and acting appropriately and effectively in the process of intercultural interaction.” This might be the most radical interpretation of intercultural competence as it includes “accepting cultural differences,” which can spark further cross-cultural dialogue.
The Need for Teaching International Media Literacy and Journalism

International education should not be a luxury only for students with resources in the form of study abroad, exchange students or faculty-led special course/field trips. All students should have opportunities to be exposed to world cultures so that they acquire a global awareness, become better-educated journalists, media consumers, and active global citizens.

The need for teaching international media and journalism has never been greater, especially for today’s journalists. Global awareness and sensitivity to different perspectives to highly globalized issues, such as the economy, environment and climate change, education, health and disease control, are essential in providing insightful and fair coverage of these topics and reducing bias and stereotyping in reporting on developing countries (Kalyango and Cruikshank, 2013). Being a nationalist is part of human nature as we were all born citizens of specific countries, but to be a globalist, it takes education. In covering the world, what a nationalistic journalist can produce is not patriotic journalism, but only biased journalism.

The need for global awareness is also intensified by media convergence, which has blurred the line between domestic and international news reporting. Once uploaded online, a story takes on a life of its own, being consumed, interpreted, promoted, or criticized by viewers around the world. Somewhere in the world, it might also be banned. In the age of the new media, journalists no longer report for a targeted audience: they report for the whole world. With the traditional media, it was much more difficult to catch errors in world news and alert the reporters since the subjects in the story were often not aware of how they were represented in the story while domestic audience would not know the difference since they had no means to check. The new media provides new tools for reporting, but it has also made news reporting much more demanding with instant audience feedback.

Mihailidis and Moeller (2010) believed that it was no longer an option not to teach global media literacy. They pointed to the pace of globalization and the changing ways in which information is produced, transmitted and received. The authors encouraged teaching not only digital media skills, but also “civic engagement and global awareness,” which incorporates global viewpoints, cultures, and media systems, and building curricula that “characterize media and citizenship as inherently global, and representative of the cross-cultural media environments now occupied by a majority of individuals globally.”

The business community is one of the first to recognize the importance of global communication competencies. Strawser and McCormick (2016) believed that it was necessary that U.S. graduates develop “a global communication paradigm” so that they could function as “a global communication practitioner” given the substantial and increasing overseas presence of U.S. firms. The authors cited Sigmar et al (2012) in emphasizing that the foundation for a global communication skillset is the development of the global marketplace.

International education is important not only to journalism, communication, and business majors, but to all majors so that they can become engaged global citizens. If more people think of themselves as citizens of the world, there would be so much more goodwill and harmony in the world today and so much less hate and fewer conflicts in the world.
Challenges in Acquiring Global Awareness

However, it is no easy task for students and journalists to acquire the much-needed global awareness and understanding, given the values and beliefs they grow up with. Some of the things they will learn could be directly contradictory to what they are taught. Research shows that there is plenty of bias and stereotyping in covering the world. How can journalists be trained to be aware of their own bias in covering the world?

Gross and Kopper (2011) discussed foreign correspondents’ power in shaping perceptions of foreign countries, cultures, and policies. But biased reporting and stereotyping in world news are nothing new (Yin, 2016), and one of the major reasons is a lack of understanding of the cultures journalists cover and the lack of context that could help the audience make sense of what is happening beyond their borders. A survey of international journalism educators on their perceptions of American media’s coverage of world news crystalized some of the issues (Kalyango and Cruikshank, 2013). Survey findings showed that many of the educators, especially those from developing countries in Africa and Asia, reported negatively-biased coverage or little to no coverage of their countries by the U.S. media and that such coverage tended be devoid of context and local knowledge and reinforced stereotypes about their countries by focusing on natural disasters, famine, economic problems, and military coups. The educators expressed concerns about the impact of such reporting because of U.S. position in the world.

Researchers also discussed the fallacies of globalizing western approach in training journalists. Miller (2011) pointed to “a time of unprecedented international efforts to codify and inculcate Western-style news reporting and editing” by the turn of the century and popularize these practices of “world journalism” in places that have very different journalistic or political-cultural history than that of North America and Western Europe. Miller believed such international journalism training in “an environment of increasing contingency and dynamic changes” was too rigid and institutionalized and appeared to be “yesterday’s solutions to tomorrow’s problems.”

Sullivan (2011) provided a personal account of challenges in trying to train Balkan journalists in traditional Western journalism practices. He discussed his long and sometimes “painful” journey in training journalists in Sarajevo and admitted that “altering the perceptions I arrived with proved to be my biggest challenge.” He wrote that “...it had never occurred to me that American journalism is unique and is only practiced in the United States.”

Experiments and Possibilities in Teaching the Global Media and Journalism

Given the wisdom of these veteran journalists and educators, how can we best train the journalists for tomorrow so that they are motivated to learn about the different cultures and contexts in which world events occur and report not only from their own point of view but the view of the locals?

Research and experience in the classroom show that being personally immersed in a different cultural setting in the professional role is the best way for students to learn international journalism. Two possibilities are international internships and faculty-led study/reporting abroad programs.
International internships

Yin (2016) reported student interns’ transformative learning experience working as journalists for a national media organization in China. Given the drastic differences in culture, media systems and practices between China and the United States, the gap between rural America and Beijing, one of the largest national capitals in the world, and the professional gap between journalism undergrads and the China’s national media outlet targeting an international audience, the learning curve for the student interns was steep. In interviews the interns discussed their professional and personal growth from experience inside and outside the newsroom and provided perspectives and insight into reporting world news that only students with direct experience in foreign reporting could provide. Steeves (2006) introduced an international journalism internship in Ghana, which also provided a sharp contrast to the environment where American journalists work. The paper discussed how students overcame many difficulties in completing their journalistic tasks and acquired a new appreciation of Ghanaian journalists’ work considering the lack of resources and the working environment they were in. As with all such personally-impacting programs where students learn everything firsthand, the students came back with a new outlook on the world.

Effective as international internship programs are for student learning, there are many challenges in setting up and maintaining such programs, including finding an ideal international program partner and securing institutional support and funding, especially for students from rural areas with little resources of their own.

Faculty-led study/reporting abroad programs

The next best option for students to have direct experience of international cultures is faculty-led study/reporting abroad program, which could be more easily built into existing curriculum structure. There is also the benefit of more structure in the program, more direction under faculty guidance and easier transition into a different culture as students are introduced to it in a group rather than individually. However, logistics for the whole group and the balance between free “explore time” vs. class work could be challenges.

Duffield (2014) introduced a “faculty-level model,” where students traveled to Southeast Asia and Europe to do news reporting for campus-based media outlets and for “core learning” in “changing educational contexts.” The field work made students realize the significance and value of intercultural knowledge and languages skills in world news reporting and how crucial background was to a story. The program also encouraged students to keep diaries and write a reflective report for assessment purposes.

International masterclass

The Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change constructed a sort of a masterclass curriculum around media literacy, global citizenship, and freedom of expression (Mihailidis and Moeller, 2010). It recruited journalism students and faculty from around the world for a three-week program to create educational and multimedia products, for which students were asked to think about “how media apply to different ideologies and customs, and how media function to define and represent cultures and identities.” The questions were aimed at opening up students’ mind to bigger issues, such as all media systems must deal with access, expression, ideology, power, and government.
One result of the program is the creation of a curriculum that were downloaded in more than 100 countries, enabling new forms of dialogue across borders, cultures and divides. According to Mihailidis and Moeller, the program not only created educational content, but also a dynamic atmosphere for individual growth and transformation experienced by participants.

The goal of the program was to create a place where students from very different countries “could talk about shared goals, respect each other’s differences, find common solutions, and take responsibility for forging a better world,” according to the authors. It taught how to empower civic voice, how to be tolerant of media cultures in other parts of the world, and how to use media for better cross-cultural dialogue and less stereotyping.

Even though the Salzburg Academy program emphasizes the teaching of media literacy and global citizenship, it could also serve as a very effective model for training journalism students to increase their global awareness and knowledge. When more journalists are better educated about the cultural, historical and political differences around the world and think of themselves more as global journalists, world news reporting would be so much less biased and so much closer to the reality.

**Online communication, reporting and resources**

The new media presented not only challenges to traditional journalism, but also opportunities for better intercultural communication as new media use is guided by global media values in addition to indigenous cultural values (Shuter, 2012). It also provided new platforms for teaching international media and journalism by opening up new communication channels for cross-cultural dialogue. Crowd sourcing, virtual foreign correspondence, partnering with schools in other countries are only a few of the examples of expanding reporting and teaching resources. When direct experience of foreign cultures is out of the question, the next best option is direct communication, albeit mediated, with those cultures.

A group of international educators from the United States, China, Russia and Germany facilitated such direct online communication among their students by setting up an online debate (Trushnikova et al, 2015). The project was designed to have students provide a constructive argument, receive refutation argument, and then provide a rebuttal and summary of the project. The project provided an opportunity for direct intercultural communication among participating students and helped raise their intercultural awareness and sensitivity.

The new media also made virtual foreign correspondence possible. Hahn et al (2018) conducted an experiment where students were asked to do foreign reporting only with online resources. The authors wanted to find out how accessing resources exclusively via Internet technology shapes world news coverage. They found that in some cases it could lead to high quality products, but in others it led to co-orientation with the online sources and a lack of background and context when reporting was done off-location.

Obviously virtual foreign correspondence cannot be compared with traditional foreign correspondence in terms of local and language knowledge, reliability of information and sources, diversity of information especially from non-government sources, and the selection of relevant news topics. Nevertheless, the students were introduced to different media systems and had a taste.
of how information was packaged in a different culture. Though less than ideal, virtual foreign correspondence can benefit smaller news outlets, student media, and smaller journalism programs that might not have the resources to provide students with direct experience of foreign cultures.

**Class assignments that provide a window on the world**

The author of this paper has been teaching cross-cultural mass communication for more than 20 years and has found that one of the most challenging aspects of teaching the course is to get students interested in other media systems and international journalism when they often do not have a connection to the topic or see the impact of world news in their personal lives. Over the years, a set of writing assignments have been developed to help students rethink about their news consumption habits, especially their interest in world news, spark their interest in foreign media systems, open their eyes to bias in world news reporting, and raise global awareness by finding international angles in local events. The best lines in their papers are: “This assignment has opened my eyes to ...” or “Before this assignment, I’ve never thought about...”

The first one is about news habits. With the help of readings about Americans’ interest in world news, students are asked to analyze their own news habits and survey the people in their life on their news habits as well. Students enjoyed doing the paper. They often discover something new about themselves and sometimes are surprised about the news habits and explanations provided by their parents, supervisors at work, or best friends. At the end of the paper many students write about the importance of keeping informed about the world and make the determination that they would start doing just that. Class news quizzes help foster that habit. One alum once said happily that he still kept the habit of checking up on world news even long after the class ended.

The second one provides some kind of a “shock therapy.” Students are asked to pick a country, do a report on its status of press freedom and responsibility, and compare that with the United States. Many were shocked by the extent of government control of the press, especially in Asian and African countries and started to appreciate the freedom more. The shock opened students’ eyes to differences in media systems and journalism practices around the world.

The third writing assignment serves the same purpose but goes one step further: students are asked to do a comparative news analysis of a major world news event covered by an American media outlet and a foreign media outlet. Objectively speaking, there should be one truth to an event no matter where it occurs. However, students found different versions of an event depending on who covered it. It became truth in the eye of the beholder. Many students like this assignment the best as they are thrilled to discover the differences on their own rather than learning about it secondhand. It encourages students to examine more closely how bias is inserted into world news coverage. Some students were inspired to do a better job in world news reporting after they graduate. An additional and important benefit of the assignment is to remind the students to seek out alternative news sources when consuming world news.

The last one is to create a feature story with an international angle. World news topics tend to be complicated and seem to have little to do with students’ life. However, for this assignment one student created a story about the difficulties a local farmer was going through, enduring the impact of the U.S.-China trade war. The process of creating the story shortens the distance between the trade war and the local community and makes the student see the local impact of world events.
Once students start to look for them, they find more and more connections between the world and their local communities, albeit small and rural, and they become more curious and invested in the outside world.

**Internationalizing the curriculum**

Even in courses that do not focus on international media and journalism, there are various ways to internationalize the curriculum, including class discussions on a world news topic and how the story should be covered, an assignment on an international news topic, international guest speakers, requiring one of the interview sources to be international, and readings on the global media. Alaimo (2016) proposed partnership with a professor teaching a similar course in another country and connecting classes. The author cited the American Council on Education in promoting globalizing course content, including global trends in the profession, different national historical, political, and cultural perspectives, challenges for developing countries, intercultural issues in professional practice, and international laws, standards, and customs.

There are also specific resources that journalism educators could take advantage of in helping them adopt a global approach in teaching journalism students (“IJNet,” 2012). Produced by the International Center for Journalists in different languages, the International Journalists’ Network, IJNet, provides education and training that keeps journalists and journalism students updated on the latest global trends, media innovations, and new media tools. It has a list of resources that provide tips for verifying online information, guide to verifying images, and using Facebook for reporting.

**Assessment of the Effectiveness of Teaching Global Media and Journalism**

There appears to be consensus from research that the goal of international media and journalism education is the awareness, understanding, tolerance, sensitivity, and respect of cultural differences in world news reporting and as global citizens. Assessment of the impact of such education can be challenging as it will be difficult to measure. Trushnikova et al (2015) discussed the complex nature of international education projects and the lack of appropriate methodologies for assessment. They found that “a quantitative assessment of their impact on intercultural awareness and sensitivity has been difficult.”

Yin (2016) conducted in-depth interviews with student interns, who reported for a Chinese media organization, and learned a lot about the challenges and opportunities the students encountered during the internship. In the interviews students also reflected on their professional and personal growth through the experience, especially how to handle unexpected situations. Students were encouraged to provide examples for their learning and growth. One student said that nothing could prepare them for an internship in a country that is so different from America culturally, professionally, politically and socially. But that was the point of the internship, the student said. Differences made them think and learn.

The reporting abroad project (Duffield, 2014) required students to keep a field diary. Some provided a reflective report on objectives, experience and outcomes, which contained a narrative of the experience with commentary on the professional decisions they made in news coverage.
These diaries and reports generated rich examples and evidence for the faculty to assess stimulus for learning, achievement, and fulfilment.

Obviously, no two classrooms are alike; no two student bodies are alike; and no two instructors are alike. This paper explored some insight into some of the issues and challenges in teaching international media and journalism and the opportunities that could be taken advantage of. The goal is trying to find an effective way of engaging students in international media and journalism in a meaningful way so that they could become informed and active global citizens and well-trained global journalists, who are able to overcome an inherent national bias and contribute to understanding across national and cultural boundaries and, ultimately, to a better world.

**About the Author**

**Jiafei Yin**, journalism professor at Central Michigan University, worked for the China Daily before obtaining a doctorate in journalism from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Her teaching and research interest include world press systems, particularly press freedom and responsibility around the world, coverage of world news, journalism in China and data journalism. Of her scholarship, she is most proud of her critical review of the four theories of the press and her proposed new model for the Asian and the world press published in the Journalism & Communication Monographs. She is also very proud of starting an exchange program between CMU and the China Daily in Beijing.

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A Rod Map for Technological Egyptian Journalism Training Ecosystem

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Abstract

In this research, we sought to determine the status of professional training for mid-career Egyptian journalists, and to examine their perceptions for the effectiveness of professional training they previously receive and their needs for technological training. This research aims to explore the different factors that affect the Egyptian training environment in Egypt, to suggest and develop a practical and appropriate training roadmap. Results show that mid-career journalists reflect an increased dissatisfaction with the training environment in Egypt and express there need for continuous quality training to prepare them for an upcoming generation of technological innovation in journalism practice.

Introduction

What are the working conditions that have an impact on Egyptian journalists’ professional training? This question has not been addressed in Arabic research throughout the last decade. To fill part of the gap about this issue, we conducted a study in spring 2019 to collect data about Egyptian journalism’s professional training. The main objectives were to learn about the respondents’ opinions about professional training they previously received, their preferences and needs about training topics, and to explore the factors affecting the training environment in Egypt.

This study has been conducted at a time while a discussion of challenges that face Egyptian media is widely echoed. The training of Egyptian journalists is at the core of the industry’s challenges, that include media trustworthiness, the uncertain future of the profession, economic struggles, adoption of up-to-date media technologies, and the challenging requirement to satisfy new generations who are internet native such as the so-called generations “Z” and “Alpha”.

While journalism training in Egypt first evolved decades ago, and has been organized through different and various entities, there is still no scientific assessment of the effectiveness and validation of the training offered to Egyptian journalists in years past.

Like any other developing country, Egypt faces many economic, social, educational and political challenges. However, what makes journalism training in Egypt a vital issue is the whole context of the Egyptian journalists’ working conditions. Recent research has shown that journalists struggle to reach updated, reliable and accurate information from official websites and databases (Fahmy & Abdul Majeed, 2018).

The ownership of the Egyptian media outlets is another challenging issue due to the lack of the diversity of media companies (Elaswad, 2017; Bashir, 2016; ElMasry, 2014). Besides, other
controversial issues like journalism and freedom of expression, human rights, and the decline of newspaper readership due to an increase usage of social media platforms as a source of news among Egyptian and specially youth (Fahmy & Abdul Majeed, 2017).

In this research, we sought to determine the status of professional training and development for mid-career Egyptian journalists. We seek to examine their perceptions for the effectiveness of professional training they previously receive and their needs for technological training. This research aims to explore the different factors that affect the Egyptian training environment in Egypt, in order to suggest and develop a practical and appropriate training roadmap.

**Journalism Training Providers in Egypt**

Egyptian journalists participate in training programs, these programs—often referred to as mid-career training, it can be offered by in-house training center, formal educational institutions, or independent training organizations.

Many newspapers entities in Egypt (like Al-Ahram, Akhbar al Youm, etc.) have their in-house training centers that provide training to their staff and other journalists as well. In addition, there are other privately owned training institutions as InfoTimes, and academic journalism training institutions in the American University in Cairo, or the Syndicate of Journalists in Egypt. Recently, several journalism-training associations emerged as Danish Media Club as a collaboration between Egyptian journalists who aim to share their knowledge and experience to raise their colleagues’ professionalism.

Despite the prominence of training programs for Egyptian journalists, they have received little attention in the literature on journalism education and journalistic work. Therefore, little is known about their effectiveness.

**Literature Review**

Studying journalism training especially in transforming and developing countries has attracted the attention of researchers from different perspectives (Allan, 2014; Ireri, 2018; Rowlands & Khosla 2014; Salwu, 2017; Hoxha & Anderesen, 2014).

The study of journalists’ professional career development has been examined in past research in relation to other variables like an assessment of job satisfaction (Flores & Subervi, 2013), and training validity (Lee B. Becker, et al. 2004; Gibbs & Hellenberg, 2004; Dube, 2013). Contributions of previous research shed light on the most common issues affecting the efficiency of professional training, however, the status of journalism training that focus on technologies is not fully covered by previous research, especially in the Arab countries.

**Factors Affecting Journalism Training**

In a study of job satisfaction of US Latino journalists, results showed that availability of professional training would significantly increase the likelihood for journalists to keep their job and their preference for a training topic was digital/multimedia reporting (Maria Flores and Federico Subervi, 2013).
Seeking to join journalism-training programs can reflect the motivation journalists have for professional growth and self-realization. It also can be an indicator of their job satisfaction, as mid-career training provides journalists a way to recharge their motivation and also to “sustain interest and avoid burnout” (Lee B. Becker, et al. 2004).

**Examining the Validation and Effectiveness of Journalism Training:**

A study by Becker, et al, (2004) examined the effectiveness of two journalistic training programs operating in the United States. The researchers urged that journalists who participate in mid-career training acquire new skills, are expected to be more highly motivated more than those who do not. Journalists also expected to gain stature in the newsroom, to advance in their careers. Moreover, the benefits of journalism mid-career training are not limited to the trained journalists, as they usually share their experiences with others in the newsroom, which leads to the overall improvement in the performance of the media organization.

Another study by Dube (2013), examined the challenges for journalism education and training in developing countries, applying in a post-1994 South Africa as a case study. Results showed that no journalism education and training programs analyzed taught students to report in indigenous languages, and that journalism education and training in the selected programs did not yet address the challenges of a transforming post-1994 South Africa.

Hoxha and Andersen (2017) examined training journalists in times of transition in Kosovo. Their results pointed out to the significant gaps in the teaching of journalism in Kosovo, which they interpreted as a weakness of the education system in Kosovo along with other structural problems in the media there.

**Defining journalism training**

Previous researchers examined journalism training and education together, despite there is a difference between them (Dube, 2013; Hoxha & Anderesen, 2014). Gibbs et al. (2004:5), identified training as the teaching of a particular skill or type of behavior through regular practice and instruction. According to them, any training should include “(a) some identifiable performance and/or skill that has to be mastered; and (b) [when] practice is required for the mastery of it [skill].”

Previous research discussed the different categorization of journalism training according to the type of targeted and acquired skills. However, journalism training is the same as any other training, and aims at teaching skills that will help improve the professional practice. Early research pointed to five objectives for journalism training: to improve jobs skills, prepare for new assignments, provide job enrichment, prepare for special assignments or handle special projects, and renew employees’ enthusiasm (Lee B. Becker, et al. 2004).

De Burgh (2003) and Dube (2013) classified journalism training into two types; training for transferable skills and training for vocational skills. The transferable skills include research and investigation; information verification and assessment; communication skills; precision journalism and prioritization of news worthiness; and the ability to interpret information. On the other hand, vocational skills include analysis and construction of news stories; professional production;
operating skills; production management; interviewing skills; teamwork; meeting deadlines; using technology; and understanding audience, market, and genre.

As advanced technologies have been merged and widely used in newsrooms, the ability to master the usage of technologies in all steps and types of media production is now a vital training skill that every journalist needs to have. This study focuses on the “know-how” or “how-to-do” training related to technologies usage skills in journalism practice.

Accordingly, journalism training in this study encompasses all types of training offered to Egyptian journalists, to use any kind of technologies, whether to improve their traditional professional skills or to acquire new and innovative ones, which are more convenient to the new media environment.

**Theoretical Approach**

*Motivation and hygiene theory*

Previous research examined job attitudes by using job satisfaction and dissatisfaction as a counterbalance to each other. Researchers examined them as two separate and parallel areas, and not opposites (Flores & Subervi, 2013).

The Motivation-Hygiene Theory developed by Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959), was the most dominant theoretical approach used by previous research to examine job satisfaction in different contexts. The theory stated there is a relationship between job attitudes and job productivity. It also pointed out that the timeframe is very important, as workers’ job attitudes are dynamic, in constant motion. According to that theory, there are two types of factors affect on job attitudes and then, job productivity. The motivation factors are the internal work factors that create satisfaction or dissatisfaction. While the hygiene factors are the external ones that are necessary to avoid dissatisfaction, they do not provide satisfaction by themselves (Flores & Subervi, 2013).

Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) identified the hygiene factors as “the political, social, and technological machinery involved in the job, such as company policies and administration, supervision, physical working conditions, interpersonal relations, benefits, and job security.” The motivation factors include recognition, achievement, the work itself, responsibility, professional advancement, and the possibility of intellectual growth. (Flores & Subervi, 2013, p:3)

A study by Flores and Subervi (2013), gave special attention to race and ethnicity in examining the assessment of job satisfaction by Latino journalists. The motivation factors examined were (1) work itself, (2) advancement, and (3) growth. The hygiene factors were (1) company policy, (2) supervision, (3) relation with boss, (4) work conditions, (5) salary, and (6) relations with peers. Results have shown that the “motivation” factors which have an impact on Latino journalists’ job attitudes were work itself, advancement, and growth, while the leading “hygiene” factors that influenced their job attitudes were salary and relations with peers.
Changes in Egyptian Journalism

Studies monitor the rapid changes in journalism over the last two decades as the print industry lost readers to online news websites. This harmed its revenue from advertising as advertisers shifted to other media, especially online websites.

A brief history of journalism in Egypt

During the Sadat (1970-1981) and Mubarak (1981-2011) eras, the media industry in Egypt was characterized by the absence of true democratic practice and real political participation even after political parties were allowed to publish their own private newspaper. The parties’ newspapers lacked a real base of popular support and depended mostly on government funding (Khamis, 2011).

In the early 2000’s the Egyptian media industry has experienced the emergence of privately owned newspapers, and a growing internet accessibility, which lead to the great reduction on national newspapers’ popularity and importance. Several online news tools in the form of blogs and Facebook pages offered an uncensored alternative to government-owned media. During the last few years of Mubarak era, some of these newly emerging opposition newspapers and online news websites started to break some taboos by criticizing very senior government officials, including the president (Sakr 2016). The introduction of private news media outlets and the internet was a shift to a more pluralistic media environment.

During the Al Sisi presidency (from July 2013 until now) the Egyptian journalism industry has been dominated by semi-governmental journalism outlets and private newspapers owned by some business moguls who support the new regime. Pro-government newspapers dominate the scene, and almost publish similar news (Yousef, 2015).

In 2005, Hamdy (2005) reported more than 10 international journalism-training providers working in Egypt. In 2013, they had to shut down their offices or move to other Arab capitals when they were accused of working illegally in Egypt (Tynes, 2013). Moreover, several professional Egyptian trainers were accused of working with unlicensed organizations (Osnos, 2013).

Journalism industry problems in Egypt

Since the nationalization of the journalism industry in Egypt in 1960, Media outlets depend financially on government subsidies and advertisements as funding mechanisms. Both started to decrease in the past few years due to the political and economic circumstances, in addition to their unsustainable revenue models that struggle to achieve any interest due to a constant decline in readership.

According to Allam (2018), the main problem of the governmental newspapers is the lack of real competition between newspaper organizations or between reporters. In addition, readers consider them as mouthpiece of government. Moreover, ElMasry (2014) highlighted that this institutional situation lead to an unfair career advancement for journalists who serving the regime became a valuable criteria for promotion.
**Financial challenges:**

Newspaper organizations adopted a business model that struggle when faced with a drop in newspaper circulation. Also advertising revenues decline rapidly and migrate to online news platforms. Egyptian state-owned Journalism entities get its funding from the government and the most recent reports indicate that their debt surpasses 19 billion Egyptian pounds, a huge amount that government needs to get rid of. This economic crisis results in low wages for journalists and many of them seek a second job (ElMasry, 2014).

**Media regulation in Egypt:**

Egypt has a long history of media laws since 1880 when its first journalism law was issued. The latest one that affected media in Egypt came out during 2016 to establish the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) that applied controls to ensure that media institutions and journalists adhere to the principles and ethics of the profession.

In a reflection of SCMR how changed journalism training, Magdy (2018) reported SCMR announcement of a mandatory training sessions in “Media and National Security” for editors-in-chief of Egyptian newspapers and websites, offered by ex-military officers in the Nasser Military Academy.

According to Sakr (2016) journalism in Egypt is characterized by self-censorship. Criticizing authority contradicts many Egyptian newspapers’ practices because state-owned newspaper policies avoid any comment that could harm Egypt stability or reputation.

It is forbidden to publish any material likely to cause disputes among different religious groups, create social confusion, or criticize Arab and Egyptian society principles and traditions. This perhaps explains why most Egyptian journalists exercise self-censorship and do not conduct investigative reporting that may cause conflict (Sakr, 2016).

Nowadays, journalists are seen as merely government mouthpieces who propagate government policies without much accuracy and fact-checking. The status quo of Egyptian journalism has deteriorated due to lack of in-house training programs, low salaries and absence of fair career advancement (El Masry, 2014).

**Digitization challenges:**

Digitization challenges affect both journalist work and Egyptian newspaper outlets. It has impacted the way journalists can publish their own stories in several platforms. There is a rapidly emerging need for a quick adaptation to new technology to develop content and reach readers in those different platforms. These different platforms require different skills in gathering and verifying information from different sources (Spilsbury, 2014).

Although the importance of providing up-to-date professional training for Egyptian journalists, a training process roadmap or factors affecting its sufficiency, is not clear.
Research Questions

• What are the institutional and individual factors affecting Egyptian journalism training effectiveness?

• How effective and sufficient are the training courses presented to Egyptian journalists?

• What are the needs and challenges for future journalism training?

Methodology

We used a mixed method approach to gather data for this paper. We deployed a 17 item-questionnaire, and six semi-structured in-depth interviews with print media journalists, to get a deep understanding to training environment in Egypt.

**Data collection tool:**

We distributed an online questionnaire to a non-random sample of Egyptian journalists. The online survey was available during March and April 2019, and it includes items about in-house training experience, continuous education for journalist, and their perceptions about training importance, usability, availability, and obstacles for training.

**Participants:**

The sample consisted of 34 respondents, 58.8% were male and 41.2% female. The majority of them had long work experience as 61.8% had over 10 years of work experience, 23.5% had work experience for 5 to 10 years, and 8.8% had a work experience less than 3 year. The majority of the sample 82.4% had a degree in Communication Studies, while 17.6% had a degree in the Humanities or Computer Sciences. Respondents represented multiple age groups with 67.6% between 31 and 40 years, 20.6% between 41 and 50 years, and 11.8% between 22 and 30 years.

Factors Affecting journalists Professional Training

As the Motivation-Hygiene Theory argues that the motivation and hygiene factors influence job attitudes, productivity. Accordingly, we assume that the following factors have impact on journalism mid-career training and development.

**A: Motivation factors:**

The survey measured the motivational factor that journalists cited as their reason for wanting professional training. These motivational factors are:

• Journalists’ perceptions about their job roles, and how meaningful, interesting and challenging for journalists to achieve the ultimate effort in reporting their societies.
• The advancement factor: the journalists’ recognition of the promotion criteria in the media outlets they are working in, and their opinions about the importance of training for promotion.

• The career development factor: knowing about the available opportunities to improve knowledge and journalism skills; the available training with their media company, journalists’ assessment of training programs; their interest in having new opportunities in future training; and their preferences in training topics.

B: Hygiene factors:

The survey measured the hygiene factors that journalists cited as their reasons for wanting professional training. These hygiene factors are:

• Media outlets policies: journalists’ perception of how much media outlets care about training their staff.

• The practice factor: the recognition journalists perceive as developing their skills and apply it in practice.

• The flow of communication with managers and top executives, the encouragement/discouragement by managers to join training programs.

• The working conditions factor: the existence of an employment contract, having a syndicate of journalists’ membership, and the number of working hours for journalists.

• Wages factor includes two variables: the current salary and opportunities to increase salary.

• The relationship among peer’s factor: encouragement among colleagues, knowledge and experience sharing with peers to improve their skills and to join training courses.

Key Findings:

Results from the survey and in-depth interviews reflect respondents’ negative perceptions about training courses offered for journalists in Egypt, and describe the challenges it face.

Specialization of journalist practice (Table 1):

Researchers asked respondents to identify their role as journalists, results show varieties in the fields of work represented in the sample. As 35.3% are reporting about politics, parliament, and economics news, 32.4% cover other local issues like education, health, and 29.4% indicated that they report on culture, arts, and literature.

23.8% report on Arabic and international political issues, 23.8% were graphic designers. 14.7% report on criminal activity, 11.8% photojournalists, and 8.8% cover sports. The remaining of the sample conduct investigation reports, or cover lifestyle and legal issues.
Role satisfaction and professional career:

Results show that the majority of the respondents are highly satisfied for their roles as journalists, as 94% of the respondents illustrated that working in journalism was a fully desired decision they made willingly, and 91% of them have a positive vision for the profession of journalism with high loyalty, and still feel a sense of belonging to it.

Moreover, 70.8% exhibited active participation and enrollment in local, regional, or international professional media forums, while 10% were passive participants. Besides, 67.6% of the respondents keep track of innovative local and international media practices to maintain personal development by acquiring latest update from international journalism practice.

Strategic importance of professional training (Table 2):

Results show that the majority of respondent’s report being highly satisfied with being a journalist. As 82.3% of them confirmed that practicing journalism requires training, and 85.2% mentioned that practicing journalism requires continuous training and professional development. We can also notice that 94.1% of the respondents are aware of their continuous needs of professional training to acquire and update their skills. Also, half of them report that their media outlets encourage continuous professional training. 67.6% of the respondents expected that professional training could support their career promotion. 94% of the respondents consider that the professional skills they gained from work experience aren’t enough without training.

Perceived professional training efficiency:

Concerning the efficiency of previous professional training, the majority of the respondents reflects a positive attitude in this regard. As 88.2% of them confirmed that training workshop upskill and reskill their professional reporting, with an 11.7% disagreeing.

Almost half of the respondents agree their training was efficient, while the other half were split as follow: 14.7% think it was efficient, 17.6% think that to some extent, and 17.6% can’t evaluate its efficiency.

In the same context, 52.9% of the respondents refused to say that most of the professional training they received were not of real value, while 23.5% of them agreed to some extent, 8.8% agreed, and 14.7 do not know.

Regardless of the topic of professional training the respondents attend, 52% pointed out that most of the courses they passed were valuable while 32.3% said it was not helpful. This indicates that despite the problems facing professional training in Egypt it is still able to add value to journalists.
Technological significance in journalism practices

Results show the perceived significance of technologies in journalism practice by the majority of the respondents. While 88.2% acknowledged that use of technology is mandatory in journalism, and a requirement for future progress and adoption of latest updates.

As 70.5% of them pointed out that, they can’t fully understand and use technologies in practicing journalism without specialized training, while 29.4% can utilize the technology updates without professional training. On another hand, 20.5% and 44% of the respondents respectively strongly agree and agree that they can learn how to use new technologies by self-learning without attending professional training.

Factors Affecting Mid-Career Training:

A: Workplace impact:

Approximately 80% of respondents consider that workplace and institutional policies have a great impact on the effectiveness of journalism training in Egypt. In addition, 64.7% mention that their workload prevents them from attending training courses, and 47.1% found that their institutions' policy does not encourage attending professional training courses.

Although most of Egyptian media outlets have in-house journalism, training centers, several of them are not interested in offering professional training to improve journalists’ skills. Survey results reveals that 32% of the respondents confirmed that their current employers are not interested to provide them training. Besides, 58.8% of the respondents mentioned that daily workloads make them unable to join professional training.

In the same context, 53% of participants considered that the work environment in their media outlets prevent them from fully using their journalists' skills, and 20.5% have no idea about training offered by their media outlet.

In addition, 64.7% of the respondents indicated that their media outlets even don’t have a budget for training or financially cover their training fees when they attend an outsource training. In addition, 44% don’t host in-house training courses for their staff. A mid-career print journalist in Cairo reported in an interview.

“Our media outlets don’t have a training budget nor subsidies us to attend journalism training courses.”
Asking respondents if they expect that attending professional training could support their promotion, 52.9% didn’t expect that. However, 47% expect it could help, this can help to interpret why journalists sometimes attend inefficient training course. This also reflects inconsistency in how Egyptian media outlets deal with the professional training issue. As they do not provide enough support in this regard, while they could lean on it in their promotion criteria.

A mid-career reporter in two different full job shared a similar comment when he mention,

“Promotion criteria in media outlets in Egypt has nothing to do with gaining new skills or even work professionalism, it is about having a good relationship with authorities and the bosses, and it was never related to attending training or improving their journalism skills.”

Another journalist comments.

“Journalists’ working conditions and low wages force many journalists to work in two full jobs at the same time considering the insufficient wages they receive from their media outlets so they search for an extra job like news editors in private TV channels to raise their incomes.”

B: Self-motivation impact:

Willingness to attend a journalism training is mainly driven by self-motivation for 94% while 55.9% of the respondents consider that self-motivation made them truly engaged and get benefit from a journalism-training course. Moreover, 55.8% of the respondents clarified that due to the lack of training courses they often ask their colleagues to train them for new skills. Responses also show that 55.8% of respondents are not familiar with massive open online courses (MOOC).

Data reveal a positive attitude towards training as an opportunity for up-skilling and reskilling their journalism competencies for 85.2% of respondents, while 67.6% realized an improvement in their work after attending professional training courses. Also 61.7% said digital news outlets are more interested in training then print media.

Interviewees explain that,

“Massive open online course could be an opportunity for self-development as they offer continuing education for journalists in Egypt but the language barrier prevent their proliferation as they are unavailable in Arabic language so journalists in Egypt can’t benefit from such type of education.”
C: Professional training providers:

How much qualified the trainer is, one of the most important factors affecting respondents’ decision to join a professional training. 70.6% said they would attend a training if the trainer was highly qualified. While 52.9% of the respondents said the training topic’s quality and saliency would encourage them to attend a training.

Responses show that the Egyptian Syndicate of Journalists is a known training entity and was recognized by 82.4% of respondents as a professional training provider. Also, 50% of the respondents mentioned regional and international journalism training provider.

The survey also asked about academic journalism training providers. 64% of respondents recognized the American University in Cairo; 38.2% for College of Mass Communication at Cairo University; 29.4% of the respondents recognized Info Times company as a journalism training provider, and 26.5% of the respondents recognized the Arab Data Journalists’ Network as a training provider.

When asked to state their experience in attending online professional journalism training course, we found that 47.1% of the them never experienced any kind of online professional training, however, they want to. While 29.4% of the respondents said they experienced online professional journalism training before and consider this experience as pleasant and helpful. However 11.8% experienced it before with minimal benefit, and 5.9% of the respondents experienced online professional training and said they didn’t want to repeat it again. And finally, 5.9% were not interested in such online training.

A common theme cited during in-depth interviews was that training entities rarely offer a high quality training courses and they mention several reasons for that. For example, one of the journalists stated,

“Training programs’ curriculum tackle some basic journalism skills like information gathering and news editing that mid-career and veteran journalists don’t need anymore. Training programs provided by media entities and the Syndicate of Journalists in Egypt seem to be pour la forme (Formalistic) and doesn’t offer training programs that journalist’s needs.”

An interviewee added that the main problem for training offered by professional training entities or in-house training is mainly related to lack of organization. This involved:

“Sometimes trainers are not qualified enough to give their colleagues a high-quality training as they are chosen based on a personal relationship with the training organizer, or they are well known in the journalism field for their long career or a good relationship with authority.”

Respondents expressed some skepticism about the miss use of international journalism training providers and interviewee comments was,
“International journalism training providers collaborate with Egyptian Syndicate of Journalists to offer training courses but sometimes those international funds are miss used by their local partner. For example, allocating a budget of 200 thousand Egyptian pounds for catering while only compensating the trainer with 300 EGP.”

Themes of professional training

Respondents ranked the most beneficial training they receive in this order: News editing for print media 64.7%; Media coverage 50%; Online news editing 44.1%; Interview techniques 38.2%; Photojournalism 35.2%; Editing for Social Media 32.3%; Mobile journalism; Layout; conflicts and war coverage; News verification 29.4%, Investigative Journalism, Data Journalism, and Specialized journalism, 23.5% for each one. (As shown in Table 3)

Required professional training courses:

Mid-career journalists training is in high demand by journalists, because the emerging changes in Media practice require new skills to deal with technological innovations such as mobile journalism, and reporting for multimedia platforms. Respondents mention their requirement for training courses to focus on the following topics.

“Using Digital Techniques in Journalism Practice” and “Video Editing and Production” are the most required topics for training by 64.7% of the respondents for each one of them. Then, “Mobile Journalism” for 55.9% of them and “Investigative Journalism” is required by 52.9% of the respondents.

“Writing for Interactive Media Platforms”, “Data and news verification”, and “Data Journalism” are required as training courses by 47.1% of the respondents for each one of them.

“Dealing with Information sources” is required by 38.2% of the respondents, “Digital Photography” is required by 35.3%, and 32.4% for “Using Digital Information Sources”.

At the end of the list, “Journalistic news editing” in general is required by 23.5% of the respondents, then “Editing Features” is required by 20.6% of the respondents (Table 3).

During in-depth interviews we asked interviewees to elaborate on their journalism training needs, they stated,

“We seek to have Training courses and workshops that improve our technological skills in newsgathering, verification, editing for multimedia platform, training center rarely offer training in Mobile Journalism, data journalism investigative journalism while such topics are highly needed and are offered in other Arab countries like Tunisia and Jordan.”

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Another comment was,

“In-house journalism training center and Private journalism training center offer training to gain profits so they target fresh graduates who dream to get a chance to join the media profession.”

**Overall satisfaction about journalism training** (Table 5):

Asking respondents whether they are satisfied by the journalism training they had, results reveal that the majority of them are somewhat satisfied with the training they received, their professional skills levels, especially those related to using technologies in journalism practice, while they are not fully satisfied with the training system in their media outlets.

However, results show that 20.5% of the respondents are fully satisfied with the professional training they received, 41.1% are partially satisfied, while 29.4% are completely unsatisfied.

Overall, 44.1% of the respondents are partially satisfied with the experience and skills they have in using digital technologies in their work, and 44% of them are unsatisfied with the media outlets policies concerning journalism training and professional development.

**Conclusion**

Taking into consideration the limited size of the sample that forbidden any generalization, this study explores the journalism training roadmap in Egypt in an attempt to determine its characteristics and factors that influence it. Surveying journalists and in-depth interview results show that journalism training is in a crisis for several reasons:

The departure of international training providers who used to organize and fund training for Egyptian journalists and provide them with an opportunity to acquire practical know how from their international colleagues.

Workplace policies and conditions are the most important factor affecting the ability of journalists to join professional training, according to the respondents. Indeed, it is also the same factor responsible mainly for the imperfect and inefficiency of the Egyptian professional training environment as a whole.

Media institutions’ policies doesn’t prioritize journalism training. Respondents mentioned the lack of budgets for training and retraining their staff. Also, career structure and advancement is not related to professional development but with a good relationships with authorities. Changing those policies to consider increasing investment in professional training for journalists and to ensure that they receive a high-quality training that raises their competency in using technologies in their work.

The type of media outlet ownership seems to have no impact on a training’s effectiveness, according to the respondents. However, the financial factor has a notable impact on the ability of journalists to attend training by their own.
Journalists face low wages that make a second full-time job their best solution to maintain a decent lifestyle for their family. They also felt unsupported when they attend training, as their institution does not reduce their workload if they attend a training courses and it doesn’t support them by paying training fees.

Comments by mid-career journalists reflect an increased dissatisfaction with the training environment in Egypt because training entities organize workshops about basic journalism skills that mid-career journalists don’t need any more, and they often use unqualified trainers. Instead, they mention their need for training in several topics, such as, mobile journalism, data journalism, and news verification techniques. They also express their need to acquire new skills related to editing for multiple platforms.

As the journalism industry rapidly changes, there is a need for continuous quality training for all journalists, to prepare them for an upcoming generation of technological innovation in journalism practice. In addition, it became obvious that maintaining a high level of professionalism is unavoidable after the rapid emergence of citizen journalism.

As political circumstances affect the existence of international journalism training providers and force them to leave the scene, there is a huge need to proceed in an Arabization of journalism MOOCs to support self-motivated journalists to update their knowledge and acquires new skills.

About the Authors

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Maha abdul Majeed Attia is an Associate professor at College of Mass Communication, Ajman University since 2012, with academic and professional media training experience for +18 years. She is also an associate researcher at the National Center for Social and Criminal Research, Egypt. She is a media expert and trainer in online journalism, writing for social media, research skills development. Maha published individual and co-authoring research. Her research interests including online networking, interactive media, innovations in journalism practice, media and terrorism, social media and crisis management, journalism teaching, online research methods, qualitative analysis, online news usage, and media and social change.

References


Appendices

Table 1: Respondents’ fields of journalism practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fields of practice journalism</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reporting about politics, parliament, and economics news</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covering local issues like education, health</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting culture, arts, and literature</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting Arabic and International issues</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic designer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covering crimes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photojournalist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigative reports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lifestyle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legal issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Journalists’ perceptions about the strategic importance of professional training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements feedback</th>
<th>Agree N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practicing journalism does not require training</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updates and developments in practicing journalism make the professional training required</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not keening to join professional training, as it is useless</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The media company I am working in encourage professional training</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional training could help me to achieve career promotion</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional skills I gained from work experience are enough and I do not need to develop them</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Perceived utility of journalism training experienced by the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fields of training</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Partially Useful</th>
<th>Not Useful</th>
<th>Didn't Attend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News editing</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital news editing</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photojournalism</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data journalism</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing for SM</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Journalism</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview techniques</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News verification</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typo</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media coverage</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized journalism</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts and war coverage</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigative Journalism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Mid-career journalists training needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fields of required training</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using Digital Techniques in Journalism Practice</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Editing and Production</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Journalism</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigative Journalism</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing for Interactive Media Platforms</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data and news verification</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Journalism</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining and Target Media Audience</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with Information sources</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Photography</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Digital Information Sources and Search skills</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Editing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing Features</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Fields of journalism training offered to the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fields of training</th>
<th>Fully satisfied</th>
<th>Partially satisfied</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
<th>Completely Unsatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The available journalism training</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional output along past years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media institution training policy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage of digital technologies experience and skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Media Convergence Skills, AI Literacy, and Cores of Journalism Value - Journalism Education Reform of China in a Disruptive Age

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Abstract:

On May 18th, 2019, International Conference on Artificial Intelligence & Education promulgates the “Beijing Consensus”, proposed the “Artificial Intelligence + Education” global cooperation development framework, explored the “Artificial Intelligence + X” talent cultivating model, and promoted the establishment of 100 national virtual simulations experimental teaching centers. The Chinese media ecosystem has been sharply transformed and reformed by new technologies. Therefore, functioning as the source of journalism talents, journalism education has been undertaking an unprecedentedly new reform. By analyzing the journalism curricula, media labs, and media practice bases of key institutions in China, combining field interviews and participatory observation of Chinese mainstream journalism, the paper indicates that media convergence skills, AI literacy, and cores of journalism value are the essential elements of the future journalism education reform direction of China in the current era of media diversification.

Key words: Journalism education of China, Media convergence skills, “AI” literacy, Cores of journalism value

Overview of Research Methods

Nearly 700 colleges and universities in China have set up nearly 1,300 undergraduate majors in journalism and communication at present. This paper has combed the journalism curriculum, media labs, and media practice bases of key institutions, and combined with field interviews, participatory observations, case studies of the mainstream journalism industry in China and other methods.

This paper refers to the 2018 QS Journalism and Communication World Rankings, and selects the School of Journalism and Communication of 18 well-known universities across China, including School of Journalism and Communication, Nanjing University; Fudan Journalism School; School of Journalism and Communication, Renmin University of China; School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University; College of Literature and Journalism of Sichuan University; Journalism and Information Communication School of Huazhong University of Science and Technology; School of Journalism and Communication, Jinan University; School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiaotong University; Faculty of Journalism and Communication, Communication University of China; Communication University of Shanxi; Beijing Film Academy; Communication University of China, Nanguang College; School of Journalism and Communication, Communication University of Zhejiang; College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, City University of Hong Kong; School of Communication, Hong Kong Baptist University; School of Journalism and Communication, The Chinese University of Hong Kong;
College of Communication, National Chengchi University; Academy of Social Science, National Chung Cheng University. This paper will lay emphasis on the curriculum, innovation media laboratory and media practice base of these 18 well-known Chinese universities and colleges.

This paper has certain limitations on the research sample. First of all, the selected 18 well-known colleges and universities only reflect the status quo of China's journalism education reform to a large extent. Secondly, the information disclosure of each institution is different, and it is impossible to exhaust all the data of curricula, media labs, and media practice bases of journalism education in China. At the same time, aiming to make the research of this paper more scientific, in addition to the above 18 well-known colleges and universities, some of the special courses, media labs, and media practice bases of other journalism colleges will also be included in this paper as research samples.

Reforming Journalism Education System in China

China’s journalism education has a history of 100 years of development, and its origin can be traced back to 1918. Since the 21st century, China’s journalism education has undergone profound changes and entered the current era of media diversification. At present, nearly 700 colleges and universities in China have set up nearly 1,300 undergraduate majors in journalism and communication. The total amount of undergraduates has reached to more than 220,000. According to Professor Tong Bing (Zhang et al, 2017), up to 2017, there were 123 masters stations of journalism and communication in China, including 60 journalism majors, 63 communication majors; 19 doctoral stations, including 10 journalism majors, 9 communication majors; 6 doctoral degree conferral stations; 5 post-doctoral stations of journalism and communication.

According to the latest report of Chinese official education institution, the Ministry of Education of the PRC on October 2018, based on the current situation of China's journalism education during the transitional period, China will strive to establish a number of first-class journalism and communication stations with domestic characteristics and world-class levels. China will form a comprehensive, expert-oriented, and omni-media talent cultivation system of journalism that follows the law of news dissemination and the rule of talent growth, aiming to enhance the level of China's journalism education in response to the new demand of journalism education brought by globalization and new technologies.

Curricula

The curriculum system of journalism education in China has been established. According to the latest report of Chinese official education institution, the Ministry of Education of the PRC on October 2018, “More than 240 top-level national journalism and communication majors will be established with 500 top-level national journalism and communication courses. The curriculum system of journalism education in China can be divided into two major categories: the first category is traditional courses, and the second category is the non-traditional courses. Among them, the traditional courses include journalism history courses, research methods, and theoretical courses, journalism and communication practice courses, etc.; non-traditional courses include media convergence courses, “AI” literacy courses, interdisciplinary courses, etc..
Media labs

The layout of media labs of journalism education in China has gradually established, forming a cooperative model of “Media Lab + Media + Technology Company”, featuring in “Multimedia, Interdisciplinary and Scalable”. According to the latest report of Chinese official education institution, the Ministry of Education of the PRC on October 2018, China plans to “An additional 20 state-level journalism and communication convergence media exemplary centers will be established for experiment and teaching. Meanwhile, 50 national journalism and communication virtual simulation experimental teaching programs will also be established.” Currently, media labs of journalism education in China can be divided into five categories according to their functions: the first is traditional media-teaching labs, the second is media convergence labs, and the third is interdisciplinary labs such as artificial intelligence, big data, and brain science. The fourth category is the innovative media labs. The layout of media labs of journalism education in China has greatly promoted the specialization of journalism education and integrated the digitalization of journalism and communication technology.

Media practice bases

The system of media practice bases of journalism education in China has gradually established, combining colleges and universities with journalism industry in the form of “Production-Education-Research”. Since journalism is a subject of strong applicability, Many colleges and universities in China have formed the "School-Enterprise" mechanism with the journalism industry, which helps to promote the combination of journalism education specialization and news media industrialization. Representative universities include Communication University of China, Renmin University of China, Tsinghua University, Fudan University, Nanjing University, and Jinan University.

Teaching Media Convergence Skills as Mainstream

The rapid development of new media has exerted huge impacts on the traditional media industry and social life. On February 28th, 2019, the 43rd Statistical Report on Internet Development in China released by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) showed that as of the end of December 2018, the number of Internet users in China reached 829 million(CNNIC, 2019). Through the participatory observation and structured interviews with Chinese mainstream radio and television stations and newspaper offices, most of the traditional media has promoted media convergence. For example, China Media Group implements “Pay equal attention to new media and traditional media, but put the news on new media platforms and then on traditional ones” policy. Similarly, Guangzhou Daily Newspaper Group implemented “put the news on new media platforms and then on newspaper” policy. The profound changes in the traditional media industry have forced the source of journalism talents — journalism education to cultivate a large number of talents who have mastered media convergence skills.

1. Connotation and iteration of media convergence skills

Convergence news mainly refers to the news that uses multimedia means to converge different media such as newspapers, radio and television stations, websites and mobile phone clients on one
information operation platform to edit, and disseminates news according to the needs of audiences of multimedia platforms. Media convergence skills refer to the skills that serve convergence news. It can be divided into two categories: “Multimedia Information Convergence Skills” and “Convergent Editing Skills”. With the development of media technology, the connotation of media convergence skills is constantly iterating.

“Multimedia Information Convergence Skills” refers to the journalistic ability to edit news for convergent media platforms by collecting and integrating multi-channel information. The convergent media editors need to have strong abilities to collect and identify information resources and judge the value of news. “Convergent Editing Skills” refers to the comprehensive journalistic ability of convergent news planning, writing, and broadcasting on text, pictures, video, audio, web page editing, and beautification, etc.. The convergent media editors also need to use the above skills to plan, coordinate, and share resources to improve the efficiency of editing process.

The innovation of media technology drives the continuous iteration of the connotation of media convergence skills. As the resource of journalism talents, China's journalism education deeply reforms by setting up curricula and education practice of media convergence skills.

2. **Curricula of media convergence skills**

A large number of colleges and universities have opened majors and curricula related to media convergence skills. Teaching media convergence skills has become mainstream in China’s journalism education. Through the data collected from 18 well-known Chinese universities by their official websites and field interviews, this paper summarizes the media convergence skills courses in Table 1:

*Table 1. Chinese Well-known Universities Media Convergence Skills Courses Summary*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Colleges and Universities</th>
<th>Media Convergence Skills Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Nanjing University</td>
<td>New Media Applications, New Media Communication, New Media Research, Convergent Media Reporting, Video Production and Communication, News Visualization, News Product Planning and Operations, Media Convergence, New Media Communication and Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fudan Journalism School</td>
<td>Introduction to Media Convergence, Convergent Reporting, New Media Communication and Development, Multimedia Production, Introduction to New Media Technology, New Media Business Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Renmin University of China</td>
<td>Cross-media Communication Experiments, Convergent Media Audio-visual Reporting, New Media Management, Chinese Media Convergence and Practical Research, Visual Communication Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University</td>
<td>Digital Media Technology, Video News, News Practice of New Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Literature and Journalism of Sichuan University</td>
<td>Introduction to New Media, Omni-Media Integrated and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism and Information Communication School of Huazhong University</td>
<td>Creative New Media Production, New Media Editing, Innovative Design of New Media Application Models, Visual News Reporting, New Media Audiovisual Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Jinan University</td>
<td>Introduction to Network Communication, Introduction to Television Broadcasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiaotong University</td>
<td>Internet and New Media Practice, Case Study of Internet and New Media Development case, Cross-media Integrated Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Journalism and Communication, Communication University of</td>
<td>Convergent News Reporting and Production, Convergent Journalism, Interaction Design in New Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China, Nanguang College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication University of Shanxi</td>
<td>New media Planning, New Media Creative Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing Film Academy</td>
<td>New Media Management, New Media and Film Industry, New Media Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication University of China, Nanguang College</td>
<td>Omni-media News Practice, New Media Creative Practice, Mobile Media Video Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Communication University of</td>
<td>Multimedia Design and Layout, Digital Media Technology and Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhejiang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, City University of Hong</td>
<td>Visual Communication, Multi-Platform Publishing Design and Layout, Multimedia Writing, Digital Photojournalism, Communication and New Media Research Methods, Internet Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Communication, Hong Kong Baptist University</td>
<td>Visual communication, TV and New Media, Multi-platform News, Convergent News Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, The Chinese University of Hong</td>
<td>Broadcasting and TV News, New Media Ecology, New Communication Technologies, New Media Content Development, Media Economy and Information and Communication Technology, Multimedia Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Communication, National Chung Cheng University</td>
<td>New Media Creative Writing, Audio and video News, TV, Cross-media News Design and Production, Multimedia Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Social Science, National Chung Cheng University</td>
<td>Digital Media Production Practice, Digital Integrated Media Practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It can be seen from Table 1 that all 18 well-known Chinese journalism and communication institutions have opened courses related to media convergence skills. Basically, courses related to media convergence skills have become an indispensable part of China’s journalism education curriculum system. The media convergence skills courses can be divided into two categories, one is a theoretical course, such as: “Introduction to Media Convergence”, “Introduction to New Media Technology”, “Introduction to Network Communication” etc.; The other category is skill-based courses, such as “New Media Communication and Application”, “Convergent Media Audio-visual Reporting”, “News Practice of New Media”, “New Media Audiovisual Program Production”, “Convergent News Editing” etc.

3. Education practice of media convergence skills

The applicability of media convergence skills, that is, the combination of “theory” and “practice” is the core competitiveness of journalism talents. Therefore, China’s journalism education reform pays great attention to cultivate the applicability of media convergence skills of media news talents and opens a large number of multi-functional, cross-media, convergent media labs and media practice bases to respond to the needs for journalism talents.

3.1 Convergent media labs

China's well-known journalism and communication institutions have established a number of distinctive convergent media labs. According to statistics, the first convergent media lab in China was established in 2007 by The Cheung Kong School of Journalism and Communication at Shantou University, coping with the School of Journalism of the University of Missouri. Nanjing University Jinling College established its convergent media lab at the end of 2008 followingly, and it cost about 7 million yuan. (Zhang et al, 2017) Accordingly, Communication University of Zhejiang, Tsinghua University, Renmin University of China, and other universities have opened convergent media labs. In October 2015, the School of Journalism and Communication, Renmin University of China, coping with AsiaInfo Technologies, jointly established the AsiaInfo Convergent Media Lab, also an experimental platform open to the public.

The Communication University of China established the All-Media Operation Center in 2018, aiming to cultivate convergent media talents. The lab builds an omni-media interactive news studio with virtual environment packaging system and data visualization large screen, where students can complete various forms of programming. (CUC, 2018) Convergent media labs in China have introduced a variety of leading technologies to promote the development of media convergence technologies in China.

3.2 Convergent media practice bases

The “University-Enterprise Cooperation” mechanism contributes to the successful establishment of media practice bases in Chinese universities. For example, School of Journalism and Communication of Beijing Normal University cooperated with Baidu Corporation to establish a “New Media Innovative Space”. Journalism and Information Communication School of Huazhong University of Science and Technology and JC-Vision Co. Ltd. in Hubei province jointly built four workshops, including “New Media Practice Base”, “Production-Education-Research Studio”, “Job Training Studio”, and “Product Promotion Studio” (HUST, 2015) Many Chinese universities have
cultivated convergent media talents by signing agreements with traditional media and Internet companies.

**Teaching “AI” Literacy as Innovation**

Intelligence media refers to media assisted by all sorts of artificial intelligence technologies. The advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, blockchain, sensors, virtual reality, and 5G mark the entry of Chinese journalism into the intelligence media era. Since the era of intelligence media has come, China’s journalism education is facing an urgent need for innovative reform, cultivating journalism talents with “AI” literacy.

According to the latest report released on International Conference on Artificial Intelligence & Education by the Ministry of Education of the PRC on May 16th, 2019, China plans to establish 50 artificial intelligence colleges, research institutes or cross-research centers by 2020. China has formulated the “Development Planning of Education Informatization Decade (2011-2020)” and the “Education Informatization 2.0 Plan of Action” to support and guide the modernization of education in China. Chinese colleges and universities plan to lay out artificial intelligence-related disciplines and curriculum systems, explore the “AI + X” talent cultivating model, promote the construction of 100 national-level virtual simulation experimental teaching centers, and strengthen the cultivation of inter-disciplinary and application-oriented talents. (MOE, 2019) Based on this, China’s journalism education is actively exploring ways to cultivate the “AI” literacy of journalism talents. The proportion of teaching content related to “AI” literacy in the China’s journalism education system is gradually increasing, and many innovative “AI” majors and curricula, “AI” media labs and “AI” media practice bases have set up.

**From emerging technology to general literacy**

Nowadays, “humans” and “machines” are shaping each other. The State Council of China promulgated the “Development Planning for a New Generation of Artificial Intelligence” in July 2017. This official development planning officially upgraded “artificial intelligence” to China’s national strategy. Therefore, as an emerging technology, artificial intelligence will gradually become a general literacy for all. Artificial intelligence technology is driving the reform of China’s journalism industry and reshaping the Chinese media ecology. New technologies such as data journalism, computer-aided editing, multimedia processing, machine learning, recommendation systems, search engines, immersive media, social media robots, robotic news reporting, and automated content production and promotion systems are gradually gaining popularity in mainstream media organizations in China.

Chinese colleges and universities actively respond to the initiative by setting up new teaching contents combined new technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and virtual simulation with journalism and communication, covering innovative “AI” majors and curricula, “AI” media labs and “AI” media practice bases.
“AI” literacy curricula

Recent years have witnessed China's journalism education attaching importance to “AI” Literacy, setting up teaching content combining new technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and virtual simulation with journalism and communication. According to the latest information, the School of Communication of Hong Kong Baptist University set up the “MSc in AI and Digital Media” in 2019, becoming the first interdisciplinary major to combine the application of artificial intelligence and big data analysis with journalism education in China. The curriculum provides students with cutting-edge interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, covering big data analytics, the theory and application of artificial intelligence, and media communication. The major is opened and run by the School of Communication and co-organized by the Department of Computer Science. Students can take courses in accordance with their undergraduate professional backgrounds. (HKBU, 2019) Table 2 shows the curriculum for this major:

Table 2. Curriculum of MSc in AI and Digital Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student background</th>
<th>Semester 1</th>
<th>Semester 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Basics in Media and Communication</td>
<td>Ai for Digital Media + At least one core elective course + At least one free elective courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and Communication</td>
<td>Basic Programming for Data Science</td>
<td>Ai and Digital Media Workshop + At least one core elective course + At least one free elective courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Basics in Media and Communication + Basic Programming for Data Science</td>
<td>15 (five courses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15 (five courses)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the same time, through the data collected from 18 well-known Chinese universities by their official websites and field interviews, this paper summarizes the “AI” literacy courses in Table 3:

Table 3. Chinese Well-known Universities “AI” Literacy Courses Summary Table
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Colleges and Universities</th>
<th>&quot;AI&quot; Literacy Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Nanjing University</td>
<td>Data Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fudan Journalism School</td>
<td>Data Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Renmin University of China</td>
<td>Programming Language Foundation, Big Data and Public Opinion Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University</td>
<td>Programming in Media, Data Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Literature and Journalism of Sichuan University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism and Information Communication School of Huazhong University of Science and Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Jinan University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiaotong University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Journalism and Communication, Communication University of China</td>
<td>Data Mining and Visualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication University of Shanxi</td>
<td>Virtual Reality Technology, Human-computer Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing Film Academy</td>
<td>Virtual Reality Advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication University of China, Nanguang College</td>
<td>SPSS Data Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Communication University of Zhejiang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, City University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>Media Data Analysis, Interactive Digital communication, Interactive Electronic Communication, Interactive Advertising, Interactive Digital Animation, 3D natural interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Communication, Hong Kong Baptist University</td>
<td>Data Mining and Information Analysis, Human-computer Interaction, Social Computing and Network Intelligence, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, AI Theory and Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, The Chinese University of Hong Kong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Social Science, National Chung Cheng University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from Table 3, 12 of 18 colleges and universities have opened news courses related to “AI” literacy. Generally speaking, the “AI” literacy courses offered by universities in Hong Kong and Taiwan are comparatively diversified and comprehensive, but the popularity of the “AI” literacy-related courses in the Chinese journalism education system still needs to be enhanced. It should be pointed out that a university that does not have a relevant course does not mean that it does not involve “AI” literacy-related news teaching. For example, it will be mentioned below that Huazhong University of Science and Technology and Jinan University have already established media labs related to “AI” literacy. The above-mentioned “AI” literacy courses can be divided into three categories: The first category is courses related to big data, such as: “Data Journalism”, “Big Data and Public Opinion Analysis”, “Data Mining and Information Analysis”, etc.. The second category is courses related to artificial intelligence, such as: “Human-computer Interaction”, “Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning”, “AI Theory and Application”, “Human-computer Interaction Design”, etc.. The third category is courses related to virtual simulation and media applications, such as: “Virtual Reality Advertising”, “Interactive Advertising”, “Interactive Digital Animation”, “Future Interactive Movie” and so on.

**“AI” literacy education practice**

In the context of the intelligence media era, the establishment of “AI” media labs is one of the most popular ways to equip students with “AI” literacy. The cooperation between the Chinese universities and journalism industry to build “AI” media labs still follows the “University-Enterprise Cooperation” mechanism.

For example, Huazhong University of Science and Technology has established “Intelligent Media Computing and Network Security Lab”. It mainly focuses on the relationship between technologies and media, and conducts researches of “Digital Media Processing and Retrieval”, “Video Affective Computing”, “Augmented Reality”, and “Network Security and Big Data Processing”.

Communication University of China has established “Neuroscience and Intelligent Media Institute (NIMI)”. It establishes the “Brain Simulation Public Experimental Platform” by “Rapid Brain Simulation Technology”, conducting researches of artificial intelligence, neurochip, and cognitive science based on contemporary brain science.

Jinan University has established “Lab for Big Data and Communication” with “Domestic and Foreign Public Opinion Data Mining System and Case Library Platform”. The platform is able to monitor major Chinese news media, Weibo, WeChat official accounts with over 5 million fans, and major international social media platforms.

The Media Lab of the School of Journalism and Communication of Renmin University of China collaborates with Qianjiang Evening News of Zhejiang Daily Newspaper Group to develop a new version of “Zhejiang 24-hour Mobile Client” and three other intelligent new media products with “Thousands of People with Thousands of Faces” function to precisely distribute news to users according to their interests, demonstrating the latest application of “AI” technology in media practice.
Elaborating Cores of Journalism Value as an Iteration

In the diversified and disruptive age, the emerging media technologies have brought many new problems to journalism industry such as false news, polarized opinions caused by algorithm, privacy protection, social monitoring, deconstruction of traditional journalism. At the same time, under the impact of We media, Chinese media organizations and journalism education are facing urgent needs to reform and it is urgent to clarify the connotation and essence of journalism professionalism in the current media ecology. This paper believes that in order to realize the cores of journalism value, the reform of China’s journalism education should elaborately iterate, rebuilding new type of journalism professionalism in the field of law, morality, and ethics. It is of great significance to endowed new connotation to cores of journalism value.

1. New connotation of cores of value for media organization

The popularization of the Internet and the development of media technologies have enabled the rapid development of Chinese social media platforms and WE media platforms, and everyone can become citizen journalists. The collision between “The Fifth Estate” (ie, citizens and social media) and “The Fourth Estate” (ie, institutional media and journalists) has deconstructed traditional journalism professionalism, awaiting elaborately reestablishment. Under the impact of WE media, China’s journalism layout has changed dramatically. Journalism autonomy and media authority are facing a severe trial. How to reconstruct journalism professionalism and endow new connotation to cores of news value has become a major focus of the reforming Chinese journalism industry.

1.1 Relationship between institutional media and WE Media

In the era of “fake news” and “post-truth”, the truth of news is facing severe challenges. Worse still, under the impact of WE media, institutional media is facing unprecedented pressure to reform. Traditional institutional media such as newspapers, radio, and television have explored new media development paths and borrowed innovative thinking from WE media. At the same time, institutional media expect to rebuild media authority and take responsibility for leading the development of WE media. However, the current Chinese institutional media has not yet caught up, and it is necessary to continue to make changes in response to the new media ecology, for instance, changing the way of thinking on agenda setting of social issues. Traditional institutional media and journalists should actively explore the elaborative iteration of journalism professionalism, clarify the essence of cores of news value, and rebuild media authority.

1.2 Insistence and iteration of journalism professionalism

Journalism professionalism emphasizes the function and responsibility of media to collect, organize and disseminate information independently. Objectivity and neutrality are the main features of journalism professionalism. Journalism professionalism also covers a series of value systems such as the social function of media, the moral ethics of news, and the social beliefs that news should adhere to. In the era of diversification, journalism professionalism has been shattered in many ways: the development of social networks, the emergence of “The Fifth Estate”, the social expectations of media, and the way of thinking and judging news. Regrettably, many professional journalists fail to insist on core values of news, lack the ability to distinguish online opinions, and fall into the trap of emotional communication so that they lose the core values of journalism.
professionalism—objectivity and neutrality. Therefore, journalism professionalism needs to elaborately iterate; but the objectivity, neutrality and journalistic ethics system are still the cores of news value that journalists should adhere to.

2. Curricula of journalism professionalism

Through the data collected from 18 well-known Chinese universities by their official websites and field interviews, this paper summarizes the journalism professionalism courses in Table 4:

Table 4. Chinese Well-known Universities Journalism Professionalism Courses Summary Table
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Colleges and Universities</th>
<th>Journalism Professionalism Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Nanjing University</td>
<td>Negative News Communication Research, Fact Checking, Media Ethics and Regulations, Media Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fudan Journalism School</td>
<td>News Communication Regulations and Ethics, Public Opinion Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Renmin University of China</td>
<td>Theory and Regulations of Journalism and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University</td>
<td>Introduction to Public Opinion Study, Media Ethics and Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Literature and Journalism of Sichuan University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism and Information Communication School of Huazhong University of Science and Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Jinan University</td>
<td>Media Law and Journalistic Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiaotong University</td>
<td>Ethics and Regulations of Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Journalism and Communication, Communication University of China</td>
<td>Journalistic Ethics, Media Ethics and Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication University of Shanxi</td>
<td>Journalistic Ethics and Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing Film Academy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication University of China, Nanguang College</td>
<td>Ethics and Regulations of Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, Communication University of Zhejiang</td>
<td>Ethics and Regulations of Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, City University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>Ethics and Regulations of Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Communication, Hong Kong Baptist University</td>
<td>Media Ethics and Regulations, Media Laws and Ethics, Media Policies and Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Journalism and Communication, The Chinese University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>Journalistic Ethics Analysis, Laws and morals of Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Communication, National Chung Cheng University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Social Science, National Chung Cheng University</td>
<td>Ethics of Communication, Regulations of Communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from Table 4, 14 of 18 well-known universities offer specific courses related to journalism professionalism. There are two main categories of courses related to journalism professionalism: The first category is traditional journalism professionalism courses, which mainly involve journalistic ethics, laws and regulations of journalism, and media literacy, such as: “Journalistic Ethics”, “Media Ethics and Regulations”, “Regulations and Ethics of Communication”, “Media Literacy”, “Media Law and Ethics”, etc.. The second category is non-traditional journalism professionalism courses, such as: “Negative News Communication Research”, “Fact Checking”, “Public Opinion Study”, “Introduction to Public Opinion” and so on. It can be seen that in the diversified and disruptive age, and under the impact of WE media, Chinese universities have opened new types of journalism professionalism courses in response to the new media ecology, and added new teaching content such as “Fact Verification” and “Public Opinion Warfare” into journalism professionalism educational framework, cultivating new journalism talents who adhere to journalism professionalism by elaborately iterating journalism professionalism.

3. Education practice of journalism professionalism

The education practice of journalism professionalism is facing major challenges. Some scholars pointed out that with regard to the education practice of journalism professionalism, “There are too many micro-designed experiments, not enough comprehensive media management and control experiments. The experiment on the information dissemination supervision of the Internet is basically blank.” Therefore, facing intricate network environment, especially under the impact of WE media, media labs should elaborately design experiments related to network opinion supervision and fact checking to strengthen journalism talents’ understanding and ability of journalism professionalism.

For instance, facing the era of fake news and post-truth, Nanjing University has put forward “NJC Truth Verification Record” practice platform. It enables journalism students to practice with the journalistic concept of “Fact Verification”, evaluate the fact statement accuracy of Chinese media coverage, and inspect the value of journalistic professionalism in the diversified and disruptive age. (NJU,2017) Under the impact of WE media, the emergence of teaching content related to new journalism professionalism such as “Fact Verification” reflects the elaborative iteration of journalism education reform of China. The education practice of journalism professionalism in a disruptive age should aim to cultivate journalism talents equipped with high quality, ethical and professional standards and professional knowledge.

Conclusion

Since the 21st century, China’s journalism education has undergone profound changes and entered the current era of media diversification. This paper sorts out journalism curricula, innovative media labs, and media practice bases in key universities of China, and clarifies that China’s journalism education is reforming in three aspects: media convergence skills, “AI” literacy, and cores of journalism value.

Based on researches of Chinese journalism education in the transitional period, this paper indicates that media convergence skills, “AI” literacy, and cores of journalism value are the essential
elements of the future journalism education reform direction of China in the current era of media diversification.

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Are Interdisciplinary Studies an Element of Journalism Education? A Curriculum Analysis of Universities in Central Brazil

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Antonia Alves Pereira  
Mato Grosso State University, Brazil

Abstract

Journalism education in contemporary society requires curricula that value a generalist, humanist, critical and caring professional. Interdisciplinary studies should thus be a valuable and necessary component in educating future journalists. This article explores interdisciplinary studies as an educational element by analyzing the curricula from three journalism courses in the Brazilian Midwest. It uses four indicators to check the level of interdisciplinarity according to the basis provided in the National Curriculum Guidelines (2013): the framework of the theory, the contextual knowledge and perception of the profession, the understanding of journalistic production processes, particularly where the interdisciplinary connections stand in the curricula observed for this paper.

Keywords: journalism education; interdisciplinary studies; comparative analysis; case study; Brazil

Interdisciplinary Studies and Education

Discussions in education on interdisciplinary studies (understood as the connections established between two or more disciplines) started more prominently in Europe in the 1970s, before spreading to different countries around the world. In some places, however, the meaning of interdisciplinary has been adopted without understanding the influence and importance it has towards teaching in a number of areas. In Brazil, there are criticisms surrounding the 1971 edition of the Education Guidelines and Bases Law (Law No. 5692) and how it highlights “integrated studies” without understanding them as a form of incorporating disciplines to make sense of people’s lives.

Professor Ivani Fazenda (2003) reports that “the basic concepts: pluri, multi, inter and transdisciplinarity” were discussed in the 1970s:

The graduation between these concepts was established through coordination and cooperation between the disciplines. When we say pluri or multi, we imagine a juxtaposition of content belonging to heterogeneous discipline, we can also think about the integration of content within the same discipline. When dealing with inter, we would have something else, a relationship of reciprocity, of interaction that can provide dialogue between the different contents as long as there is an intersubjectivity present in the subjects. (...) Thinking about subjects radically changes the focus of the problem of knowledge, from the substitution of a fragmentary conception of the discipline to the unambiguity of the human being (FAZENDA, 2003, p. 48-49).
According to Fazenda (2001), interdisciplinary studies represent

(...) a new attitude towards the question of knowledge, an openness to understanding hidden aspects of the act of learning, putting them in question. (...) Interdisciplinary studies are based on an action in motion. This movement can be perceived in its ambiguous nature, with the assumption of metamorphosis, uncertainty (p. 11-12).

Conducting research on the interdisciplinary studies of journalism teaching thus requires one to observe the pedagogical practice, the disciplines and the institutional curriculum. It does not disregard the subjects involved in its conception (teachers) and practice (students). Openness toward an interdisciplinary experience would then replace the fragmentary conception with the unitary conception of human beings, bringing it closer in meaning to the dialogical education present in Paulo Freire’s studies (2018a). Fazenda also defends the importance of understanding integration as a necessary step for interdisciplinary studies, the “moment of organization and study of the contents of disciplines, a stage for interaction that can only occur in a regime of co-participation, reciprocity, mutuality” (1979, p. 21).

In a text from the 1990s, Fazenda argues that interdisciplinary studies involve relationships that incorporate values and attitudes into the interdisciplinary teaching profile. In this way, it strengthens

(...) an attitude for alternatives to know more and better; an attitude of waiting before consummated acts, an attitude of reciprocity that impels to exchange, that impels to dialogue - dialogue with identical pairs, with anonymous pairs, or with oneself – an attitude of humility in the face of the limitation of one's own knowledge, an attitude of curiosity towards the possibility of discovering new knowledge, an attitude of challenge - challenging the new, challenging to reshape the old – an attitude of involvement and commitment to the projects and the people involved in them, being committed to always build in the best possible way, an attitude of responsibility, but, above all, of joy, of revelation, of encounter, of life (FAZENDA, 1994, p. 82).

The word dialogue in the excerpt above expresses the relational dimension based on the five principles that support interdisciplinary teaching practice: humility, expectation, respect, coherence and detachment (FAZENDA, 1979). This concept is intrinsic to Paulo Freire’s (1997) proposition of dialogic subjects (teacher and student) in interdisciplinary work. The same intention behind learning in order to understand and then teaching (which motivates the interdisciplinary teacher) is implicit in the dialogue, it assumes that “an attitude of openness, a relationship of reciprocity, friendship and receptivity can only basically occur if there is a prior intention in knowing the other” (FAZENDA, 2001, p.18).

1. Professor Ivani Fazenda is a pioneer in interdisciplinary studies in Brazil. She was head of the Interdisciplinarity Studies and Research Group, created in 1981 in connection with PUC-SP, which promoted the advancement of Brazilian research in collaboration with international studies. In 1979, Fazenda published her book “Integration and Interdisciplinarity in Brazilian Education: Effectiveness or Ideology”, in which she criticizes incorporating the ideas of the concept without understanding what an interdisciplinary course is, what makes it different, its specificities, and the lack of sharing the reasons that led teachers to teach a particular subject, or what motivated them to enter the field of education.
This article considers spatial dimension as an element of analysis. The Midwest of Brazil was geographically isolated from the metropolises, the hubs of decision making, until the 1960s (Santos & Silveira, 2003). The inauguration of Brasilia as the capital of the Republic in 1961 started to reduce this distance - first in the state of Goiás, where the Federal District was transferred, and then the state of Mato Grosso, which was split into two halves in 1977, creating the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. Institutions of higher education and their journalism curricula emerged from this “exploration” towards the West, a defining movement towards constituting the academic staff of universities in the region which was made up of local professionals and educators from other Brazilian states. The constitution of the courses and the design of the pedagogical projects naturally followed the logic of sharing and dialogue between educators of different origins (territorial and intellectual). In this regard, this article aims to verify how this spatial condition manifests in interdisciplinary studies of curricula observed in the field.

**Interdisciplinary Studies and Journalism Education**

Fazenda’s perspective (op. Cit., 2003) enriches the interdisciplinary proposal recommended by the National Curriculum Guidelines for journalism courses, which states that the training for journalists must meet the demands of contemporary society and produce professionals with a generalist, humanist, critical and reflective profile. In order to develop the general and specific skills of the profession, the course’s pedagogical project must incorporate six aspects of training (humanistic, specific, contextual, professional qualification, practical application and laboratory practice) and use methodologies that promote the integration of content in teaching, research and extension.

Since it came into effect in 2015, the content of the Curriculum Guidelines for Journalism Courses has been debated inside and outside academia, as in the case for the Journalism Pedagogy postgraduate course at the Santa Catarina Federal University (UFSC), which analyzed ten (out of a total of 54) pedagogical projects from institutions across the country. The results were published in a book which assembles evaluations of humanistic formation, journalism identity and communication, and journalistic ethics. In order to investigate the teachings of journalism, scientific and specialized journalism, digital and innovation journalism, and print and audiovisual journalism, the authors studied the interfaces between journalism and press relations, as well as the implementation of mandatory supervised internships (MEDITSC; AYRES; BETTI & BARCELLOS, 2018).

Another perspective of journalism education comes from Cerqueira (2018), who presents the hypothesis that the pedagogical function of journalism on television and other media is constituted by three dimensions: knowledge, language and didactic devices. He argues that

> Knowledge is linked to training, behavior, professional performance, to the journalistic method. That is, they must be in professional thinking-acting. (...) The language of television journalism linked to adopting its own way of producing knowledge (...). And the didactic devices, the visual and textual operations, for producing a report. They are used to make content more understandable and accessible. The fruits of individual and collective initiatives, internalized in production routines (CERQUEIRA, 2018, p. 17).
The pedagogical dimension of journalism education has been the object of attention for universities for decades. Moura (2016) compared journalism training based on the National Curriculum Guidelines (Brazil) with the Bologna Process (Portugal) and pointed out the similar dimensions in both countries related to the education, egress and knowledge required for journalist training. Brazilian references center around knowledge/theories and their relationship with journalistic practices, while Portuguese references focus on the profession and its relationship with the university. Moura defends the idea of having a greater intersection of these sources in order to think about academic education from “new perspectives on the area and the profession, and the implementation of curricular guidelines in Brazil that focus on quality education for qualified journalism” (MOURA, 2016, p. 13).

We also look to authors who think of journalistic training in the environment of society’s permanent transformation into curricula that focus on generalist, humanist, critical and reflective professionals. In Brazil these issues are at the center of journalism studies conducted by Meditsch (2016), Ijuim (2009), Oliveira (2017) and Vizeu (2014); in texts on education and communication by Soares (1999, 2011) and Citelli & Costa (2011); in studies on communicational ecosystems by Martín-Barbero (2009); in the analysis of pedagogical-communicational practices from Mello (2016) and the pedagogy and practice of journalism by Marques de Melo (1991, 2007) and Melo & Tuft, 2018). Marques de Melo (2007) identifies the following three variables as part of the pedagogical strategy towards implementing Communication and Journalism curricula:

1) Uniting the didactic processes and the nature of each course. 2) Availability of laboratories and equipment compatible with the nature of each professional segment. 3) The local/regional environment in which the courses are located must be the starting point for organizing the curriculum. After all, it is in industries/services in the city/region that new professionals will seek their first employment (Marques de Melo, 2007, pp. 26-27).

He reiterates the value of the geographical and physical space between the regional characteristics of journalism education, and covers the history of curricular guidelines in Brazil since the Law for Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law No. 9.394, December 20, 1996) was established. He puts forth an instructive critique of the role of educators in building curricula. The geographical situation is at the center of the ongoing research covered in this article, which selected courses from the Federal Universities of Mato Grosso do Sul, University of Brasilia and the Mato Grosso State University as its main objects of analysis.

**Paulo Freire’s Interdisciplinary Proposal for the Teaching of Journalism**

Experience as a transforming element is essential for Paulo Freire, an educator of reference for contemporary Brazilian authors who investigate the teaching of journalism. According to Meditsch (2016, p. 35), Freire’s thought is committed “to real life, to the human reality that seeks to understand in order to transform or, in a word, experience”. Dialogue is just as important as problematization, so Meditsch (op. Cit., P.143) argues that re-studying Paulo Freire reinvigorates the perspective of an emancipating communication: “Who do you think communication mediums

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2. The Bologna Process of European intergovernmental cooperation in education was developed between 1999 and 2010, and today unites a total of 48 European countries with the aim of internationalizing higher education.
serve and answer to? This is a question of power and politics” (FREIRE & GUIMARÃES, 1984, p. 14).

For Vizeu & Cerqueira (2017), the 27 types of knowledge for educational practice, listed by Freire in his book *Pedagogy of Autonomy*, can be extended to journalists because the practical domain which Freire deals with is “the same one that trained professionals should master so they can produce grounded, contextualized, critical and transformative knowledge (2017, p. 6). Among these types of knowledge, we highlight the rigor of the method, criticism, aesthetics and ethics, the critical reflection on the practice, the recognition that there are constraints, the forms of apprehension of reality, and the knowledge to listen. The authors defend a procedure for the production of news that, “with a rigorous method and critical eye, seeks to remove the veil, to reveal the action that is in the pedagogical nature of the activity. Thus, by grasping reality and knowing how to listen, journalists are committed “to the construction of reality in an ethical, precise, contextual way, going beyond bureaucratic on-lending, and striving for the interpretation of events or facts” (VIZEU & CERQUEIRA, 2017, p. 7).

Journalists need to be committed to society so they can deal with issues inherent in transformation, engagement and humanization within the practice, something Ijuim (2009) alludes to in a discussion based on the text “Professional commitment with society” (Freire, 1979). This commitment goes beyond the use of research and writing techniques in view of a keen ability to “feel in tune with the world” and leads to a commitment to humanizing people, one understood as a “courageous, purposeful and conscious engagement” that prevents it from being neutral (IJUIM, 2009, p. 36).

The process of emancipatory journalism based on Paulo Freire’s ideas is guided by relational dimensions and collectivity. For Oliveira (2017), the project of collective emancipation is also communicative as it gives a voice to those involved. Oliveira takes “a critical look at characters, daily life and environment, seeking to displace them from their functionality and reposition them within a structural perspective” (OLIVEIRA, 2017, p. 203). Citelli & Costa (2011) consider the centrality of communication to be in educommunicative processes, thus identifying with Paulo Freire’s concept from the 1960s: the promotion of education through communication. This concept is complex as it recognizes an inter and transdisciplinary field that goes beyond technological devices, expanding “to a communicative ecosystem that has now played a decisive role in our lives proposing values, reorienting practices, and setting standards of sociability” (CITELLI & COSTA, 2011, p. 8). This concept was systematized in the late 1990s and demonstrated why Paulo Freire was such an important reference in understanding communicative processes.

With the areas of intervention identified, this article now highlights the area of communicative process management because it understands that the communicative ecosystem is built on the webs of personal relationships. Soares (2011, p. 37) understands that this environment is qualified by inclusive, democratic, media and creative actions which are intentionally built. In terms of building relationships, Martin-Barbero (2014) says that Paulo Freire’s proposals showed reciprocity between people in the world. This communicative ecosystem was highlighted as a cultural experience in an informational environment that arouses sensitivities and modes of perception (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1996).
When considering educommunicative action, Mello (2016, p. 3) indicates socio-constructive and communicational pedagogical practices are mediated by technologies and developed through an interdisciplinary pedagogy capable of stimulating reflexive exchanges, structuring knowledge and strengthening competences for the formation of concerned and active citizens. We suggest that the area of “communication pedagogy” be reconfigured as “pedagogical-communicational practices” because it is a communicative process which is focused on the construction of collective learning, which can be articulated with evaluative training (MELLO, 2016, p. 10). A curriculum proposal for journalism courses that envelops the requirements for teaching (FREIRE, 2018a) and the types of knowledge necessary for pedagogical practices (FREIRE, 2018b), articulated with educommunicative competences (MELLO, 2016), can be used to train future journalists who are committed to social change.

Three decades separate Pedagogy from the Oppressed (1968) and Pedagogy from Autonomy (1996), two of Paulo Freire’s works used in this article. His understanding of critical, liberating and problematizing dialogue exists in action and reflection. The educator is critical and reflective in this process, while education is problematizing. This is in order to report reality and encourage a critical view of it (FREIRE, 2018a, pp. 97-98). It deals with dialogicity as a practice of freedom. In Pedagogy of Autonomy: Knowledge Required for Educational Practice, Freire (2018b) contextualizes the experience of the educator who creates conditions for the production or construction of knowledge. “Teaching does not exist without learning, and vice versa, and it has been through learning socially that women and men have historically found it possible to teach” (FREIRE, 2018b, p. 26). Therefore, we draw attention to three essential points: 1) it is necessary to reflect on the teaching practice, 2) teaching is not transferring knowledge and 3) teaching is a human specificity.

In her reinterpretation of Paulo Freire, Fazenda (2015, pp. 86-87) shows fragments of autonomy in research on interdisciplinarity developed by Paulo Freire between 1960 and 1975. Interdisciplinarity is an action in motion, which goes beyond reality and leads to the contextualization and interpretation of observed phenomena under multiple approaches in the meeting between the new and the old. In this way, the macro concept of being a teacher is strengthened: interdisciplinarity imprints the logic of “invention, discovery, research, and scientific production conceived in an act of will, a planned desire and built on freedom” (FAZENDA, 2015, pp. 86-87).

Knowledge is constituted in human-world relations, relations of transformation, and is perfected in the critical problematization of these relations. (...) To admire reality means to objectify it, to apprehend it as a field of its action for reflection. It means penetrating it more and more lucidly, to discover the true interrelationships of perceived facts. (...) Awareness is more than just awareness: “It implies a critical insertion of the conscious person in a demystified reality. (...) True dialogue only exists in critical thinking, which is dynamic thinking that captures reality and does not dichotomize itself in action. What is intended with this dialogue is the problematization of knowledge itself. (...) Man transforms the world, but his consciousness is historically and culturally conditioned.

Comparative Analysis of three Journalism Curricula in the Midwest Region of Brazil

It is our belief that providing a case study for this article is the methodology best suited towards understanding individual, organizational, social and political phenomena, as well as for preserving the holistic and significant characteristics of real-life events. Yin (2003, p. 21) identifies characteristics (rare, typical, longitudinal, decisive, and revealing) and types (single, multiple, embedded approach, and holistic approach) of case studies. Duarte & Barros (2006) reinforce other characteristics of case studies, such as particularism, description, explanation and induction.

Comparative studies in journalism conducted in the 1950s by Jacques Kayser, and spread throughout Brazil in the 1970s by José Marques de Melo, are infrequently used in Brazil, and often tend to be conducted for descriptive media content. An important contribution comes from Esser & Hanitzsch (2012), who classify comparative research in journalism according to specific types, pointing out the limits and theoretical-methodological challenges of each type. Comparative studies can establish a dialogical relationship between research in the same area of knowledge, and can stimulate the formation of researcher networks in order to strengthen databases and analysis tools, as evidenced by Nakamura in the field of education (2013, p. 9).

Since this article analyzes three disciplines from institutions in different states, the document analysis method was added to the case study and comparative studies in order to better apprehend the information in pedagogical projects. The decision to include document analysis is justified by the need to identify, verify and analyze documents that record and contextualize facts, situations and research contexts (MOREIRA, 2008, p. 2017).

Four factors underlie the analysis of journalism curricula: the theoretical framework (is it interdisciplinary?), knowledge of the context and understanding the profession (what does it mean to be a journalist?), understanding journalistic production processes (are there laboratories organized as newsrooms available?), and interdisciplinarity (are there interdisciplinary connections?). Three journalism courses at public universities in the Midwest region were chosen to observe educational content: two federal institutions (University of Brasilia-UnB and Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul - UFMS) and one state (Mato Grosso State University - UNEMAT).

The pedagogical projects cover a total of 165 disciplines (Table 1) in six courses from the Curriculum Guidelines. There is a total of 100 compulsory disciplines and 65 elective disciplines in all the universities combined: UnB (28 compulsory and 6 electives), UFMS (34 compulsory and 29 electives) and UNEMAT (33 compulsory and 30 electives). Course 5 contains the largest number of disciplines and course 6, the least. UnB has the least number of compulsory disciplines as its humanities courses are electives; students are only required to take three humanity disciplines to complete the workload in course 1. UNEMAT and UFMS electives are offered according to the availability of teachers - four electives in the first semester (240 hours) and two in the second (204 hours). At UFMS, the compulsory discipline Experimental Project II has no connection with any of the courses.
Table 1
Comparison of compulsory and elective disciplines, per institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Courses</th>
<th>Compulsory Disciplines UnB</th>
<th>UFMS</th>
<th>UNEMAT</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course I - Humanities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course II - Specific</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course III - Contextual</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course IV - Profession</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course V – Procedural</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by authors based on institutional pedagogical projects, 2019.

Ten products were identified as laboratory practice (Table 2): UnB (6), UFMS (3) and UNEMAT (1). Three are news agencies, two of which are junior agencies. Laboratory practices work with print and online media for the laboratory newspaper, internal radio, and news portals. At UNEMAT, the Junior Journalism Agency (Focagen) does not detail the laboratory practice between the disciplines in the pedagogical project.

At UnB, students complete the laboratory course in audiovisual journalism, print journalism or press advisory. “The laboratory should be considered as a space for practicing the necessary skills for graduating, as well as a space for scientific and technological initiation,” as described in the University's pedagogical project. Students practice in journalistic vehicles or in a press office at the Multimedia Campus (online portal), at the Facto, Pupila or 296 junior agencies, at the Darcy magazine on scientific and cultural journalism, or on the Faculty of Communication's institutional website.

The media curriculum at UFMS is distributed between print newspaper (three disciplines), First News news portal (disciplines linked to cyber journalism) and radio (one discipline). Students who participate in extension projects have the opportunity to provide journalistic coverage of various events.
Table 2
Laboratory products in analyzed institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laboratory Products</th>
<th>IES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Multimedia Campus - online portal (all)</td>
<td>UnB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Preference laboratory</td>
<td>UnB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Junior Facto Agency</td>
<td>UnB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Junior 296 Agency</td>
<td>UnB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Darcy Magazine</td>
<td>UnB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Institutional Site</td>
<td>UnB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Laboratory print newspaper</td>
<td>UFMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Radio Hall (internal)</td>
<td>UFMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. First news</td>
<td>UFMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Junior Journalism Agency</td>
<td>UNEMAT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by authors based on institutional pedagogical projects, 2019.

The vocational training courses were selected for this article (course IV of the Curriculum Guidelines) in order to verify how (and if) content is connected. Three of the 20 compulsory subjects were excluded (TCC I and II and Experimental Project I) because they are subjects taken in the final year of study. That means there are seventeen disciplines contained in the analysis (Verifying and Journalistic Text I and II were grouped into a single discipline in order to include dialogic and interdisciplinary perspectives. The subjects were categorized as theory (Te), text (Tx), style (S), language (L) and entrepreneurship (E). After selecting the subjects, we looked at the most cited authors and courses in the semesters.

Table 3
Professional education disciplines – Summary analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines</th>
<th>Sem.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>IES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Journalism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>UnB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verifying and Journalistic Text I and II</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>UnB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews and Journalistic Research</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>UFMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting Practice</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>UFMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic Writing Techniques</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>UNEMAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>UFMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine Journalism</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative Journalism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Style</td>
<td>UFMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive Journalism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinionated Journalism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographic Language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>UNEMAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiovisual Language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication, Marketing and</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Company Management</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>UNEMAT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by authors based on institutional pedagogical projects, 2019.
Of the 116 bibliographic references cited in the disciplines, 62 are basic and 54 complementary. The eight most cited references in the three courses are found in three categories (style, text, and theory), listed in Table 4. Nilson Lage is the most cited author with nine references, followed by Muniz Sodré and Maria Helena Ferrari with five. Cremilda Medina and Mario Erbolato are each referenced four times. Nelson Traquina, Ricardo Kotscho, José Marques de Melo and, for the complementary bibliography at UFMS, Gislene Silva, Marcos Paulo Silva and Mario Luiz Fernandes (organizers of the volume *Criteria of newsworthiness: conceptual and application problems*) all appear with three citations.

Table 4
Most cited authors – Main references in professional education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most cited authors</th>
<th>IES</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Citations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nilson Lage</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>B/C</td>
<td>S/Tx</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muniz Sodré and Maria Helena Ferrari</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>B/C</td>
<td>S/Tx/Te</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cremilda Medina</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>B/C</td>
<td>S/Tx</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mário Erbolato</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>B/C</td>
<td>S/Tx</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Traquina</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>B/C</td>
<td>Te/Tx</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo Kotscho</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>B/C</td>
<td>Tx</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Marques Melo</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>B/C</td>
<td>S/Tx</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gislene Silva, Marcos Paulo Silva and Mario Luiz Fernandes</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>S/Tx</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by authors based on institutional pedagogical projects, 2019.

The ten most frequently present keywords for checking the applicability and interdisciplinary process for all the disciplines during the semesters were: culture and mediation, company and the market, interviews and sources, journalistic style, innovation and technology, public interest, journalistic text, language, theory, and news values. This allowed us to observe the transversality of content in journalism courses in the three institutions, as Table 5 shows. However, looking at each institution individually shows how each course is more present in a particular semester or discipline.
Table 5
Most frequent key words for professional education courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Word</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Course Summary</th>
<th>IES</th>
<th>Sem.</th>
<th>UnB</th>
<th>UFMS</th>
<th>UNEMAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture and Mediation</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Culture; mediation</td>
<td>UNEMAT</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communication, Marketing and Entrepreneurship (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company and the Market</td>
<td>Te/Tx/E</td>
<td>Editor and Editorial Line; Marketing and persuasion; Media products and media research; Production and planning; Administration and organizational structure; Business plans, entrepreneurship; Economy of journalism; Market issues.</td>
<td>UFMS</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>4, 7</td>
<td>UNEMAT</td>
<td>UnB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introducation to Journalism (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews and Sources</td>
<td>Tx</td>
<td>Interviews; journalistic sources; Interview narratives.</td>
<td>UnB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UFMS</td>
<td>Verifying and Journalistic Text I (2); Verifying and Journalistic Text II (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2, 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews and Journalistic Research (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic Style</td>
<td>tx/G</td>
<td>Structure of journalistic text; Journalistic styles: interpretive, literary, opinionated.</td>
<td>UnB UFMS UNEMAT</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>Verifying and Journalistic Text I (2); Verifying and Journalistic Text II (3)</td>
<td>Magazine Journalism (4); Informative journalism (1), Interpretive journalism (2), Opinionated journalism (3)</td>
<td>Journalistic Writing Techniques (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation and Technology</td>
<td>E/L</td>
<td>Innovation; Transition from analog to digital; Insightful changes; New technologies.</td>
<td>UNEMAT</td>
<td>1, 3, 7</td>
<td>Magazine Journalism (4); Communicating, Marketing and Entrepreneurship (7)</td>
<td>Photographic Language (1), Audiovisual Language (3), Communication, Marketing and Entrepreneurship (7)</td>
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<td>Public Interest</td>
<td>Tx/Te</td>
<td>Relationship with the public; Public interest in journalism</td>
<td>UnB UFMS UNEMAT</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Introducti on to Journalism (1)</td>
<td>Magazine Journalism (4); Informative Journalism (1), Opinionated Journalism (3)</td>
<td>Journalistic Writing Techniques (2)</td>
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<td>Journalistic Text</td>
<td>Tx/G</td>
<td>Lead and inverted pyramid; Journalistic agendas; Preliminary research and journalistic research; Data collection and fact selection; Reporting, book</td>
<td>UnB UFMS UNEMAT</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 7</td>
<td>Verifying and Journalistic Text I (2); Verifying and Journalistic Text II (3); Editing; Introduction to Journalism</td>
<td>Interview s and Journa listic Research (3), Editing (4), Magazine Journalism (4), Informative Journalism (1), Opinionated Journalism (3)</td>
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<th>Language</th>
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In general, the curricula highlight the relevance of dialogue among the courses, as well as the effort to integrate laboratory projects and compulsory and complementary disciplines (UFMS) in multidisciplinary projects focused on developing competences and skills. The comparative analysis of the pedagogical projects for the selected journalism courses shows that the three institutions incorporated the suggestions from the National Curriculum Guidelines regarding which methodologies focus on student participation in building knowledge and integrating content. The learning method is effective in teaching, research, and extension projects which are closely related to community and public investment public policies (UnB).

Teacher responsibilities and the coherence of the curriculum in course pedagogical projects could be studied further by conducting teacher interviews. This would make it possible to identify how courses are selected, as well as identify any problems involving collaborative and interdisciplinary actions and cultural, social and environmental issues. This would give the curricula a systemic articulation and integrated understanding aimed at social transformation.

**Final Considerations**

The purpose of this article was to verify if there is a way to prove the existence of interdisciplinarity in journalism education. The analysis of the documents from the three institutions showed that, in general, the pedagogical activities of journalism courses try to create an integrated environment to promote the dissemination, systematization, transformation and diffusion of knowledge by articulating between theory and practice; in this way, students participate in the teaching-learning process. Examination of the curricula from the three selected institutions (UnB, UFMS and UNEMAT) shows that journalism courses are structured on course suggestions included in the Curriculum Guidelines and balanced in the distribution of disciplines, as shown in Table 1.

We can confirm that the analyzed institutions try to train professionals who will be capable of mediating human actions and who are committed to individual, collective freedom at a local/regional level, referenced by Paulo Freire’s concept of “world-consciousness”4. For the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), the guiding focus of its curriculum is “journalism and regional culture”. Yet despite the regional emphasis of the institution’s pedagogical project, there is no indication of the need for a greater diversity of disciplines, such as journalism and environment, communication and health, ethnic studies and regional reality in journalism. These topics are included in optional subjects; in other words, students study them only if they are interested in them.

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4. Human beings are “in the world” and “with the world”.
The University of Brasilia (UnB) is the only institution that sees curricular flexibility as an interdisciplinary instrument for building knowledge, with disciplines divided into two segments (environmental and local) and four stages (concordance, approximation, experience and deepening). While the environmental segment aggregates all course subjects, the location connects the parts together and concurs with the environmental disciplines. Here, students develop relationships between communication and society and learn about their implications (concordance), understand the specifics of the field of communication (approximation), experiment with techniques in specific disciplines (experience) and merge theoretical and practical views while thinking and reflecting on the discovered, created and experienced knowledge (deepening).

The curriculum for the State University of Mato Grosso (UNEMAT) focuses on the teaching of journalism as part of a transformative action using parameters that include Paulo Freire’s conception of education. The focus of the pedagogical project is to educate subjects who are capable of looking beyond their interests, who seek paths to a more equal society through knowledge.

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References


New Technology, New Rules for Journalism and a New World of Engagement

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Abstract

The ways in which people learn, communicate and engage in discussion have changed profoundly during the past decade. As Jenkins related in her book, The Convergence Crisis: An Impending Paradigm Shift in Advertising, Millennials do not want to be told the whole story. Rather, they want someone to begin a conversation that will engage others to become participants in the development of that story (2015). Technology now allows that to happen, sometimes with unintended and/or ill consequences, but technology also generates a dynamic potential to create international and interactive discourse aimed at addressing shared global challenges.

Introduction

We now live in a period of shifting norms and expectations where those previously taken for granted seem fragile. In part, this perception advances because the speed of change, fueled by emerging technology, affects our most basic priorities -- where we live, how we stay informed and how we govern in times of crisis.

The first decades of the 21st century have disrupted these intersecting dynamics. Neighborhood stability felt the impact of gentrification globally. Reliable production of the day’s news came under siege as digital capacity expanded and online options increased. Before long European newspapers, like those in the United States, accepted the need to upgrade equipment and seek tech-savvy reporters and editors. Soon came a struggle to hold on to subscribers. That problem, too, became a global concern.

By 2014 The Guardian warned that newspapers were “in free fall.” They cautioned, “Print editions are being discontinued. Editors are being replaced. Financial losses are mounting. Digital strategies are yet to bear fruit. New Readings are fickle, promiscuous and hard to impress….” El País, which was selling 400,000 copies in 2007, slumped to 267,000 in April. Advertising income plummeted by 60%” (Penketh, Olterman, & Burgen, 2014, p. 1). In France and Germany the situations were similar. American newspapers grappled with comparable conditions.
Newsroom crisis brought a sobering example of a “trickle-down effect.” The disruptions required that journalism education also change. College departments have scrambled to reboot to make way for new technology, to find young professors for whom the new communication systems are most familiar. Curriculum has also moved into the new era. These urgencies have coincided with changes within the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) where a need to internationalize in response to globalization of these fields was evident. The development of the World Journalism Education Congress (WJEC) opened the way for an “unprecedented meeting of journalism education associations and educator/trainers from around the globe to improve journalism education, and therefore journalism worldwide” (Goodman & Steyn, 2017, Preface). As a first step the new alliances undertook a massive project to document global journalism education. The result was a 470-page report published by the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas (Goodman & Steyn, 2017).

Meanwhile, newspapers, long dependable sources of internships and jobs for trained, aspiring journalists, began downsizing as subscribers and casual customers fell away. Creators and users at first believed that digital services would become a secure underpinning of democracy, but free access to unrestricted Internet communication soon introduced negative, even hateful messages, the sources of which could be hidden. More recently, a steady and unrelenting period of civic stress fueled by government accusations of “fake news” has surrounded efforts by professional journalists and journalism organizations to seek new venues for news distribution and new means of news production in answer to the digital transformation.

These claims of fake news emerged against familiar sources and circles previously taken for granted as authorities, but led by U. S. President Donald J. Trump, these flourishing attacks have generated insecurity about content. That has encouraged the popularity of social media despite the fact that its users often have no way to discern its content origin or validity. The strategy to undermine quickly became an international approach as world leaders have followed Trump’s example from microphone to tweet. This new appropriation of information has made even local reporting difficult: Who to trust as sources? As the need to be well informed about personal, economic and civic issues have increased, traditional, legacy and research sources have fallen victim to recurring attacks. Given the symbiotic history between journalism education and the job-market newsroom, the steady attacks against the press have affected journalism classrooms.

This has caused both opportunity and consternation for journalism educators. Most students now begin studying journalism with a grasp of digital potentials, but reliable sourcing and background relevance as well as an appreciation for context often challenge emerging journalists. Professors may understandably wonder, “how and what then do we teach?” “Where do we find sources more apt to provide valuable and knowledgeable background context to proposed news stories?” “How do we make that information appealing to the new information consumers living in high-tech equipped homes?” “How do we make it pay?” Too long hamstrung by mythologies of journalistic objectivity or neutrality, reporters have been expected to cultivate a certain professional distance from issues that they may know more about than they report. These may be goals worthy of reconsideration.

Certainly when covering communities that face disappearing affordable housing, reporters should have an intimate knowledge of the area or be embedded there to cover the critical issues of the changes. Unless one has seen presence, it is impossible to see the impact of absence. One approach
to reimagining journalism education might have students volunteer at a grassroots-level with a non-profit of their choice for a more ethnographic experience (deUriarte, 1993). This approach might be thought of as revisiting the “beat” concept where reporters and sources interact over time in matters as personal and life determining as one’s home.

Another pedagogical approach might be to pursue, as with the project that is the focus of this paper’s research, an interactive-technology design that allows various informed perspectives on the issues of affordable housing and gentrification to receive equal voice and to be shared internationally thus fostering worldwide and diverse conversations on the specified topics.

Still, competing with the attractiveness of options that give visual movement to the affordable housing and gentrification story is the need to encourage students to develop interest, sensitivity and empathy to problems faced by the growing number of those disenfranchised. People without place, feel a loss of identity and purpose that may seem remote from student reality. Students know that they are temporary migrants, present only until they claim their pending degrees, but youth usually welcomes new destinies as dreams are pursued. Not so for those cozy in older predictable realities. Many such threatened residents wish to remain where they are.

Whether employing a traditional journalistic approach or one that is tech-driven, these situations provide opportunity for insightful narrative reporting. This requires developing a lens that crosses class and generations, a challenge even for many experienced reporters and editors.

Currently the issue of secure shelter, at-risk reliable reporting and journalism education appear entwined in ways that necessitate exploratory analysis and some consideration of new practices (Guajardo, Guajardo, Janson & Militello, 2016).

**Journalism’ Response to Social Change from the Middle of the 20th Century Onward**

Historically, significant social change has fostered analysis of press relevance, compliance and weaknesses. Each one builds upon records of earlier results. The modern journalism era began about 75 years ago as the end of WWII approached. At that time U.S. journalism had gained significant international stature. Coverage of Europe fell to the U.S. wire services because the war limited previous press leaders, Agence France Presse and the BBC’s ability to cover and deliver the news. The U.S. press, restricted by censorship in the interest of national security, found itself questioning whether press freedom could be restored. To assure its return and improve its future Henry R. Luce (creator of Time Magazine) and Robert Hutchins (president of the University of Chicago) joined forces to create a committee to explore the matter and develop guidelines to assure a professional press.

The resulting Commission on Freedom of the Press (the Hutchins Commission) examined the civilian role of journalism and set five required standards of professional ethics. The Commission presented the key elements as truthful, comprehensive, intelligent, contextualized content and a “representative picture of constituent groups in the society” (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947, p. 26). For the first time minorities and foreigners were cited as entitled to inclusive representative coverage. “When the images they (journalists) portray fail to present the social group truly, they tend to pervert judgment” (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947, p. 26).
They began the press project in 1944 and published the conclusions in the 1947 committee report *A Fair and Responsible Press*. The Report established five ethical standards to which the Commission believed the press should adhere and that content should provide:

- A truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context that gives them meaning
- A forum for the exchange of comment and criticism
- The projection of a representative picture of constituent groups in the society
- The presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society
- Full access of the day’s intelligence

The Commission strongly supported a free press as “essential to political liberty.” “Where men cannot freely convey their thoughts to one another, no freedom is secure…. Free expression is therefore unique among liberties: it promotes and protects all the rest…. Civilized society is a working system of ideas. It lives and changes by the consumption of ideas” (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947, p. 6).

Twenty years later President Lyndon Johnson created the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders to determine the cause of the more than one hundred uprisings across the U.S. The resultant Kerner Report (released in 1968) did not mince words. They faulted the press for its inaccurate, exaggerated reporting, and they noted that press coverage needed to be representative of all citizens (The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 2016).

The most influential path toward communication globalization may be attributed to the UNESCO report, *Many Voices One World* (UNESCO, 1980). The report, prepared by the “International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems,” chaired by Sean MacBride, criticized media concentration, commercialization and unequal access to information in a sweeping analysis of the “developed world’s” media advantage and power to maintain exclusion. It urged universal freedom of expression not vested in just journalists and governments. Instead, it sought a journalistic experience that it defined as “horizontal,” one that would replace the existing structure that it believed to be “little more than a dominating monolog.”

The MacBride Report further criticized the information flow and content of news noting that the distribution was intricately entwined with the international power structure. The complaints included, the promotion of “alien attitudes across cultural frontiers” (UNESCO, 1980, p. 87) and marketing practices that were “imposing uniformity of taste, style and content” (UNESCO, 1980, p. 88). Moreover, it pointed to the control of communication equipment as a primary means of excluding participation in world dissemination of other points of view and circumstances.

The United States, however, saw the MacBride Report as antagonistic to “the free flow of information” and, along with the United Kingdom and Singapore, withdrew its support from UNESCO in 1984 (it rejoined in 2003). The United States’ withdrawal and the subsequent financial
consequences put pressure upon UNESCO to distance itself from the MacBride Report, and many of the Report’s recommendations fell away.

Most recently the 467-page publication, *Global Journalism Education In the 21st Century: Challenges & Innovations*, gathered the work of journalism education scholars discussing the titled topic as it pertains to preparation for a journalism profession as practiced in ten selected nations. The book includes a significant contribution by Mark Deuze in an “analysis of how globalization and new technologies/innovations are dramatically altering journalism and, accordingly, journalism educators’ roles” (Goodman, & Steyn, 2017, p. ix).

**Technology and Change**

This paper’s opening statement read, “We now live in a period of shifting norms and expectations where those previously taken for granted seem fragile. In part, this perception advances because the speed of change, fueled by emerging technology, affects our most basic priorities -- where we live, how we stay informed and how we govern in times of crisis.” It seems a bit foreboding and inevitable. Yet, the paper has also put forth that “historically, significant social change has fostered analysis of press relevance, compliance and weaknesses. Each one builds upon records of earlier results.” Although emerging, interactive technology has powered global disruptions in the ways in which information is exchanged, used and sometimes abused, there is also a recognition by many that the interactive and global characteristics of today’s media can be employed in the service of finding solutions (Halliday, 2013; IPECC, n.d.; PHYS, 2015; Wingfield, 2015; WHO, 2014).

Ash Carter began his 2018 Ernst May Lecture to the Aspen Strategy Group with the following observation:

Disruptive scientific and technological progress is not to me inherently good or inherently evil. But its arc is for us to shape. Technology’s progress is furthermore in my judgment unstoppable. But it is quite incorrect that it unfolds inexorably according to its own internal logic and the laws of nature. My experience and observation is that this is true only directionally. Which specific technologies develop most quickly is heavily shaped by the mission that motivates and rewards the innovators: improving health, selling advertising or some other service, cheap energy, education, or national defense, for example.

Carter concludes, however, with a note of caution:

There are a lot of smart kids at MIT and around Boston working on the driverless car. LIDAR (light detection and ranging), which along with passive imagery and radar provides inputs to the steering algorithms…. I always say to these smart kids, “save a little bit of your innovative energy for the following challenge: How about the carless driver? What is to become of the tens of thousands of truck, taxi, and car drivers whose jobs are disrupted” (2018)?

Certainly the rapidity with which issues such as “gentrification” and “lack of affordable housing” have spread, can be linked to the upsurge in global, social media industries such as Airbnb (Shah, 2017), and so we return to an assertion found earlier in this paper: “Currently the issue of secure shelter, at-risk reliable reporting and journalism education appear entwined in ways that necessitate exploratory analysis and some consideration of new practices.” The Lisbon Beta Project is an effort
to provide a model for exploring new definitions for journalism; new approaches to journalism education, and new platforms for addressing universal issues.

**Method**

The Project was produced in four stages: research, production, post-production and interactive design. The first three closely followed a traditional journalism approach to digital storytelling. As a participant at the 2016 Habitat III Conference in Quito, this paper’s lead author became more interested in and more knowledgeable about global urban issues and agendas while separately investigating ways in which technology has fundamentally changed the ways in which people (mostly younger) communicate, tell stories and exchange ideas. The connection of these two “dots” seemed like a natural union, and the idea of exploring the link turned into a successful sabbatical proposal. Research revealed the “crisis” that Lisbon’s historical center was experiencing as a failed economy had created a target for wealthy international investors who looked to capitalize on precious, low-cost real estate. Residents, community groups, social activists and eventually the municipal government identified “affordable housing” as Lisbon’s most outstanding social issue in the fall of 2016.

This paper’s lead author moved to Lisbon in September, 2016, read local, national and international stories about the affordable housing problem in Lisbon and took note of several people identified in the stories, who held various perspectives on the issues. The author contacted eleven of those individuals and then several others who were identified by the original group. In all, 18 people from all sides of the “Affordable Housing” and related “Gentrification” debates in Lisbon were contacted, and eventually 14 agreed to be interviewed on camera. The interviewees included government officials; people displaced by gentrification; community activist leaders; a journalist; a university scholar doing related research, and others.

From the start the project was envisioned as a collaborative endeavor. Research revealed that the recently created iNOVA Media Lab at the Universidade NOVA de Lisboa had already participated in a video collaboration with a documentary production company from the Netherlands. The Media Lab’s Founder and Coordinator, Paulo Vicente, agreed to the proposed collaboration, and all of the 14 interviews were conducted in the University’s studio and/or on location. A staff member served as cameraman, and a PhD student served as the interview manager and translator. All 14 participants that had agreed to be interviewed took part. The interviews generally lasted from a half hour to an hour. The interviews were conducted over a four-week period.

Several months of post-production editing was undertaken by the lead author upon returning to the U.S.. An undergraduate student from Western Kentucky University completed the sound and color enhancement portion of the post-production work.

The edited interviews were then sent to the third member of the collaborative team, Kim Grinfeder, the Founder and Director for the Interactive Media Program at the University of Miami (Florida). It was this fourth and final stage of the Project that introduced the interactive element to the Lisbon Beta Project.
Interactive Storytelling Engages Students in Urban Issues Dialog

Students often feel disconnected from the traditional media methods taught to them at journalism schools today. In fact, most people under 30 do not subscribe to newspapers or habitually tune in to TV and/or radio newscasts (Shearer, 2018). Their day-to-day media landscape offers a personalized, filtered, searchable, and summarized news feed that covers a breadth of subjects albeit with little depth. In addition, when we ceded editorial control to algorithms that optimize for clicks rather than a world view; it has created an echo chamber making it difficult for us to see opposing arguments on a subject. Today’s student media consumption habits are vastly different than those of their educators, and while the fundamentals remain the same, how do we reconcile these differences?

The open-source software produced for this project (Doc-Gen) aims to provide a platform that mimics a student’s current media environment to address complex, multi-faceted stories such as affordable housing and promote conceptual understanding. The Lisbon Beta Project software, for example, permits viewers to generate their own 2-4 minute documentaries about affordable housing allowing them to filter topics and reconstruct the story at their own pace. The danger of doing this is that students might only receive a narrow view of the topic by only selecting subjects that interest them, but in user tests, students often came back and continuously “reconfigured” their documentary multiple times to view different perspectives or understand different topics.

The current filters offered are “affordable housing,” “social conditions,” “rentals,” “government,” “families,” “gentrification,” “developers,” “tourism,” “transportation,” and “universities.” Viewers can select one or combine multiple filters to generate their documentaries. The generated documentaries come from a “clip bank” that was derived from 14 interviews conducted with local stakeholders from Lisbon. The interviewees are from a diverse socio-economic background and from multiple sides of the issues.

The interviews followed a fixed questioning line (all interviewees were asked the same questions) on diverse topics that allowed us to edit the interviews and create the clip bank. The clips were created using quotes that most directly answered the questions and were then tagged with metadata. The clips ranged from 18 seconds to 1:14 in duration. The metadata included applicable keywords. Once the clip bank was formed, the software allowed viewers to generate the documentaries based on their selected topics. The software randomly selected the interviewees that spoke about the keywords chosen.

Results

Doc-Gen allowed the site to include 7 hours of interviews in a format that students are accustomed to viewing. Initial user tests on a group of 16 students showed that the students quickly grasped the concept and kept “reconfiguring” the story. The topic of affordable housing is vast and has multiple angles and even a traditional feature-length documentary would only allow viewers to see a small curated view on the topic.

One of our goals with Doc-Gen was to mimic the functionality of news-feeds, from software such as Snapchat and Instagram, that students find recognizable, and at the same time restrict the content
to a specific topic from a curated list of subject experts. By operating on a familiar platform (http://lisbon.formativejournalism.org/about), students seemed more inclined to explore a topic rather than passively absorb it.

Another goal of working with Doc-Gen was to create a platform that provoked discussion. Since every student brought his/her own set of experiences to the selection and viewing of the documentaries, discussions about affordable housing at the end of the user test were lively and came from different perspectives. This, in turn, allowed for greater breadth and insight regarding the topics covered as everyone seemed to have received some part of the story that they were particularly interested in since they had self-selected the topics.

While the content used in Doc-Gen was produced by a team of media professionals, with some student assistance, the content could have had more student participation, and the results would have increased engagement and promoted a deeper learning experience. Today’s youth not only consume media but are very adept at producing their own content (Ito, Baumer, Boyd, Cody, Herr,…Tripp, 2009). Including a participatory component in future project creation will allow for greater ownership of the topic. In addition, as educators and professionals, we might learn a thing or two on how to produce content for automated video feeds.

Discussion

Teaching journalism in the face of a future shock

In the face of the profound transformations related to the access and use of digital technologies, as well as connected with a restructing media industry, communication sciences and journalism education in particular appear to be on the verge of a future shock, one that “occurs when you are confronted by the fact that the world you were educated to believe in doesn’t exist” (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 14).

There are signs suggesting that students already consider journalism education inadequate when it comes to keeping up with the emerging communication technologies and that the theory-practice antinomy is remarkably limited to comprehensively address the complexity of contemporary digital technologies and their emerging mediation regimes (Ercan, 2017). On the other hand, even if for pragmatic reasons, news media companies seek candidates with solid multimedia skills (Wenger, Owens, & Cain, 2018), established digital journalists – reporters, editors, producers – consider that new entrants into the newsrooms, although well trained in technological skills, are less prepared when it comes to traditional journalistic skills, such as interviewing, critical thinking, and understanding newsworthiness (Ferrucci, 2017).

It becomes thus apparent that contemporary journalism demands a blend of intellectual education and professional training, often with very different quality assessments, as well as of academic research and teaching (e.g. Bromley, Tumber, & Zelizer, 2001; Meier & Schützenereder, 2019; O'Donnell, 2001; Williams, Guglietti, & Haney, 2017). The Lisbon Beta Project is an effort to implement a knowledge transfer hub aimed at bridging these epistemic gaps and occupational boundaries. As such, it can be adequately understood as being based on a problem-based learning/teaching methodology, through which the development and application of intellectual and technical skills are nurtured, allowing for journalism students’ identity to be built in the making.
Interdisciplinary collaboration has a key value in the development of future journalism. Although, contemporary communication sciences and journalism education are still very much embedded with theoretical traditions supportive of an occupational boundary work: the social and the cultural world as a strict sociological and anthropological object of study and the material world as the domain of scientists and engineers. We have sustained elsewhere that the multilayered nature and phenomena of digital media can only be properly addressed by a higher level of integration among fields and disciplines, working together to develop new theories, concepts, methods and applications around common problems. To this process towards transdisciplinarity we have called a digital Renaissance (Vicente, 2018). Nevertheless, to operationalize a link between biological, technological, social and cultural aspects of communication is still an exception and very often a matter of academic occupational boundary and contest (Bondebjerg, 2017).

Since emerging digital technologies rearrange the set of skills, operations and mindsets that journalists and journalism students and professors were used to, the integration of several disciplines in a project, as well as in a university course, was a key concern for the Lisbon Beta Project. Innovative dynamics in teaching/learning require a solid epistemic foundation, particularly because Practice-based research (PbR) and Project-based Learning (PbL) in Digital Journalism are still underrepresented in communication university departments.

The epistemic divide between theory and practice in conventional journalism education disregards that practice-based research (PbR) and Project-based Learning (PbL) are founded on a co-evolutionary premise “where the existing technology is used in a new way and from which technology research derives new answers: in turn, the use of new digital technology may lead to transformation of existing forms and traditional practices” (Edmonds et al., 2005, p. 458). To transform our classrooms into laboratories – or into a simulated version of a newsroom – we do need to recognize that while practice generates the relevant artifacts and phenomena, scientific research grants its systematic investigation. Thus, “not only is practice embedded in the research process, but research questions arise from the process of practice, the answers to which are directed towards enlightening and enhancing practice” (Candy & Edmonds, 2018, p. 63).

Active professor and student engagement are critical. As such, a robust framework needs to support student-centered participation. It is relevant to make clear that, while interdependent, practice does not equals research. As a scientific method, PbR demands that researchers “develop theoretical frameworks that inform and guide the making and evaluation of the outcomes of their practice” (Edmonds & Candy, 2010, p. 470), i.e. for the research process it is central and unavoidable both the theoretical and conceptual constructs and working from within digital media to test and advance ideas. In this sense, The Lisbon Beta Project not only aspires to be an artifact, but also a framework to explore a theorist-practitioner model in journalism teaching.

We must realize that the media landscape, where our students consume content, has dramatically changed. Teaching students broadcasting in a traditional sense is the equivalent of teaching them Latin; it’s useful to better understand the roots of a particular group of languages but outdated for everyday use. We must adapt to the shifting landscape and look for new ways to give students the tools to explore a subject in depth and from multiple perspectives that match their current media landscape. Media consumption has never been higher, according to the Pew Research Center, 95% of teens have access to a smartphone and 45% say they are on it “near constantly” (Teens, 2018). And, while the fundamentals of journalism remain as critical as ever, developing new tools that
can explore complex stories in a manner that is engaging and familiar with this new generation is critical for the survival of journalism education.

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Global Assignments: How Virtual Student Exchange Is Preparing Australian and Pakistani Students for Cross-Cultural, Collaborative Journalism

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Abstract

For decades, empirical research has documented the value of student exchange programs, which broaden students' perspectives and prepare them for a rapidly globalizing world. But in-person exchange is difficult and expensive, excluding many from participation. In this study, researchers in Australia, Pakistan, and the United States used technology to create a Virtual Student Exchange program, preparing students for cross-cultural, collaborative reporting with student counterparts in a distant part of the world. Results show that Virtual Student Exchange is effective and more accessible than in-person exchange, connecting students who cannot travel to work together to gain the valuable exchange experience.

Introduction

Western journalists and academics are increasingly documenting the crucial role of local journalists in international news production. Erickson and Hamilton (2006) detail the interdependence of local journalists and foreign correspondents in the production of stories. Palmer and Fontan (2007) note the increased responsibilities placed on local journalists during and after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in the early 2000s, when journalists from Western nations became favored high-value targets of local forces. Bossone (2014) credits what he calls the “thankless work” of local journalists for “writing up a news brief, arranging logistics, securing and translating interviews [and] also conducting them, and providing background.” According to Bossone, “Our work—and, on occasion, our safety—depends on them.” In her seminal work, Murrell argues that local journalists, or “fixers”, “have largely been airbrushed from the official accounts of international reporting,” and she has conducted her research “to set the record straight” (2015, p.2).

Education of Journalists in Peshawar, Pakistan

Peshawar is the main city on the Pakistani side of the Afghan border, and the University of Peshawar is the principal research university in the area as a whole. Activists like Malala Yousafzai and journalists like Pir Zubair Shah of the New York Times and are internationally known for their work in the region, but Khan (2011) emphasizes that there are many professionals and activists who are working to bring their society into closer alignment with worldwide norms of democratic governance and treatment of women and minorities. As Khan explains, many journalists in the
region have been inspired by the international model of a free press, their work “challenges fundamentalism”, and they help nurture the “democratic potential” of like-minded professionals such as lawyers, scientists, doctors, academics, and others (2011, p.12). Along with the vital role they play in the production of news for the rest of the world, these local journalists have important influence within their own society as thought leaders – as professional opinion writers.

Educational interventions designed for them, especially ones that strengthen their ties to the wider profession of global journalism, have potential for double value: not only for their irreplaceable assistance to international reporting, but also for their crucial contributions to the adoption of international norms within their own societies.

**Education of Journalists In Melbourne, Australia**

Refusing to be deterred by a tight job market, young journalists from the West increasingly work in dangerous countries as freelancers, without the protections and guidance afforded by major news agencies and without experience in how the journalistic “rules of engagement” differ in zones of conflict. Alone and under-prepared, these young journalists risk deportation, incarceration, or worse (Wake, 2016). Educational interventions designed for them, especially ones that strengthen their ability to communicate and collaborate with local journalists, also have potential for double value: not only to improve their capacity to understand and report on difficult events in distant lands, but also for their ability to keep themselves safe in complex, hostile, and dangerous circumstances.

An educational intervention designed to promote collaborative work between these two groups – students of journalism in a Western country and students of journalism in a Muslim-majority country – offers a third, related benefit: that of building productive working relationships in an academic safe space, including specific relationships with new partners that these student-journalists may continue to cultivate as professionals, as well as general attitudes towards collaborative work based on reduced stereotypes and improved attitudes that result from well-structured educational experiences.

**Virtual Student Exchange In Journalism**

This context – the overall professional environment, the educational needs of two groups of journalism students, and the potential to provide these students with cross-cultural learning empowered by new technology – informed the aims of the innovative program Reporting from Zones of Conflict, a Virtual Student Exchange in Journalism.

Public opinion polls in multiple countries recount a grim story, that Westerners and Muslims regard one another as arrogant, intolerant, and violent, and that attitudes are not improving (Pew, 2006; Helbling, 2012; Telhami, 2015). Among few bright spots, pollsters find that young people and those with more education have slightly more favorable attitudes toward the other (Telhami, 2015). With their natural inclination towards idealism, young people can be more open, tolerant, and empathetic than their elders.
The Virtual Student Exchange program was launched by Keith Bowen at Stanford University to connect classrooms in Western and Muslim-majority countries for the purpose of reducing stereotypes, improving attitudes, and building productive working relationships – a way to leverage the natural openness and tolerance of university students to build bridges between them, despite substantial geographical and cultural differences.

For over 50 years, empirical research in Contact Theory has shown that under specific conditions interpersonal interaction between individuals and groups in conflict will reduce stereotypes and prejudice, while improving attitudes and relationships (Allport, 1954; Johnson, et al., 1983; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Amichai-Hamburger & McKenna, 2006). Contact Theory has been at the heart of various in-person exchange programs, including student exchange programs, that were accelerated after World War II and during the Cold War to improve relations between historical and geopolitical adversaries (Bu, 1999; Paige, et al., 2009; Atkinson, 2010). Today, governments, foundations, and others fund in-person exchange, undergirded by Contact Theory, to reduce pernicious stereotypes, broaden personal perspectives, and build productive relationships between students in Western and Muslim-majority countries (Patterson-Neubert, 2004; Craner, 2006). Student exchange is a vital component of public diplomacy.

The benefits of in-person student exchange are well known. Decades of research have shown that those who have the opportunity to study abroad exhibit "higher levels of international political concern, cross-cultural interest, and cultural cosmopolitanism" (Carlson & Widaman, 1988, p. 13), along with "a greater change in intercultural communication skills" (Williams, 2005, p. 356). Student exchange can “profoundly influence individuals’ pursuit of further graduate studies, career paths, and global engagement" (Paige, et al., 2009, p. 15). Even in especially difficult contexts, such as tensions between Jewish and Palestinian communities in the Middle East, programs connecting young people help reduce stereotypes, broaden perspectives, and improve working relationships (Maoz, 2000).

However, traditional in-person exchange is an expensive and demanding form of educational experience, one more often available to students from high-income countries, and one that requires even these students to have sufficient means and flexibility to live far from home for extended periods of time. For example, in the U.S. almost all institutions of higher learning offer a path for study abroad, yet only about 1% of students take advantage of the opportunity every year (Lipinski, 2014). Students with less economic, cultural, and social capital, including those from under-served racial and ethnic communities, are less likely to participate (Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). Along with lost opportunity for these students, in-person exchange exposes peers in host countries to skewed samples of travelers.

In this present research, we used new media and technology to connect two classes in journalism, Dr. Alex Wake’s Global News Studies at RMIT University and Dr. Altaf Ullah Khan’s International Journalism at the University of Peshawar, in a Virtual Student Exchange in Journalism. This form of exchange is much less costly and easier to implement than traditional in-person exchange, with promise to increase access in substantial ways, but we questioned whether it can be effective at reducing stereotypes, improving attitudes, and building good working relationships between students from such distant cities as Melbourne, Australia, and Peshawar, Pakistan.
Methods

Participants

Twenty students enrolled in the course Global News Studies at RMIT University and nineteen students enrolled in a comparable course International Journalism at the University of Peshawar participated in the Virtual Student Exchange. In Peshawar, eight participants were female and eleven were male. In Melbourne, nine students were female and eleven students were male. In both courses, students had already completed undergraduate degrees. Ages ranged from a low of 22 to a high of 47. Most students on both campuses were in their early to mid-twenties. In Melbourne two students were in their forties, and in Peshawar one student was in his forties. Most students in Melbourne had some professional experience as journalists. Most students in Peshawar had some experience working with international counterparts; a few students in Melbourne did as well.

Program Design

Like many in-person programs, this Virtual Exchange was designed in accordance with Contact Theory, which Gordon Allport initially articulated in 1954. His book *The Nature of Prejudice* is wide-ranging, but has become best remembered for his observation that the mere occurrence of contact between groups in conflict – between “in-groups” and “out-groups” – does not guarantees positive outcomes, but that if the contact is organized to follow four principles, it does tend to have a beneficial effect for reducing stereotypes and broadening perspectives:

- The contact should be officially sanctioned on both sides

- The contact should be structured to “lead to a sense of equality in social status”

- The groups should engage in “ordinary, purposeful pursuits”

- Their efforts should be cooperative rather than competitive (Allport, 1954, p. 489)

In a range of studies and meta-analyses, testing methods and contexts, empirical data support these claims (Johnson, et al., 1983; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000, 2006), including research on in-person student exchange (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Maoz, 2000; Williams, 2005; Paige, et al., 2009). In their latest meta-analysis of Contact Theory, with 713 samples from 515 studies, Pettigrew & Tropp account for selection and publication bias, and find that contact based on Allport’s principles “typically reduces intergroup prejudice” and helps attitudes “become more favorable.” Where earlier studies suggested that the mere fact of contact was sufficient for beneficial outcomes, Pettigrew & Tropp’s most recent meta-analysis shows that contact structured to meet Allport’s optimal conditions “achieved a markedly higher mean effect size” (2006, p.766). Moreover, they find that “greater intergroup contact is generally associated with lower levels of prejudice”, that “the mean effect rises sharply for experiments and other rigorously conducted studies”, and that effects “typically generalize beyond participants in the immediate contact situation” (2006, p. 766).
For the present study, we have specifically designed the Virtual Student Exchange to leverage insights from research in Contact Theory.

**Official sanction**

For intense conflicts, potential participants in an exchange typically require Official Sanction from national or local leaders in order to engage in contact at ease. In the relatively safe context of higher education, researchers hypothesized that students would be sufficiently put at ease by the Official Sanction of the teaching team. This sanction was conveyed in an initial plenary session where students and faculty on each campus were introduced to one another, and where the Virtual Exchange was introduced as a common assignment for both classes. The exchange used the Stanford Online platform to provide access to recorded lectures and uploaded readings. Along with practical convenience, researchers hypothesized that use of an official online learning platform would also communicate Official Sanction to students.

**Promotion of social equity**

The stereotyping and mistrust identified by Pew (2006), Helbling (2012), Telhami (2015) and others is typically coincident with, and often a result of, substantial differences in material and social status. These differences were manifest in the Virtual Exchange. For example, students in Western countries typically have much better access to technology, which emphasizes their material and social advantages. In addition, for practical reasons, it was determined that English would have to be the common language of the exchange, and while the students in Pakistan spoke English well, the choice of English over Pashto inevitably privileged the communication of the native English speakers.

These differences in the material and social status of participating groups are similarly apparent in traditional in-person exchange. Nevertheless, universities, governments, NGOs, and other actors establish in-person exchange programs and structure the interactions within the exchange to promote a sense of social equity as far as possible, with the understanding that significant beneficial outcomes emerge even when conditions are not perfect.

In this trial, we structured the overall exchange and the activities within it as if the two classes were one. All students had identical login privileges to the Stanford Online platform, had access to the same pages and materials, watched the same recorded lectures, and downloaded and read the same academic articles. In session, faculty from each country were equivalent co-facilitators, taking turns to lead various discussions. Students from both groups were encouraged to participate in discussion, and faculty were attentive to alternate between the sides when calling on raised hands. Within group assignments, formal roles and responsibilities were carefully structured to ensure equivalence. Pakistani students worked as fixers for their Australian counterparts, and Australian students worked as fixers for their Pakistani counterparts, which was crucial not only to ensure equal treatment, but also to give students an opportunity to view the working relationship from new perspectives.
Engagement in purposeful pursuits

The Virtual Student Exchange was designed and presented to students as an ordinary educational activity intended to further students’ learning in their field of study. Various learning components included recorded lectures, shared reading assignments, and collaborative field research, culminating in two joint reporting assignments, one on a story in Australia and one on a story in Pakistan. The exchange began with introductions and instructions in a common session. Later common sessions included lecture and shared discussion. Students routinely met with their overseas counterparts out of class in small groups over web-conferencing to work on their joint assignments, and stayed connected on social media.

Cooperative rather than competitive

The exchange was set up so that at no point were students competing with another, either for roles within the exchange or for points or grades. All work was designed to support cooperative learning, where success requires close collaboration among small teams. At the end of the exchange, the teams presented findings and final reflections in their final common session.

Data Collection and Analysis

Researchers collected video and audio recordings of the weekly sessions, including random samples of the small-group work, as well as collected post-course surveys from each student. Three students from Peshawar and three from Melbourne were selected for post-course semi-structured interviews instead of the post-course surveys. The selection of the students for semi-structured interviews in place of surveys was done at random, although student availability played into their decision to be interviewed, and in Peshawar, students’ confidence in their English language skills also played a part. Researchers also studied post-course student reflections.

On a weekly basis, researchers in Pakistan, Australia, and the U.S. discussed their interpretation of events from the two- and one-half-hour weekly course meetings, as well as reports and interim deliverables from the small groups, and later consulted the video recordings to confirm sequences of interactions and pull specific quotations. Field notes and communication among researchers comprise another source of data.

Relationship building in the virtual student exchange

Peshawar is the oldest living city in South Asia, with a recorded history that goes back over 2500 years. Now, it’s one of the most dangerous cities in the world, especially for journalists. On the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, just down from the Khyber Pass, this city of 3 1/2 million Pakistanis and 1/2 million Afghan refugees is a crossroads of the Taliban, remnants of Al Qaeda, Isis, drug networks, and warlords. By contrast, with its beautiful skyline and charming laneways, the city of Melbourne was recently chosen by the Economist magazine as the most livable city in the world, over perennial contenders such as Vienna and San Francisco (2017). Young journalists
in Melbourne and Peshawar grow up in environments that are worlds away from each other, and in early phases of the exchange this geographical and cultural distance made it difficult for them to fully understand with one another.

For example, the exchange began with introductions all around, as often takes place at the outset of a university course. With limited time, students were instructed to keep their introductions brief. Moreover, the videoconference connection was not strong, so on occasion it was difficult to see and hear very clearly. Thus, researchers had only limited expectations for students in both countries to make many significant connections during this narrow exercise. Yet even under these conditions the disconnect between students in Melbourne and Peshawar was notable. On both sides, students stated their name and described specific interests in the field of journalism. In Peshawar, students responded to this exercise in a very formal way, calmly and slowly pronouncing their names and describing their professional interests.

Students in Melbourne began the same way, but started attempting to lighten the occasion by inserting humorous comments into their presentations. It became a small bit of sport, as each Australian student tried to think of new ways to elicit chuckles from their friends. Nothing disrespectful was intended, but the humor was one-sided. Pakistani students didn’t get the jokes. The introductions continued, Pakistanis polite and soft-spoken, Australians performing for each other with humor that Pakistanis didn’t understand.

For example, one Australian student opened by saying “G’day, Pakistan,” with a big wave. Students in Australia chuckled, but students in Pakistan didn’t realize that it was humor. Another Australian student joked about his difficulty finding a job with a degree in English literature. Students in Australia laughed, but students in Pakistan didn’t understand the joke. Another Australian student joked about trying several seemingly unrelated occupations before now trying journalism. Again, students in Australia laughed, but students in Pakistan didn’t get it. Another Australian student ended his presentation with a big, comical thumbs up. Students in Australia laughed out loud, but students in Pakistan were uncertain about the joke. Later, another Australian student ended his presentation with two big, comical thumbs up, and students in Australia laughed louder, but students in Pakistan were still unsure about the joke.

At the outset, in spite of many combined years of study and experience in cross-cultural education, researchers could not know for certain how students from Australia and Pakistan might eventually work together in this Virtual Student Exchange. Connecting this way through technology is new, and the kind of relationship building often recognizable from in-person student exchange was not guaranteed.

But researchers were pleased to see personal relationships grow over the course of the Virtual Exchange, as illustrated in this interaction from the second week, when Australian and Pakistani representatives of one of the small groups reported on their team's progress on collaborative stories:

P1: I am [P1] and in my group I am with [P2], and in the Australian side, we have [A1], [A2], and [A3]. We have decided on migrants, and on the Australian side, they will give us feedback and statements from the migrants living over there and their problems.
A1: It’s been going well. It’s been great getting to know [P1] and [P2]. We’ve had some long and fruitful chats over the last few nights – with technology getting in the way a little bit ...

At this point, A1 and P1 smile broadly and knowingly at each other, nodding their heads. The humor is now shared on both sides. By the fourth week, when students shared their final work product and their reflections on the experience, relationships had grown substantially:

A2: We all got a lot out of this experience, [A1], [A3], and myself. We communicated with our guys constantly, and we never found that we couldn’t get a hold of them or they weren’t getting back to us. We were in constant communication with them.

A3: [Laughing] We’ve spoken so much, it’s like ... A2: ... we said the other day we could write a book.

At this point, students on both the Australian and Pakistani side are laughing:

A3: Yeah. Like we would speak every single day.

A2: It was a lot of communication. I just want to also add that – I’ve spoken a lot to these guys [motions to A1 and A3] and we really enjoyed getting to know [P1] and [P2]

A3: We all have nicknames now.

A2: Yeah, we all have nicknames. [Laughter in Australia and Pakistan]. And we definitely thought that we got a lot out of this experience. I had no idea about life in Peshawar before, and now I do, so thank you.

Here, P1 shares the nicknames to laughter on both sides. P1 continues:

P1: We enjoyed our four weeks journey with them. I learned that technology can bring people near, that we can highlight local issues on continental websites and continental news organization, and that I was considering Australians [an overly] proud people – but that was my stereotyping, and I’m going to remove that stereotyping.

Both sides also shared perspectives on the serious stories they developed together. With the support of the Pakistani students in the role of fixers, the Australian students wrote a story on the desperation of families of migrants who were lost at sea. The Pakistani students wrote on migrants who successfully arrived in Australia and faced the challenge of thriving in a new country, with the support of Australian students in the role of fixers. In a semi-structured interview a few weeks after the exchange, an Australian student from this group indicated that all members were still in contact and hoped to work together again.

This group’s experience was generally representative of the other groups. In final reflections, one group indicated that technical and scheduling problems made it difficult for members to connect, and that these problems hindered their ability to work together, although not enough to prevent them from completing the assignment and writing successful stories on the changing role of women in journalism in both societies. The eight other groups reported successful and robust communication and collaboration. All groups wrote substantial stories and presented them to peers
on both sides in the connected classroom. Both universities put the stories on their websites, to which other university programs in journalism made connecting links. One story was picked up and distributed widely by the mainstream Pakistani press.

Contact theory in relationship building

As Allport originally observed, and many others have later confirmed, the mere occurrence of contact, including in-person contact, does not guarantee successful building of relationships. Official Sanction refers to the need to reassure unfamiliar and distant groups, including groups in open conflict, of approval to speak and interact benignly. In this exchange, the setting itself in higher education provided Official Sanction, which researchers sought to augment in mindful ways. In early sessions of the exchange, and even in the early hour of later sessions, students were often nervous and reluctant to speak. Thus, much of the early back-and-forth discussion was between Australian, Pakistani, and U.S. faculty, as they modeled open and collaborative dialogue.

University faculty have a range of time-honored techniques to get nervous students to open up and speak. For example, very early in the first session the Australian facilitator asked students how familiar they were with the news network Al Jazeera, and for a minute or two, no one spoke. To get students into a mode of interacting, she then asked students simply to raise their hand if they’d watched Al Jazeera. Most students in both countries raised their hands. She then asked the question of the facilitator in Pakistan, who answered that he had, and added that alumni of the journalism program at the University of Peshawar were now working for Al Jazeera. With the ice broken, students began to speak.

By the middle of the second session, as the class moved more deeply into the heart of the curriculum, topics were more sensitive and difficult to discuss. The following exchange illustrates Official Sanction, as faculty on both campuses created a safe for topics that were not easy to broach:

AF: I thought that Chris Cramer’s quote ‘No story is worth a life, no picture consequence is worth an injury, and no piece of audio is worth endangering our staff’ is a really good point, but I actually wondered whether or not ... the attitude of news bosses has moved on since then and that while they won’t put their own staff in danger, they’re willing to put others in danger, and by that I mean young people, freelancers, fixers, and I wonder if that is where we’re seeing those people losing their lives. And I wondered from your end, [PF], if that’s how you would see it?

PF: I’ll also want students to answer the question, but this is true, and I think what’s happening here is that the bosses are just putting everyone’s life in danger. We had this Freedom of Expression day in collaboration with UNESCO about investigating reporting, and I spoke with many mainstream journalists, and they were all of the same view that the way media works there is no place to hide, and you are normally in danger all the time. But I think it would be better if someone among students talk about it.

At this prompting, a student raised his hand, and the Pakistani facilitator handed him the microphone. The student began to tell a story about working as a fixer for a Western journalist. The two had conducted an interview in a remote region with a jihadist who had fought in
Afghanistan, but the Western journalist did not have the permission that the Pakistani government requires for her travel in the region:

P3: I was feeling fear that I am just traveling with a foreigner in a region where I cannot justify her travel, and when I just conduct that interview and we got back to Mardan, and I just dropped her and she was heading toward Islamabad, and then I just get a sigh of relaxation that I got rid of a threat – so it’s always been a threat to work with foreign journalists as a fixer ... you don’t have any security from the guy you are working with, and so it’s always been a threatening situation.

Then another Pakistani student spoke about similar experiences, concluding “I always like to keep myself away from this type of reporting.” At this inopportune point, the videoconferencing connection was lost for several minutes. When it was restored, the Australian facilitator noted the surprise of her students to hear these perspectives, and asked a crucial follow-up question:

AF: Hello ... Okay, so before we lost you, we were talking about your two speakers, one who had been a fixer and was talking about how it was a relief to drop the foreigner off because it was very dangerous, and there was no insurance. And the second speakers spoke about keeping himself safe. When you dropped out, we were talking here that these were issues that we hadn’t even really considered, and my class was saying that we don’t even know how to respond to that here in Melbourne because it’s so removed from our experiences, and we wondered then, do many foreigners come to Pakistan to do stories and treat people badly because they haven’t really thought about it?

Here, the Pakistani facilitator explained that in some cases young Western freelance journalists put themselves and their fixers in danger by being “adventurous” and taking a cavalier attitude towards rules and procedures, including traveling to dangerous areas of Pakistan without proper paperwork. He went on to explain that Pakistani fixers typically don’t ask whether the Western journalist who has hired them has all the proper authorizations in place. In a professional context outside the safe space of the exchange, these perspectives would not be shared.

**Discussion**

Early results from this trial provide clear evidence that Virtual Student Exchange can reduce stereotypes, improve attitudes, and build productive relationships in ways that are comparable to in-person exchange, at a fraction of the costs. For this reason, Virtual Student Exchange offers intriguing potential for further development and research. For the amount of money, time, and human resources spent to send just a handful of students overseas, very many could connect and gain comparable benefits from participating in a Virtual Student Exchange empowered by technology.

In some cases, Virtual Student Exchange is likely to be the only way to help students connect in any kind of scale, as is the case with students in Melbourne and Peshawar. It is essentially impossible to send groups of students from Australia, the United States, and most Western countries to Peshawar, as all of the Western diplomatic missions have long-standing travel advisories to the region due to violence. It is possible to send a small number of students from Peshawar to the West, and a few are currently studying in Western universities. But for a variety of reasons the process of sending young men and women from Peshawar to the West tends to be

Difficulty of travel tends to isolate people in fragile states and zones of conflict, including young people. This is unfortunate for everyone, but especially for young journalists and other young professionals from these areas who are curious about the world and inspired by customs and practices they hear about in other countries, including democratic norms like a free press. This is also unfortunate for young journalists and other professionals from high-income nation who are trying to learn about life in fragile states and zones of conflict. Some young freelance journalists take it upon themselves to travel to these areas, and while their enterprising spirit is admirable, their actions carry risks that, in their youth and inexperience, they often don’t appreciate. Virtual Student Exchange offers an alternative for serious learning about distant lands and cultures, while helping students prepare for the rigors of in-person travel, if they so choose as a follow-up step.

Limitations

It bears repeating, both within an exchange like this with students and in any post-event analysis, that for all of the efforts to ensure equal treatment during the program, the necessity of working in English and the technical disparities between the two societies by themselves prevented students from having genuinely equivalent experiences. More importantly, disparities in background – between growing up in a high-income and relatively secure city like Melbourne and a low-income and insecure city like Peshawar – ensure that students in any kind of exchange like this will have very different experiences. Moreover, exchange experiences like this one are necessarily limited in scope, and we don’t yet know if students in this exchange are still connecting over social media, though other research has indicated that changes in attitudes caused by in-person exchange tend to be lasting (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Paige, et al., 2009).

Scaling a program like this will require patience, as it compels a non-trivial up-front investment from faculty to develop a common curriculum, find appropriate readings and resources, and record lectures that will free up class time for discussion and group work in a blended learning format. On the other hand, once developed, the curriculum only needs to be updated every year. Still, scaling will take time, so it may take some time before researchers can attempt large-scale quantitative investigations. Technical limitations were a problem in this exchange, though this may be the easiest problem to address. Professional videoconferencing systems are increasingly common in university classrooms, even in low-income countries.

Finally, it’s crucial to say that Virtual Student Exchange should not be thought of as an equivalent alternative to in-person student exchange. There are many aspects to living in another country and working with counterparts in the same physical environment that cannot entirely be replicated virtually. There are some common physical courtesies like opening a door for someone, or social experiences like breaking bread together, that contribute to softening of prejudices, improvement in attitudes, and building of relationships. Students will only experience these through in-person travel.

It is encouraging that some have students expressed a greater interest in traveling overseas as a result of Virtual Student Exchange. In general, it is probably best to think of Virtual Student
Exchange as a supplement to and not a replacement for the kind of in-person exchange programs offered by university campuses around the world, and in the best of circumstances, Virtual Student Exchange might open the door for more students to consider studying or working overseas, better prepared for difficulties they may encounter.

Conclusion

Though new and in need of further testing, Virtual Student Exchange has shown to have the potential to reduce the isolation of students in cities like Peshawar and its environs, while offering a way for students from outside the region to make connection to counterparts there for meaningful learning. A final lesson from this study is that students enjoyed the experience. Student evaluations of the sections of the courses with Virtual Student Exchange were up in both countries, and all students said they would recommend them to peers. Based on student interest, faculty in Melbourne and Peshawar intend to continue the program. This study shows that students can learn vital lessons from Virtual Student Exchange, lessons that are much more difficult to learn without connecting to counterparts in another society, and lessons that are much more expensive to learn by sending students on a trip to the other society, when that’s possible at all.

About the Authors:

Keith Bowen is a researcher in the Learning Sciences at Stanford University. He develops and studies innovative programs that blend best practices in teaching (cross-cultural dialogue, design thinking, problem-solving) with scalable and sustainable technologies (web-conferencing, multiplayer simulation, virtual reality). Working with faculty partners around the world, he is currently developing and studying a series of Virtual Student Exchange programs in the fields of international education, global health, and journalism. Bowen has over 10 years of experiences teaching in fragile states and zones of conflict and has developing blended learning programs completed by tens of thousands of learners across the globe.

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Glocalization of Journalism and Mass Communication Education: Best Practices from an International Collaboration on Curriculum Development and Implementation

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Abstract

This paper presents the experiences and research results of an initiative which was funded through the Institute of International Education (IIE) under the umbrella of the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program (CADFP). The project is a collaboration between a journalism and mass communications professor from a public university in the United States of America and a team of curriculum developers from a private university in Uganda where a brand new journalism and mass communications program was recently co-developed. The experiences we shared in this work is expected to inform African colleges and universities in their quest to glocalize their curricula especially journalism and mass communication. Linking our work to the 2019 World Journalism Education Congress theme, Teaching Journalism during a Disruptive Age, the Age of Disruption is usually marked by drastic change which gives rise to adjustment, re-strategizing, assessing, redesigning, and reconsidering how things were done and how things could, and should be done. Often this is measured in conformity with the current trends, needs, and demands of the society in which the disruption occurred. So, we presented the process involved in developing this program which aims at teaching journalism in a disruptive age. The process in question entails, assessment of needs, actual design and development of curriculum, review and accreditation processes, program launch, and formative evaluation of the first cohort of the program.

Introduction

This paper presents the experiences and research result of an initiative which was funded through the Institute of International Education (IIE) under the umbrella of the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program (CADFP). Vital international and national concerns were addressed. On a global level, scholars have questioned and criticized the general Western-module ingrained in journalism and mass communication curriculum and proposed a decolonization of journalism curricula. Another major criticism is the concept of western-based educators transplanting their curriculum verbatim to other regions of the world without paying greater attention to the local needs. To address these two global concerns, an extensive assessment of local needs was conducted prior to the conceptualization of the new program. The assessment of needs adopted a participatory action model and captured the knowledge and narratives of both internal and external stakeholders. This involved review of pertinent documents including the nation’s constitution, governmental briefs, and promulgations, interviews with governmental officials, media and journalism educators, media practitioners, students, and benchmarking the curriculum of other tertiary institutions in the nation.
Linking our work to the 2019 World Journalism Education Congress theme, *Teaching Journalism during a Disruptive Age*, the Age of Disruption is usually marked by drastic change which gives rise to adjustment, re-strategizing, assessing, redesigning, and reconsidering how things were done and how things could, and should be done. Often this is measured in conformity with the current trend, needs, and demands of the society in which the disruption occurred. In recent times, disruption occurs concurrently with emergent technologies and society’s adaptation to incumbent technologies. Bringing this concept to journalism, several adjustments have been made in journalism pedagogy and journalism practice. Journalism programs originally were offered at trade schools but are now housed in academic departments and colleges that do not necessarily follow the old trade school model but strive for, and strongly encourage scholarly module. Additionally, emergent technologies enable journalists to write, produce, and disseminate information through several platforms and this requires a multi-skilled abilities both in handling the technologies and in critical thinking and other multi-disciplinary acumen including but not limited to civic, ethical, economic, business, religious, and technical knowledge.

Perhaps a macro perspective and dimension in journalism practice and education is the internationalization construct as journalism is taught with this framework in mind so as to cater to the seamless international boundaries. So, with this internationalization, comes globalization and a complementary concept - *Glocalization*. With the above theoretical underpinnings, this paper presents “glocalization” as a framework upon which journalism curriculum could be effectively developed and implemented in a disruptive age. Glocalization is often defined as the practice of conducting business according to both local and global considerations – this epitomizes the curriculum co-development collaboration between a journalism and mass communications professor from a public university in the United States of America and a team of curriculum developers from a private university in Uganda where a brand new journalism and mass communications program was recently co-developed. We also present, in subsequent pages, the processes of design, review and approval, and implementation.

**Needs Assessment Outcome and Implementation Philosophy**

Information gathered through this process served as blueprint and frame of reference for all design decisions. In the area of local needs, four key factors were addressed. First, the realization that most media personnel in Uganda are both academically and professionally unqualified. Second, the practitioners with academic training were found lacking in experience. Third, the current curricula offered at several tertiary institutions are not comprehensive and lack local relevance. The project addressed these problems thus: first, the program was designed to cater to both traditional and non-traditional students offering opportunities for unqualified media practitioners to get their formal training through evening and weekender programs. Secondly, the challenge of inexperienced graduates was mitigated by designing the program to adopt the experiential learning approach which many refer to as the “Teaching Hospital Model”. This entails integrating practice to theory - similar to the way medical students engage in hands-on practice under the supervision of a mentor. The university drew a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with reputable media houses for students and faculty to use their studios for hands-on experience and for seasoned media practitioners to guest-teach some courses. With the convergence functions of media industry today, graduates should be trained to have adequate knowledge of other disciplines; therefore, the curriculum integrated cognate courses that would render graduates versatile. Ultimately, this
research serves as a template for African colleges and universities to follow in their quest to glocalize their curricula. While the general concept of journalism may remain western, journalism curriculum developers in Africa through extensive assessment of needs, and focusing on those needs and other societal particularities, can adjust the western module to fit their local needs.

The practice of joint curriculum development and implementation in higher education is not new. What is new is the growing need for responsiveness to local context in developing and implementing programs that are benchmarked by international curriculum. This paper presents the theoretical underpinning for and experience in curriculum co-development collaboration between a journalism and mass communications professor from a public university in the United States of America and a team of curriculum developers from a private university in Uganda where a brand new journalism and mass communications program was recently co-developed, approved and is being implemented. Although theoretically, international collaboration may seem simple, but there have been occasions whereby global North-South collaboration is lopsided or failed to achieve the desired goal. Also, there have been situations where the goal was achieved but without the input or participation of all involved. The expectations from all parties involved in collaboration may be as distinct as their backgrounds in the realms of what should be included in the assessment of needs, pedagogical styles, content, and outcome. However, alliance with equal contribution and participation grounded in equity and mutual understanding, rather than dominance, would yield a more effective outcome. The caveat then becomes a challenge of each participant discarding their pre-conceived notions of how things are done in their home institutions and countries and embracing the environment where the designed program will be implemented. This however, does not undermine self-reflexivity. Collaborators’ reflexivity cannot be entirely erased especially since it often interweaves with experiences. However, some challenges may arise from the perception that scholars in developing nations may feel inferior to their counterparts coming from institutions in developed countries either due to the feeling of dependency or lack of similar qualification or experience (Altbach, 2002). In such cases, conflict resolution skills are needed as intervention strategy and referencing the goals of the project might bring all parties back to focus.

Programme Development and Approval

Program development

The development and approval of the Bachelor of Journalism and Mass Communication program (BJMC) followed a comprehensive process for curriculum design. This program development and approval process was informed by the national and regional (East African) framework for program development and review which recognizes the participation of higher education stakeholders. According to the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) Handbook for Quality Assurance Volume 1, higher education has many stakeholders and their expectations of quality of programs and graduates are equally many. Higher education institutions therefore, have to be clear about the requirements of the Government, employers, academicians, students, professional bodies as well as the general society. As far as possible, the requirements of all stakeholders should be translated into the expected learning outcomes of the program.

The critical question here is how does an institution get to know and to analyze the needs and requirements of the various stakeholders? More precisely, how did Uganda Martyrs University get to know and analyze the requirements of the stakeholders for the Bachelor of Journalism and Mass
Communication Program? An extensive and inclusive stakeholders’ needs assessment was conducted prior to the conceptualization of the program. In addition to review of relevant institutional and governmental documents, participatory stakeholders’ consultation meetings were held for both key internal and external players. Through letters, telephone calls, face-to-face meetings, focus group discussions, and surveys, several stakeholders were contacted to provide input on whether the program is necessary; their advice for an effective program, the current needs that the program will solve, and best practices to be adopted. The results of this process informed the goal and content of the new journalism and mass communication program. Overall, the program was developed to train professional journalists and communicators who have the requisite knowledge and skills not only in the broad areas of journalism and mass communication but are also ICT savvy and well-rounded in issues of politics, economics and development. It targets those interested in the study of both print and broadcast journalism, business journalism, science journalism, new media, mass communication, public relations, pastoral communication, advertising, integrated marketing communication and strategic communication. More specifically, the Bachelor of Journalism and Mass Communication program was developed with the following objectives:

- To facilitate the learning of the historical concepts and approaches to the study of journalism and mass communication;
- To expose learners to foundational understanding of theory and practice in the field of journalism and mass communication;
- To prepare the student to apply communication principles and best practices in the achievement of set objectives for the church, community, business, government and non-profit organizations;
- To provide the basis for in-depth investigation as watchdogs for the society and use of communication principles for effective dissemination of information;
- To train conscientious media practitioners who will uphold ethical values and restore dignity to the practice of journalism;
- To train students to meet the current demand of designers and graphics by incorporating emergent technologies in media and communication endeavors.

Notwithstanding the relevance of stakeholders’ consultation in program development and review, the experience in the development of the Journalism and Mass Communication Program at Uganda Martyrs University can be described as mind-numbing, back-breaking and emotionally draining process. This was largely due to the overbearing challenge of reconciling the sometimes conflicting requirements of the various stakeholders and the limited timeframe to accomplish the process amidst numerous cancellations and rescheduling of stakeholders meetings. But the narratives of the stakeholders were far enriching and could not be ignored in the design of the program. The success of our collaboration in Uganda as indicated in Ezumah (2019) can be attributed to several factors including our agreement to operate in a space that was neither western nor entirely local. We worked within the framework of Third Culture. Third culture is a brand new space independent of both the local culture and the borrowed culture but embodying the constructs of both. This new space provides a respectful, engaging, and inspiring, space where “diverse cultural communities meet and make connections through dialogue, negotiation, and meaningful engagement” (Patel & Lynch, 2013). Third Cultural space is neither purely western nor purely Ugandan but a combination of best practices from both worlds. As such the curriculum that emerged from this collaboration...
is not ethnocentric but adopts a global perspective for training journalists who will serve in both local and global environments.

**Program approval and accreditation**

Following the completion of the design of the curriculum, the process for the review and approval of the draft document had to begin. Uganda Martyrs University has an elaborate and rigorous internal process for curriculum review to ensure quality. Three levels of curriculum review process can be distinguished: faculty level, university senate level and the final administrative level. At the faculty level, the Faculty Curriculum Review Committee (CRC) and Board have the mandate to review and to approve an academic program respectively. The draft program had to be presented before the Faculty CRC and Board for critical interrogation to ensure that it is aligned to the vision of the faculty and framework of the discipline. At the Senate level, the Curriculum Review Committee of the University Senate is responsible for the review of the draft program. This Committee ensures that the program has been developed in line with the institutional and national requirements. Where minimum standards for the proposed program exits, the Committee ensures that the proposed program has exceeded those requirements. The Committee also ensures that the philosophy, vision and mission of the University, which is to train graduates who are competent in the disciplines and responsive to ethical values, has been fully captured in the program. As a technical body, the Committee makes the necessary review and once satisfied with the program, recommends to Senate for approval. At the administrative level, the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs ensures that all the requirements set by the National Council for Higher Education have been fulfilled. We confirm here that the Bachelor of Journalism and Mass Communication was subjected to this rigorous process of internal review and approval.

The mandate to accredit academic programs rests with the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). This mandate is defined in the national law that regulates higher education – The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001 as amended. Section 119A of this Act states that “for the avoidance of doubt, no person shall operate a University, Other Degree Awarding Institution or a Tertiary Institution, without the prior accreditation of its academic and professional programs by the National Council for Higher Education.” In simple terms, the Act requires that accredited institutions must run only accredited programs. With its own internal program accreditation process, the NCHE subjected the new program of journalism into independent expert’s review whose report informed the decision of the Quality Assurance Committee and the final Council to accredit the program. It is worth noting here that the report of the independent external expert was decisive in this accreditation process. The Expert Program Assessor noted with satisfaction the program purpose and relevance thus:

> The program rationale is clearly stated, broad to cover all aspects of journalism. It forms part of a program of study and it gives consideration to the underlying values and beliefs about the purpose of journalism.
> The program objectives reflect the general direction of the program for they describe what students will be able to do as a result of being exposed to mass communication and journalism.

(NCHE, Program Assessment Report, 16th October 2017)

The Program Assessor had made observations for conditional accreditation of the program suggesting that “NCHE as a regulator should ensure the availability of training infrastructure and
equipment before accrediting the program.” Notwithstanding reservations expressed, the Expert Program Assessor recommended the accreditation of the program by the Council since the program is ideal and it describes most aspects relevant for journalism and mass communication professional. Based on the report of the expert assessor, the Executive Director of the National Council for Higher Education, invoking its mandate defined in the Act, wrote to the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs of Uganda Martyrs University thus:

“I am pleased to inform you that after due consideration, Council at its 45th Meeting of 27th November 2017, accepted to accredit the following academic program for a period of five years with effect from 27th November 2017.

... 7. Bachelor of Journalism and Mass Communication¹

I wish to remind you that under section 119A of the Law, you shall not run any academic programs that have not been accredited by National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). Please urge your staff members to implement these programs in accordance with the regulations of NCHE, Officers of the NCHE shall review this implementation during their periodic administrative and monitoring visits to your institution.”

It is abundantly clear, from the tone of this letter, that the NCHE not only requires universities in Uganda to have their program accredited but also have them implemented in accordance with the numerous set regulations including on student admission, quality of teaching staff, capacity of infrastructure and equipment, among others.

**Implementation Process**

**Management and administration of the program**

Following the accreditation of the Bachelor of Journalism and Mass Communication Program by the NCHE, the University was now faced with the reality of program implementation. One of the key implementation questions was where should the program be housed? Initially, the BJMC program was proposed by the School of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS) under the Department of Languages. There were calls to structure this Department and create an Institute of Languages and Communication Studies with two departments: Department of Languages and Department of Communication Studies. The later Department was to house the BJMC program. The proposal to establish these academic units was approved by the University Council and so the BJMC program became the first academic program of this new Institute and Department. A Director for the Institute was identified from the existing staff and a new Head of Department for Communication Studies was recruited to provide academic leadership for the new program.

**Marketing and recruitment of students**

At the onset, the program needed to be advertised and promoted widely to attract the target number of qualified students. Specific program brochures and other promotional materials were produced

¹. There were other programs submitted for review and accreditation. The Bachelors in Journalism and Mass Communications had the number “7” attached to it to indicate its numeric number among many other programs that the Uganda Martyrs University submitted to the NCHE for review and accreditation.
and disseminated at different forums including at the Graduation Ceremony held in March 2018 and at national Uganda Martyrs Day Celebrations in June 2018. Efforts were made to reach to the communication department of the Catholic Secretariat to disseminate information about the journalism and mass communication program through the Catholic Communication structures. The target here was to reach to the communication units of all the Catholic Dioceses of Uganda. These dissemination structures were considered in addition to the general public mass communication structures of the Newspapers, Radios and Televisions. Consideration was also made for the use of social media especially the short messaging system to reach to high school graduates whose telephone contacts were obtained the previous year. The purpose of this strategic marketing drive was to reach to the target audience and recruit qualified candidates into the program.

The profile of students to be enrolled into the program was clearly formulated and defined in the program document. Admission into the program required a candidate to have the Uganda Ordinary Certificate of Education (O’ level) or an equivalent qualification with at least 5 passes obtained at the same sitting and the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education Examination (A’ Level) or an equivalent qualification with at least two principal passes. The program also provides candidates who hold a diploma level qualification. To qualify for admission under this scheme, a candidate must possess at least a 2nd class (Lower division) diploma in the fields of journalism, media, communication or any field from a recognized institution. A third entry option is provided under the Mature Age Entry Scheme, where a candidate must pass an entry examination and provide evidence of specialized knowledge relevant to journalism and mass communication to ensure satisfactory completion of the program. This level will cater to adult media practitioners in Uganda who have no formal education in the field of journalism and mass communication.

With a target of 30 students, 32 students were admitted into the first cohort of the Bachelor of Journalism and Mass Communication Program of Uganda Martyrs University. Out of the 32 admitted students, 20 (6 male and 14 female) reported and were registered to pursue the program award. By the end of the first semester 2018, only 17 students sat for the examinations. Two students dropped from the program due to funding and health challenges. One of the three students failed to meet the requirements of regular class attendance and thus could not be allowed to sit for final examinations in accordance with the academic regulations of the University. However, 19 students returned for the second semester at the beginning of 2019 except for the student whose health problem had not improved. No new students were recruited in the second semester.

**Staffing for the program**

Staff recruitment was yet an important process in the implementation of the program. The university considered the existing staff with qualifications relevant to deliver the general communication courses in the staff recruitment process. There was therefore, need to identify and recruit specialists in journalism and mass communication discipline. For the start, the University considered to recruit only one full-time expert who was identified through head-hunting. This staff was head of a journalism and mass communication program at another university and had been involved in the program development as an external academic stakeholder. This was deemed necessary due to the rich experience and expertise of this staff in the implementation of a similar program within the Ugandan higher education context. One part-time expert in journalism and mass communication was also recruited to support the program implementation. In the second semester, two adjunct staff who are experts in the discipline of journalism and mass communication
were considered. A teaching load of 12 hours maximum per week was considered in the recruitment process to allow for gradual growth of staff due to financial constraints. Also worth noting here is the consideration by Uganda Martyrs University to invite from time to time international guest professors (adjunct professors) from the International Communication Association (ICA) to enhance the local staffing capacity. Indeed, in the second semester of this first year of the program implementation, one visiting professor was considered and made great input into the program delivery. Therefore, by the end of the second semester of the first year, there were four qualified professional staff (one full-time staff, one part-time staff and two adjunct – guest professors). The number of professional staff on the program is certainly inadequate and needs to be increased especially as the program moves into the second year of implementation.

**Program delivery**

The success in the implementation of any program is determined by whether or not the approved curriculum has been followed. The approved program structure had seven courses in the first semester and eight courses in the second semester (including internship). These courses have been distributed in the two semesters in a manner that shows coherency and good sequencing. By and large, the first year courses provide a good introduction into the subsequent parts of the program. However, during the implementation of the program in this first year, the course on communication theory, which appears in the second year, was offered in the place of the course on public speaking because it was deemed to be a vital introductory course and thus appropriate for first year. Although the implementation of the program structure in the first year can be described as successful, there was a mix up in the interpretation of one course content. The course Web Technologies/Publication Design was thought to be a computer science and information technology course. “We sat together with students of computer science and a lot of our time was thus wasted in teaching irrelevant content until it was corrected following the concerns raised by students”, remarked a group of students.

**Teaching-hospital model implementation style and local content**

Although the practical component of the program (internship) has been designed to be undertaken at the end of each year, the students were given opportunity to run mini projects in the course of each semester. In addition to writing short stories in a news bulletin they established – The Spotlight – the students were actively involved in covering university events alongside the experienced journalists. This gave the students opportunity for practical experience and a sense of great satisfaction and pride in doing journalism work. Often employing their own gadgets, the students took photos, short videos, conducted interviews with high profile people and wrote notes during events. These activities have also constituted part of the tasks for continuous assessment of courses. Moreover, the students have been scheduled to start their internship work at the end of May 2019. Media houses have already been identified; placement positions secured by the Institute and the internship guidelines and student logbook have been designed. It has been envisioned that students will undertake two internships instead of three as designed in the original program structure. The removal of the third internship in the third year is to allow for time for students to develop comprehensive reports for submission for final assessment. Also, instructors adopt a pedagogical style that focuses on the region rather than the Western perspectives. The aim was to help learners implement the contents in a way it would be understood by local people and this make impact. An example is the principles of advertising class whereby students were required to design
advertisement that will drive home the importance of environmental protection and discourage deforestation. The second assignment requires students to create a message that will speak to local people on the seriousness of breast cancer and the need for preventive measures. The two figures below demonstrate what students learn. Figure 1 shows a graphic picture of a local women whose breast cancer has metastasized. The woman is Ugandan (or at least Black) therefore, local women can relate to her as opposed using a picture of a foreigner whereby the message will be distanced and not relatable. Furthermore, the picture did not romanticize breast cancer but shows a gory detail of the real picture albeit very ugly and despicable wound of an advanced breast cancer in a female patient.

![Figure 1: Example of student work on Breast cancer awareness campaign.](image)

Similarly, the second example below depicts a local man chopping down a live tree in the forest. Equally, the picture of both the man and the environment is real and also relatable to the audience. Furthermore, the chosen picture is an activity that many men engage in without realizing the effect it as on the environment.
So, both examples fit the characteristics of an impactful advertisement which entails simple, capable of holding the audience attention, very suggestive and bearing a conviction value which can educate as well as leave a memorizing value (Wroblewski, 2018).

**Some Achievements and Challenges**

**Achievements**

The implementation of the Bachelor of Journalism and Mass Communication program at Uganda Martyrs University has had noticeable achievements and challenges. Among the achievements so far registered include the implementation of the approved program structure. By and large, the original program structure for the first academic year has been implemented. This is due to the comprehensive and coherent program organization that was adopted at the onset and throughout the program development. Moreover, the strong commitment and interest demonstrated by both staff and students has helped to achieve the intended program outcomes at this stage. “Students feel proud about the program and the courses they are pursuing” according to the Head of Department for Communication Studies. This enthusiasm for the program on the part of the students has been a great motivator to their learning and practical engagement in the university community. The position of Communication Secretary in the students’ government has now been
reserved for a student of journalism and mass communication elected by the same cohort. In addition, the establishment of *The Spotlight* News Bulletin for the university, has changed the dynamics of communication at the campus and visibility of events and great personalities in the university community has increased. The greatest achievement in the implementation of this program so far is the experiential learning methods that the students themselves have acknowledged to have enabled them to appreciate the choice they made to join the program. As one student asserts, “it has been a great start and a great experience indeed; we appreciate every step of this journey of becoming professional journalists and communicators.”

**Some challenges**

Notwithstanding the achievements of the BJMC program noted above, the challenges for quality program implementation are apparent. Like any other program that requires significant inputs (human, financial, material – equipment) to guarantee quality, the implementation of the BJMC has faced the challenge lack of facilities and equipment. As the first year comes to an end, the studio rooms (for radio and television) have not been established due to financial resource constraints. The absence of a functional communication studio and specialized computer laboratory if not addressed means that the delivery of quality journalism education will be compromised. The exposure of students to local media houses is certainly inadequate to offer greater practical learning experience. Moreover, the rapid changes in media technology today exert greater challenge on education institutions to avail learners with up-to-date technologies for enhanced learning. Reliance on students own gadgets for learning is not sustainable and is exclusive to better learning for students who have no means to acquire these relevant educational equipment. Another notable challenge has been the inadequacy of literature (books, journals and other written materials) produced from the local context. Whereas sufficient reading materials on journalism and mass communication exist in the library, the inadequacy of the local context materials has implications to the appreciation of context based learning by students. On the other hand, the absence of any international language other than English, which is the main medium of instruction, has been voiced as a limitation of the program. “How shall we become effective journalists without knowing at least one international language like French, Spanish, Chinese and even Kiswahili which is widely used in the region?” asked one student. The expressed desire for inclusion of international languages in the program and at the same time the demand for local content of journalism materials brings to the fore the realization of the importance for *glocalization* in journalism education.

Despite this concern from the students, the program is focusing on improving English language proficiency because it is still a challenge among many students which impedes their classroom participation and successfully completing some assignments. In addition to language proficiency, lack of technical equipment, the program faces the challenge of shortage of both instructional staff (Faculty) and administrative staff. As a result, the instructors are also engaging in administrative duties.

**Conclusion**

The quality of a program is determined not only by the curriculum design but also by the quality of its inputs (students, staff, resources); delivery (learning and teaching approaches); and the outputs (graduates). *Glocalization* is central to the effective design and implementation of journalism and mass communication programs. *Glocalization* is a construct that, when loosely applied, literally translate to the cliché - “think globally, act locally”. In this case, it refers to the
practice of developing a curriculum according to both local and global considerations (Ezumah, 2019). Also central to the success of this program design is collaboration. Not all joint efforts are considered collaboration; valid collaboration as explained in Ezumah (2019) requires trust, mutual understanding, and respect. Montiel-Overall (2005) defines collaboration in the area of instruction, teaching and learning as a “trusting, working relationship between two or more equal participants involved in shared thinking, shared planning and shared creation of integrated instruction” (p. 5). Essentially, social constructivist approach and participatory action model are needed for collaboration and certain guidelines are necessary for a cohesive and successful collaboration. They include, Recognition of common goals (Gray, 1989); Sustainability and coordinated steps in delegating responsibilities and decision making (Ravid & Handler, 2001); Readiness to accept different approaches and change (Huse & Cummings, 1985); and mutual transformation (Kurbatov, 2008). We also considered shared thinking, shared problem-solving and shared creation of integrated instruction; trusting Working relationship; and focusing on content Areas – how it relates to the specific local need or context (Montiel-Overall, 2005).

Conclusively, in conformity with the themes of the 2019 WJEC conference, to successfully teach journalism in a disruptive age, certain criteria are imperative – collaboration, gocalization of curriculum to acknowledge the global nature of journalism discipline, rigorous evaluation and accreditation of the program to fit local standards, requirements and concepts, careful implementation by qualified and conscientious faculty and staff, and recruitment of qualified students who are able to imbibe the concepts and bring learning to life.

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Michael Mawa is the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor at Uganda Martyrs University. He previously served as Director of Quality Assurance at Nkumba University and Founding President of the Ugandan Universities Quality Assurance Forum (UUQAF) and of the East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN). He has had over 10 years of engagement in higher education quality assurance training, assessment and development of standards with the Uganda National Council for Higher Education and the Inter-University Council for East Africa. He holds a doctorate in Social Sciences and has published in the areas of quality assurance, ethics, human rights and human development.

References


Journalism Handbooks and Newsrooms Guidelines

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to point out how the conjugation of theory and practice has occurred in the triad: universities, professional handbooks and journalism training programs in São Paulo, Brazil. Will verify the curricular structures of the Journalism programs in universities that obtained a maximum score in the Ministério da Educação - Brasil (MEC) evaluations in São Paulo in 2018, comparing the emphases of the these universities with the handbooks and the trainee programs practiced by the Folha de São Paulo and Estadão newspapers.

Keywords: Journalism Teaching. Universities. Journalism Handbooks. Training Programs.

Introduction

Although universities in Brazil offer specific courses in Journalism studies and Journalism training, there are communication companies currently offering training programs for those intending to follow the profession. The issue that arises is the motivation for such small period courses and with thematic elements already addressed in the curricula of the graduation courses. The trajectory of journalism teaching in Brazil went through hard times with often problematic restructuring equations, where humanist issues in disciplines such as sociology and philosophy were sometimes neglected in the name of professional practices.

This article aims to understand the current scenario, where in addition to universities, two of the most renowned newspapers in São Paulo keep training programs for journalists and journalism writing handbooks, which are studied and adopted in undergraduate studies in Journalism across the country. The question that arises is whether such companies believe there are gaps in the current training courses or an apparent unpreparedness from unexperienced recently graduated journalists, or do these courses follow other commercial and editorial interests.

The object of study consists of four Journalism courses lectured in the city of São Paulo and receiving maximum score in the evaluations carried out by the Brazilian Ministry of Education (MEC) in August 2018 (E-MEC, 2018). The evaluation is based among other factors on students marks in the National Examination of Student Performance (ENADE) organized by the Brazilian Federal Government every three years; MEC evaluators visit the educational institutions to analyze the curricular and laboratory structure, faculty qualifications and student satisfaction. The target universities were the Faculdade Cásper Libero, Universidade Anhembi Morumbi, Faculdade de Comunicação e Marketing da Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado, and Escola Superior de

Propaganda e Marketing – ESPM. The journalism course *Curso Estado de Jornalismo* and the training program *Programa de Treinamento em Jornalismo* *Diário da Folha de S. Paulo* were chosen due to their notorious national recognition, which may be considered normal due to the history and relevance of those communication companies in the country. The same reasons lead to the choice of their handbooks to analyze the courses, training and handbooks from universities. The second part of the article discusses the onset of Journalism in Brazil starting from the first experiences in print until the beginning of vocational training. It took 139 years to establish journalism teaching permanently. The early influence of French humanist thought should be highlighted, as well as the British commercial insight.

Journalism writing handbooks are addressed in the third topic of this article. The newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo* was the first in the editorial market to issue its own standards of conduct and writing, allowing the purchase of such handbooks in 1984 by students and communication professionals. The newspaper *Estado de S. Paulo* soon followed. Both handbooks are considered reference standards, issuing updated editions over the years.

The four universities and two companies that are objects of study in this research are presented in the following chapter. Their history and current figures allow understanding the relevance of the institutions. Their contextualization allows the identification of journalism degrees and training programs curricula, the purposes of journalism writing handbooks and their relevance in the academic and professional life. To fully develop such considerations, the universities and newspapers were contacted and invited to share their views concerning these issues. Only the *Folha de S. Paulo* replied the email with the proposed questions, and the answers are presented throughout this article.

**Origins of Vocational Training in Journalism in Brazil**

Newspapers arrived in Brazil with a centuries-long delay, due to the prohibition of typography, books and publications during most of the colonial period. Before 1808, the year of the arrival of the Portuguese Royal family in Brazil, there were several attempts, but none succeeded. The most relevant lasted less than one year, in 1746, with the typographer António Isidoro da Fonseca, from Lisbon (Dias, 2018).

The arrival of D. João VI in Rio de Janeiro changed the status quo. The presence of the King and the Royal family in the Portuguese colony required typographies to herald the acts of government and to disseminate the news (Souza & Silva, 2016). The first newspapers were registered in 1808. The *Correio Braziliense* (Brazilian Courier) was drafted in London by Hipólito José da Costa, with a doctrinal character and international perspective. The *Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro Gazette) by the catholic clergyman Frei Tibúrcio José da Rocha was more informative and considered by many as an official publication (Dias, 2018).

The early years of the Brazilian press are described by historians as a period of “personalistic journalism”. The *Correio* often criticized the administrative actions of the Portuguese. The *Gazeta* announced the changes brought about by the arrival of the monarch; indeed, “Newspapers were the voice of their owners” (Dias, 2018, p. 22).

Only since 1828, with the implementation of law courses, Brazil has professionals prepared for writing. The courses formed intellectuals, with classes of rhetoric and mother tongue. However, the text remained literary, without the specific characteristics that would be used in the following century. Regarding the topics, they switched throughout the century from Independence to the need to establish the Republic and the abolition of slavery. At that moment several printed newspapers with industrial structure were distributed in the country. Among them, *A Província de São Paulo* (The Province of São Paulo) is highlighted, which would later be named *O Estado de S. Paulo* (The State of São Paulo).

The Brazilian Press Association (ABI) was created in 1908, including the purpose of establishing a Journalism course. Only in the 1930s, Costa Rego, one of the leaders of the institution, was able to implement the undergraduate course in journalism at the University of Distrito Federal (Melo, 2004), later incorporated in the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Brazil, currently the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. The following initiative took place in São Paulo, in 1947, with the Cásper Libero School of Journalism (Melo, 1994). In the beginning, the institutions adopted a European school-based curriculum.

In 1969, the university degree and the professional registration issued by the Brazilian Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) become mandatory to practice journalism. Such regulatory obligation remained in force until 2009. The adaptation of the courses to an American school model constituted a significant change in the curricula, adopted by the media specially since 1960 and 1970 (Melo, 1998). The MEC kept a mandatory curricular structure for humanistic theoretical-based undergraduate studies in Journalism, but with an infrastructure of laboratories to assure the performance of common practices in the profession.

**History of Journalism Writing Handbooks**

By the time of the inauguration in 1875, the newspaper *A Província de São Paulo* had an editorial line that endures to present day: “making its independence the attribute of its strength” (Fundação Cásper Libero, 2019). There is no reference to handbooks, but the company identifies an ethical concern and indicates how to make journalism. Historians identify the newspaper *A Província* (The Province), circulating between 1928 and 1965 in Recife, as the first to issue writing guidelines for their journalists (Melo, 2005). Gilberto Freyre, who studied at Baylor University in Texas, was concerned with quality, clarity, correctness and a more colloquial style in the production of the daily newspaper. He implemented a notice board where he placed tips for his colleagues in the newsroom. In 1950, the first organized material was released to establish the standards that would be adopted by the Brazilian press. The daily *Diário Carioca*, in a handbook produced by Pompeu de Souza, introduces the lead, directs to the need to produce a text that is easy to understand and appealing for the reader (Vizeu, 2008).

Freyre's ideas were the foundations for modern handbooks. Among them are those produced by the *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Estado de S. Paulo*. The *Folha* was the first to issue its handbook in 1984, making writing standards, principles and commitments accessible to the public through editorial publication (Souza & Silva, 2016). New editions of the handbook were organized in 1987, 1992, 2001 and 2018, with reformulations made over the years by the editorial team. In the case of *Estadão*, the first edition of the handbook dates from 1990 by the journalist Eduardo Martins. In 1997 it reached the third edition, reprinted for the sixth time in 2002. Currently, the *Estadão
handbook is available online with open access to the public. The foreword explains that over the years hundreds of entries were added to the text and chapters required for updating the document (Estadão, 2019).

**Analyzing Universities and Newspapers from São Paulo**

In order to present the educational institutions and companies studied, each object of study is synthetized in a specific topic.

**Faculdade Cásper Libero (FCL)**

The Foundation was established in 1944, by determination of the journalist Cásper Libero in his Will, for the administration of the Gazeta newspaper and radio, which he owned (Fundação Cásper Libero, 2019). The school of journalism was inaugurated in 1947, the second registered school in Brazil (Melo, 2004). Located on the main avenue *Avenida Paulista*, the Group also holds a TV station, two radio stations and two newspapers. This University offers degrees in Journalism; Advertising and Propaganda; Radio, TV and Internet; and Public Relations; in addition to post-graduate degrees, with 3,500 students enrolled in 2018.

**Faculdade de Comunicação e Marketing da Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado (FAAP)**

The institution stemmed from the wish of the São Paulo architect Armando Álvares Penteado to create a Foundation holding his name, opening in 1947. The school was initially oriented towards artistic training, but over the years began to offer courses in different areas, with approximately 12,500 students enrolled (Faculdade Armando Álvares Penteado, 2018), in Communication Studies, Journalism, Cinema, Advertising and Propaganda, Radio and TV, and Public Relations. The Foundation also administers a museum, a theater, and an artistic residence, among other activities.

**Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing (ESPM)**

The ESPM was created in 1951 by a group of advertisers aiming to be a school of excellence, with communication industry professionals teaching the students (ESPM, 2019a). The University has campuses in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre, with 15,000 enrolled students. Both the curricula of the Journalism courses and the tuition fees in the three cities are adapted to each of the markets. The courses include Journalism, Film and Audiovisual, and Advertising and Propaganda (ESPM, 2019).

**Universidade Anhembí Morumbí (UAM)**

Created by a group of advertisers in 1970, the Anhembi University was designed to train graduates in Social Communication. In 1982 they joined another institution for engineers and architects and became Anhembi Morumbí. In 1997 it was accredited as an university. The north-American educational group Laureate International Universities gradually bought the UAM stock shares, becoming the sole owner of the institution in 2013 (Folha de S. Paulo, 2005). The University has 44,000 enrolled students. The communication courses are: Cinema and Audiovisual; Journalism,
Editorial Production; Multimedia Production – Communication in Social Media; Advertising Production; Advertising and Propaganda; Radio, TV and Internet; and Public Relations.

**O Estado de S. Paulo**

Named after the province of São Paulo, the newspaper *A Província de São Paulo* began to circulate in January 4, 1875. The goal of the republican group of founders was to oppose monarchy and slavery. Since January 1, 1890 the name of the newspaper changed into *O Estado de S. Paulo* (The State of São Paulo). Between 1940 and 1945 it was confiscated by the President Getúlio Vargas, who used it for Government propaganda. During the military Government between 1970 and 1975 the newspaper faced another censorship period that banned the publication of news, replacing them by gastronomic recipes and literary texts as form of protest (Estadão, 2018a). The history of the *Estadão* points to political objectification and modernization over the years. The administration was transferred to the group *Grupo Estado* to gather all the companies owned by the group under the same umbrella.

**Folha de S. Paulo**

The newspaper started distribution in 1921 (Folha de S. Paulo, 2018). The so-called *Folha da Noite* (Evening Paper) was created by former journalists from the competing newspaper *Estadão*, aiming for a more popular and informative print media. In the 1940’s, the director introduced editorial and style rules and inaugurates a journalist recruitment program. The company reached three daily newspapers, *Folha da Noite* (Evening Paper), *Folha da Tarde* (Afternoon Paper), and *Folha da Manhã* (Morning Paper), gathered in 1960 in the *Folha de S. Paulo* (Paper of São Paulo). In 1962, it was acquired by the current administration, which remained in favor of direct elections even during the military dictatorship period in Brazil. The *Folha* always criticized the requirement of a diploma for journalists (Folha de S. Paulo, 2009), claiming it contradicted the rights of freedom of expression. Currently, the *Grupo Folha* owns five companies in different areas. After presenting the objects studied in this research, the proposed analysis is presented below.

**The Triad: University, Writing Handbooks and Training Programs**

With the purpose of comparing the structure of the undergraduate studies and training courses in Journalism, as well as the topics they addressed, the disciplines lectured in the courses are presented below.

**Undergraduate studies in journalism**

The curricular structure of the Journalism course in Cásper Libero University follows the classic guidelines recommended by MEC in 2013 (Faculdade Cásper Libero, 2018), presenting the subjects in a semester and annual distribution.
Table 1 – Curriculum CÁSPER LIBERO UNIVERSITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum CÁSPER LIBERO</th>
<th>Disciplines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>2nd Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Press Office and Corporate Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Editorial Design in Journalism: printed and digital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photojournalism</td>
<td>Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Communication and Journalism</td>
<td>Contemporary History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Journalism: epistemology and techniques</td>
<td>Art History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism in Digital Environments</td>
<td>Multimedia Journalism Lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism Lab</td>
<td>Portuguese II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese I</td>
<td>Media and Contemporary Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Radio Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Theory</td>
<td>Theory and Practice of Reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>4th Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Ethics Journalistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazilian Culture</td>
<td>Audiovisual Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship and Project Management</td>
<td>Literary and Cultural Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Contemporary Brazil</td>
<td>Political and Economic Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism and Entertainment</td>
<td>Journalism, Citizenship and Social Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Advanced Journalism Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese III</td>
<td>Libras (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Communication Methodology</td>
<td>Monograph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic Reality and Brazilian Politics</td>
<td>Supervised Internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Journalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: By the authors, based on the university website.

The Cásper Libero university website explains that the purpose of the curriculum, combining humanitarian and specific training for the exercise of journalism, is to enable the student to fulfill the mission of the journalist: “To understand and interpret the world he lives in, investigating and reporting facts that interfere in the life of the population” (Faculdade Cásper Libero, 2018a).

As the FCL curriculum, the FAAP Journalism course mixes theoretical and technical contents, distributed in disciplines per semester.
Table 2 - Curriculum ARMANDO ÁLVARES PENTEADO UNIVERSITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines</th>
<th>1st Semester – Year 1</th>
<th>2nd Semester - Year 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology in Communication</td>
<td>Image Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genres and Concepts of Journalism I</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art History</td>
<td>Communication and Market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Journalism I</td>
<td>Genres and Concepts of Journalism II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese I</td>
<td>History of Journalism in Brazil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Visual Journalism I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Theories I</td>
<td>Reading of Visual Texts and Indices in Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Techniques</td>
<td>Portuguese II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting and Research Techniques</td>
<td>Media Regulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories of Journalism</td>
<td>Sociology of Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication Theories II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Semester - Year 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esthetics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political History of Brazil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Journalism II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Theories III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Techniques I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazilian Social Theories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2nd Semester - Year 2                           |                       |
| Professional Deontology                        |                       |
| Philosophy of Communication                     |                       |
| Literature and Dramaturgy                       |                       |
| Cultural and Media Policy                       |                       |
| Graphic Design I                                |                       |
| Psychology                                      |                       |
| Radio Journalism                               |                       |
| Writing Techniques II                           |                       |
| Rhetorical Techniques                           |                       |

| 1st Semester - Year 3                           | 2nd Semester - Year 3 |
| Compared Communication                          |                       |
| Communication and Religion                      |                       |
| Organizational Communication Design             | Journalistic Documentary I |
| Geopolitical                                    | Legal Grounds for Journalistic Practice |
| Graphic Design II                               | International Geoecconomics |
| Communication Psychology                        | Programming and Distribution in the Information Society |
| Writing Techniques III                          | Television Journalism I |
| Webjournalal                                    | Contemporary Theory |
|                                                | Political, Economic and Social Theories and Ideologies I |
|                                                | Webjournalism         |

| 2nd Semester - Year 4                           |                       |
| Journalistic Documentary II                     | Large Event News Coverage |
| Market Intelligence                             | Specialized journalism |
| Opinactive Journalism                           | Contemporary Editorial Market |
| Strategic Marketing for Communication           | Applied Social Media |
| Monograph I - Methodology and Technique         | Advanced Seminars |
| Television Journalism II                        |                       |
| Monograph II - Methodology and Technique        |                       |
| 1st Semester - Year 4                           |                       |
| Political, Economic and Social Theories and Ideologies II |                       |

Source: By the authors, based on the university website.

For this analysis of São Paulo universities with maximum score in their evaluation by MEC, in the case of ESPM the presented curriculum corresponds to São Paulo journalism course (ESPM, 2018), since the curricula differ among the different campus.
### Table 3 - Curriculum ESPM SP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum ESPM SP</th>
<th>Disciplines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Semester - Year 1</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Semester - Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation and Journalistic Text I</td>
<td>Investigation and Journalistic Text II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Journalism</td>
<td>Journalistic Production and Radio Editing I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>Photojournalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Cyberculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Journalism</td>
<td>Communication Theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>Graphic Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>History of Contemporary Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Semester - Year 2</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Semester - Year 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic Production in Press Media</td>
<td>Great Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic Production and Radio Editing II</td>
<td>Journalistic Production and TV Edition II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic Production and TV Edition I</td>
<td>Critical Media Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories of Journalism</td>
<td>Press Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Geoeconomics</td>
<td>Audiovisual Production for Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing I</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Marketing II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infographics</td>
<td>Quantitative and Qualitative Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Semester - Year 3</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Semester - Year 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Documentary</td>
<td>International Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production and Editing in Multiplatform Content</td>
<td>Applied Online Content Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Communication</td>
<td>Market Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis Narratives and Opinion</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship and Business Management in Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Journalism</td>
<td>Communication in Public Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and Socio-environmental Responsibility</td>
<td>Science and Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation in journalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Semester - Year 4</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Semester - Year 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Journalism Project - PGJ I</td>
<td>Undergraduate Journalism Project - PGJ II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Seminars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local and Regional Media Scenarios</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis Management and Reputation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics in Journalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights and Journalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: By the authors, based on the university website.

One particularity of the course structure in São Paulo is the non-compulsory presentation of a monograph in the Course Completion Work, unlike Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre and the other analyzed undergraduate studies in Journalism. On the other hand, the Project of Undergraduate Studies in Journalism has a full-time load in the last semester. The course presentation proposes a preparation in view of the market, allowing the student a “strong connection with the business area and contact with all stages of the profession, such as research, writing, editing and publication of materials in various media, always updated with the new technologies and tools of the market” (ESPM, 2018).

The Anhembi Morumbi University works with a differentiated teaching model in relation to the other institutions analyzed, which provides for a modular course, as explained in the Course Guide, “inspired by the American model of community colleges, graduating the student in two years and
providing a higher level certificate in an period before the conclusion of the undergraduate course, thus anticipating their entrance in the professional market” (Universidade Anhembi Morumbi, 2018a, p. 2).

Table 4 –Curriculum ANHEMBI MORUMBI UNIVERSITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines</th>
<th>ANHEMBI MORUMBI UNIVERSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication Advisory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy and Ethics</td>
<td>Information Management: Cities and Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Convergence</td>
<td>Contemporary Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic Text</td>
<td>Photojournalism and Visual Planning II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism: Theory and Practice</td>
<td>Magazine Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Methodology</td>
<td>Information Management: Politics and Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art, Culture and Esthetics</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Multi-platform Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic Writing</td>
<td>Video Documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Journalism</td>
<td>Information Management: Science and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology and Brazilian Culture</td>
<td>Applied Research in journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Theories</td>
<td>Great Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Journalism</td>
<td>Methodology of Projects in Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary History</td>
<td>Laboratory of Practices in Journalism I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Journalism</td>
<td>Monograph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human and Social Development</td>
<td>Laboratory of Practices in Journalism II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photojournalism and Visual Planning I</td>
<td>Supervised Internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Production</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: By the authors, based on the university website.

The disciplines follow a sort of ‘path’, as indicated by the university, aiming at “the formation of ethical professionals, socially responsible and fully aligned with the market demands” (Universidade Anhembi Morumbi, 2018a, pp. 3-4).

Subsequently to the objectives and curricula of the universities, the data presented below concern the course Curso Estado de Jornalismo and the Training Program Programa de Treinamento em Jornalismo Diário da Folha.

Training Programs

The journalism course Curso Estado de Jornalismo started in 1990. It is offered annually in partnership with the University of Navarra (Spain), guaranteeing certification as an extension course by the institution. Vacancies may be filled by senior undergraduate students in journalism or students who completed the undergraduate course in the two years prior to the application. The selection is made in two stages: the first one through curricula, letter of interest and general knowledge tests: and the second phase with new proof of general knowledge, production of a journalistic text and an interview.

Only 30 candidates are chosen to participate in each training course, taking place between September and December at the headquarters of the Group in São Paulo. The course is free and
does not involve hiring the participants. The organizers report that more than a thousand professionals underwent the program, also called *Foca* because of the nickname given to beginners in newsrooms, being part of them hired by the company (Estadão, 2018b).

In addition to lectures, there are activities in newspaper and news agency newsrooms, requiring exclusive dedication to the program. As can be seen below, the theoretical disciplines lectured do not differ from those proposed by the universities.

**Table 5 - Disciplines in CURSO ESTADO DE JORNALISMO**

|----------------------|---------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------|------------|---------|--------|-------------|-----|---------------------|

Source: By the authors, based on the blog *Em Foca do Jornal O Estado de S. Paulo*.

The final project is a product created by the class to be published on the company website. The blog dedicated to the course specifies that the goal is to allow the beginners a complement to their academic training and an opportunity to participate in the routine of the newsrooms of the Group (Estadão, 2018).

Unlike the *Estado*, the *Folha* training program (*Programa de Treinamento da Folha*) allows the participation of students and professionals not related to the Undergraduate Studies in Journalism. The *Folha de S. Paulo* began job recruitment and training courses in 1984. Since 1988 it issues two editions per year of the training program Journal *Programa de Treinamento de Jornalismo Diário da Folha*. The program is “aimed at students and professionals with little or no journalistic experience” (Folha de S. Paulo, 2018, p. 36), with “solid cultural background, good writing skills, initiative and critical thinking”, and intend to enable them to put into practice the Writing Handbook and the principles of the Editorial Project, which are “careful selection of topics, analytical approach to facts, balanced reports, in-depth criticism and writing didactic, contextualized texts” (Folha de S. Paulo, 2018, p.36). Singer (2019) explains that “the main purpose of the Program is to familiarize the trainees with the editorial principles and the Writing Handbook of the *Folha*”.
There are two selection stages: the first includes online tests and the second involves group dynamics at the newspaper's headquarters in São Paulo. The training lasts for 12 weeks and is free of charge, non-remunerated, but with housing assistance for the selected candidates who don’t live in the city. The *Folha* does not disclose on the website a program of classes, but refers to studying daily journalism, history, law, economics and Portuguese language and a final project to be published in the newspaper (Folha de S. Paulo, 2018b). The responsible for the Program organization revealed upon questioning that there is no official training document (Singer, 2019).

Analyzing the different disciplines in the courses, based on the information available online on the website, it is possible to verify that Portuguese Language study is common to all Journalism training programs and undergraduate courses. The *Folha* does not specify the preparation for Politics, Ethics, Philosophy, Photography, Multimedia Journalism and Reportage Technique, included in all other programs. However, it indicates Daily Journalism as an activity, which may encompass practical issues concerning those topics.

Likewise, Editing, Database Journalism and Investigative Journalism are to some extent addressed in the undergraduate studies in Journalism. Based on the disciplines included in the Training Programs and in order to identify if universities include the topics proposed by the *Estado* and the *Folha*, the Table 6 is presented below.

**Table 6 – Compared Disciplines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compared Disciplines</th>
<th>Have in the curriculum structure</th>
<th>Do not have in the curriculum structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Estado e Folha</em> Disciplines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>FCP, ESPM, FAAP, UAM, Estado and Folha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>FCP, ESPM, FAAP, UAM and Estado Folha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economia</td>
<td>FCP, ESPM, FAAP, Estado and Folha UAM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edition</td>
<td>ESPM and Estado</td>
<td>FCP, FAAP, UAM and Folha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>FCP, ESPM, FAAP, UAM and Estado Folha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>FCP, ESPM, FAAP, UAM and Estado Folha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infographics</td>
<td>ESPM, FAAP and Estado</td>
<td>FCP, UAM and Folha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo</td>
<td>FCP, ESPM, FAAP, UAM and Estado Folha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Database Journalism</td>
<td>ESPM and Estado</td>
<td>FCP, FAAP, UAM and Folha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigative Journalism</td>
<td>FAAP and Estado</td>
<td>FCP, ESPM, UAM and Folha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia Journalism</td>
<td>FCP, ESPM, FAAP, UAM and Estado Folha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting Techniques</td>
<td>FCP, ESPM, FAAP, UAM and Estado Folha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>FCP, ESPM, FAAP, UAM and Folha Estado</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The authors, based on the universities’ websites and *Estado* and *Folha* groups.
It should be noted that in Table 6, two disciplines of the training program *Curso Estado e Programa de Treinamento de Jornalismo Diário*, namely Daily Journalism (*Jornalismo Diário*) and Reporting with Computer Aid (*Reportagem com Auxílio do Computador – RAC*), were not included, because it is understood that such activities pervade the undergraduate studies in Journalism.

Clarifying the *Folha’s* view concerning the disciplines, Singer (2019) considers “there are gaps in training Journalism undergraduates” and that the Training Program aims to bridge those gaps. He recognizes that recent graduates in journalism have advantages over other recent graduates in social sciences, law, or international relations, but as time goes by, the differences are reduced.

**The handbook approach and use in undergraduate studies in journalism**

The Writing and Style Handbook of the *Estado de S. Paulo* dates from 1990 and was written by the journalist Eduardo Martins. It was subsequently revised and the online version highlights that:

“In any case, the purpose of this work remains the same: to expose, in an orderly and systematic fashion, the editorial and style norms adopted by the *Estado*. The Handbook is not intended to hinder the creativity of editors, reporters and editors, nor impose straitjackets on company journalists. Its purpose is clear: to define principles that make the edition of the newspaper uniform.” (Estadão, 2019)

The document is divided into Preface, Newspaper Text, Instructions, Doubts, Contractions of Prepositions with Articles, Common Mistakes, Serious Mistakes, Pronunciation, Vocabulary and Units. Most of these divisions address very specific issues in the Portuguese language, collaborating with any Handbook reader concerned with writing correctly. In the case of the Instructions, the text style adopted by the Group in the published reports is verified. The need for clarity, objectivity, and specific concerns as the maximum of 70 characters per line may be verified in this topic. In Doubts there are clarifications about text formatting, referring to the use of bold and italics, among other standardizations adopted.

Unlike the *Estado* newspaper, the *Folha* clearly states in the goals of the training program, the requirement for participants to adapt to the editorial project, including following their writing handbook. The document had its first version in 1984 and is now in the fifth edition. In the launching of the last version in 2018, the editor-in-chief Otavio Frias Filho stated that “the Handbook allows the unification of the different subcultures gathered in the Newsroom (origins, styles, different age groups), strengthening the identity of the vehicle” (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 2018a). The initial objectives of *Folha* ‘s publication, to “resolve doubts, indicate advisable procedures and consolidate practices” (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 2018, p.8), is added the need to reaffirm values, at a social moment when the mixing of entertainment, fake news and publicity make it difficult to understand the facts.

The current document is divided in four parts. The first presents the *Folha* Editorial Project discussed above, understanding what the Group is and how it works. The second is specific about Journalistic Performance concerning conduct and ethics, with the purpose of guiding the daily work of professionals and orienting regarding social networks, a topic that was not addressed in previous versions. Style is addressed in the third part of the Handbook, stating the need to adapt wording according to the text, as well as the need for conciseness, objectivity and standardization. Finally, the edition brings a new chapter with Thematic Annexes, addressing specific editing issues (*Folha de S. Paulo, 2018*).

Considering the Handbooks and their structure, it is possible to identify that both share a concern with the didactic form to present the news. In addition to the common issues regarding grammar and namely practical, the role of these documents is related to the standardization of the information to disseminate, based on rules adopted by the media. Relevant recommendations for daily news writing, ethical posture, the need for clarity and data verification are common elements for any newsroom.

The question arising is why such documents are important for journalism students, trainees and newsroom professionals. Almeida & Batista (2013, p.14) consider that “the handbook is a good consultation guide for exemplification and standardization for undergraduate students in journalism, hence has its value as a teaching tool.” However, the authors point out that these documents cannot be considered definitive, but when exposing a variety of handbooks to students, teachers should present them as tendencies, to be evaluated in a critical way and without affecting the personal style of each student.

Singer (2019), who participated in the editorial project of the last handbook of the *Folha*, explains that for the company's professionals, the document “is a sort of Constitution. There are our principles and guidelines, as well as very useful tips for our daily trade”. Despite considering “the peculiarities of the newspaper, it can be extremely useful in universities and other companies, even those that are not journalistic”.

According to Lins & Silva (2018), “the handbook is important because it gives clear instructions to journalists working in a newsroom on how to proceed and how to act in situations of doubt”. The professor argues that “the problem with the handbook is not whether it is good or bad, it is whether it will actually be followed or not”. He concludes that “precisely because of the difficulties that journalism currently faces, it is more than never important to disseminate tools to produce good journalism”. Castilho (2011) highlights that the handbooks should not concern solely journalists, because as “a sort of cookbook on how to make a news or report” it should be of interest to the reader, to understand how facts are disseminated. Finally, Vizeu (2008) advocates a marketing perspective on handbooks, complementing the arguments of the remaining authors. He considers that despite thinking on the reader, it actually treats readers as consumers, given the concerns about market aspects, the competing demands for audience and advertising resources.
Conclusion

A retrospective of the history of Journalism and Journalism teaching in Brazil shows there were many changes. Something that seems present since the beginning of the twentieth century is the distribution often problematic in the curricula between the need for theoretical knowledge and professional practices. Thus, in addition to the specificities of teaching in universities, the discussion that arises when analyzing the triad college degree, training programs and journalism writing handbooks, points to important considerations on journalistic practice, study environments and professional newsrooms.

The records on the disciplines lectured in universities, in the course Estado de Jornalismo and the training program Programa de Treinamento de Jornalismo Diário, as well as the approaches in the standards of newspaper writing point to a confluence in topics. The preparation for producing a correct and quality text crosses all these elements. The need for a minimal understanding of issues such as politics and economics is also present. University courses allow students, during a four-year degree, to go far beyond what is offered in short-term training, with a predominantly technical grounding and a shallow humanistic foundation. The reduced number of hours, between 12 and 16 weeks, indicates a preparation focused on the daily practice in newsrooms.

Specifically concerning the courses by the Estado and Folha, it is possible to verify that the former underlines topics such as ethics and philosophy, besides the practical disciplines. This is an arguable differentiation between training courses, since the Estadão has a partnership with the University of Navarra, from Spain, allowing an extension certification by that institution, thus establishing an academic requirement that is not contemplated in the program by the Folha. Another issue is the prerequisite of being a Journalism student or a newly graduated journalist to join the Estado course, whereas the Folha requires only an academic degree to be an eligible candidate. This allowed the inclusion of more than 2,400 candidates in the selection for the second edition of the Folha program in 2018. Only 11 received training and among them, eight had a degree in journalism, five held a master’s or port-graduate degree and four studied in universities outside Brazil. One interesting possibility for future research is to identify to which extent education and international experience are criteria for companies to choose their candidates.

Thus, what drives the need to publish writing handbooks and what are the goals for their collaborators’ productions? The study shows there is no way to verify knowledge gaps on the part of newly graduated journalists, but possibly a lack of preparation for the logic of daily work in newsrooms. In addition to training aimed at this objectification, the writing handbooks themselves translate concerns about the technique and style of the professionals chosen to form the Groups. The preparation and standards seek to allow greater autonomy for inexperienced journalists arriving at the newspapers. Although chosen after intensive screening by the companies, even those who are prepared require support to understand the working logics and to integrate the groups. The unification of different subcultures within newsrooms is also important to strengthen the identity of the newspaper, clarifying the need for homogenization.
This aspect also underscores a possible ‘apparent unpreparedness’ of newly graduated journalists, a fact justified as true and relevant in the available courses? The analysis concludes with the data demonstration that there are similarities between undergraduate studies in journalism and the journalism training programs approach. Also, the topics included in writing handbooks, and the handbooks themselves have their study space in universities. Hence, the profile of those chosen for training sessions may share a specificity. In addition to their knowledge in journalism, the candidates must display skills in other areas to earn access to such training.

University, training and handbooks are not dissociated. The training of Brazilian journalists is constantly changing within universities, as companies seek to refine their procedures through Handbooks. To deny such planification of training needs in the theoretical and practical scope will not do any service to journalism. It will further alienate students and journalists from the necessary books for basic fundamental consultation in the quest for professional quality.

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Teaching Research Methods to Journalism Students Through Communication Strategies

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Javier Díaz-Noci
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Abstract:

Research methods, both of social and human sciences, applied to communication is a central matter in many Spanish universities. The educational institutions have recognized the importance of offering to our journalism students a training in this topic to complete a curriculum not only devoted to teach practitioners' abilities as media journalist, but also as analysts and as researchers. In this paper, we make a proposal on how to encourage the teaching of such an important matter not just explaining the different research techniques, but also how to communicate the results of a research projects using a journalistic team approach, to combine both profiles: researcher-analyst and journalist.

Introduction

University is an old institution, created approximately one thousand years ago in the Italian city of Bologna. Communication and journalism studies have entered the University much later, and even later in Spain, dating back to just 1970. Even if the first attempts to introduce journalism as a matter to be taught in college happened one century ago, specific research on journalism start to be consolidated just from 1980 onwards. Faculties of communication, also named as faculties of communication sciences in Spain, provide three kinds of knowledge. On the one hand, the technical and professional ones, addressed to train future journalists and communication practitioners. Second, we pursue to shed some light on how to achieve a cultural and critical background so to understand and effective function in society, in the last decades most especially seeking to understand the new hybrid media system and the impact of new technologies, Internet above all, in social and communicative changes, in a transitional moment. Third, and we will focus on this aspect, it is our goal to provide our students with a scientific knowledge of reality, training them in social scientific research methods.

This is one of the goals of journalism degrees in Spain, precisely, attending to the recommendations mentioned in the so called Libro Blanco de los Estudios de Comunicación [White book of Communication Studies]: "To train professionals prepared to analyze, communicate and organize information, and to apply those competences in media, companies and institutions", but also to train future "researchers, teachers and consultants on communication", able to "analyze phenomena and process related to communication". This profile has not found a real relevant place in our universities degrees in communication until the adoption of the European Space of Higher Education, when UNESCO and the European institutions as well insisted in the need of a media alphabetization, which means, in our opinion, to insist in aspects such as multimedia, convergence and multiculturality, amongst others.
Media convergence has introduced a major change in the job and tasks of journalists, since they need to incorporate to their abilities some expertise on how to make a news piece using any kind of languages. The impact of the technological change in the professional profiles and of practitioners' everyday work was especially relevant when the Internet, or the World Wide Web as its practical, to have an impact on everybody's everyday life, appeared in the middle 1990s. Internet, and some other digital tools such as content management systems, the conception of media as databases, the possibility of instant connectivity, and professional polyvalence, made an appearance in newsrooms as well. Technological changes mean a transformation of the perception in time and space, that is, asynchronicity, especially for audiovisual communication, constrained as it was by the need of be synchronous in transmission and consumption of message, instantaneity -everything which is published right here right now can be accessed everywhere, any time- and mobility, most especially when smartphones appeared. Journalism, or news, is everywhere, which Hermida (2010) called ambient journalism.

A Project (and Problem) Based Learning Process

In our opinion, subject to be taught to future communicators should include a researcher's profile as well, and thus how to research should be part of our future journalists' curriculum. For one reason, at least: it will be helpful to achieve and design tools for a systematic analysis of reality (we underline the necessity of be systematic) to enhance their capacity of criticism based on data. In order to fulfill this goal, a training in research methods is also necessary.

It is our goal to arrive to the highest levels of Bloom's taxonomy, those which ensure that the student will be able to design flexible solutions and to give some significance to the tasks required, going beyond an automatic application of well-known formulas and contents. To a great extent, we conceive teaching research methods as a way to strengthen our students' creativity. Our goal goes beyond remembering contents and includes innovation, because a future practitioner should understand that research methodologies are not simple tools of direct application with no critical thinking background, instead, we encourage our students to design their own strategies and tools according to their own interests, enunciated through a reasoned election of a topic to be investigated, a research problem, proposing variables and hypothesis, and research questions to articulate a project they can feel as their own, addressed to solve the problems posed by those students, normally articulated in teams, and finally to submit those proposal to their colleagues -their classmates- to learn how a peer review is done. Which is more important, they are encouraged and accompanied all along the process by the teaching staff to produce and interpret data obtained at the light of some theoretical background, so their proposal result in some productive work. We insist all the time, as the scholarly community does, in the importance of contribution to knowledge. Our students are trained to be aware of the importance of this.
This is how we apply Bloom's taxonomy to teaching research methods in communication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>BLOOM'S TAXONOMY APPLIED TO TEACHING RESEARCH METHODS IN COMMUNICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Create</strong></td>
<td>We encourage the future communicator to create a new product or point of view and to explain in an innovative way their object of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesize</strong></td>
<td>Communicators should be concrete and specific in their enunciation, ordered in explanations, both in oral and in written communication, and oriented to solve aforementioned research problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluate</strong></td>
<td>Participants must justify and argue their decisions, developing abilities to judge the importance of the different steps of a research project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Participants must be able to distinguish the different parts of the project they design, and to work on them in an articulate and integral way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application</strong></td>
<td>Communicator must be able to apply the knowledge oriented to solve the problems posed by themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension</strong></td>
<td>Our students must be able to explain ideas and concepts in an articulate way, to make questions, define goals, problems, variables and hypothesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge (memory)</strong></td>
<td>Our students must be able to remind useful information, to be aware they have a variety of methodological tools to proceed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Done by the authors

Our option is to give a great importance to project-based learning and to a group-oriented teaching and learning design over individual efforts, articulated, anyway, and incardinated in a project.
proposed by a group, to encourage discussion and collaboration, first of all. Students are encouraged to propose a topic, and to define it properly, related to communication, and to think about the chance of applying some qualitative and/or quantitative methods to solve the main research problem. This is our option for some reasons. First, it is a proposal that comes from the students, not imposed by the lecturers. This approach, we do think, is for their interests' own sake, so it will make easier to attract their attention and more satisfactory the learning process. A second reason is that a project which includes both a research design as a whole and with all its parts altogether articulated, and a strategy to communicate knowledge from the beginning of all its stages (a strategy of knowledge transference, ultimately), helps us and students themselves to evaluate the whole thing step by step during the different stages of the course, and of the project. This conception and teaching/learning strategy, based on learning by doing (with the instructor as a facilitator, supervisor and coordinator of a process), is helpful for us in order to articulate much better the administration of contents, competences, goals and expected results. A third reason is that this teaching/learning methodology improves trust and mutual relation between instructors and students, since it is expected to reproduce, to a the extent it is possible, the real relationships established in a full operative research project. It is even more helpful because beyond contents, learning and supervision process is perceived as a personalized attention to every group and to every member of it. Finally, this teaching strategy is intended to encourage collaborative and cooperative team work - with a necessary supervision by us, the instructors, we insist. In the following table we show some of the tasks, learning results and contents this evaluation method could improve:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning results</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Evaluation methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and application of dominant paradigms, so participants may be able to discern and choose the most appropriate one of everyone's project.</td>
<td>Research training and its application to companies and institutions. Scientific paradigms, orientations and research areas in communication.</td>
<td>Starting project design. (ABPy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoned defense of a research topic, mentioning specifically a research problem, research questions, variables and hypothesis. Everything needs to be based on specific goals.</td>
<td>How to choose and expose a research topic and its different parts.</td>
<td>Advancing in the design of a proper research proposal and a research project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame research in the general aspects of research on journalism and communication.</td>
<td>How to make a literature review and a state of the art.</td>
<td>Project-based learning. Application of knowledge, abilities and competences to the participants' own research interests and proposals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remark and defend the originality of the contribution it may suppose to journalism and communication.</td>
<td>Main areas of interests of research on journalism and communication. How to make our contribution more visible.</td>
<td>Project-based learning. Application of knowledge, abilities and competences to the participants' own research interests and proposals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal and further approval of a research project adapted to the interest of knowledge of the students.</td>
<td>Elaboration of a strategy for research. Structure and contents. Chicing a topic. Research problem and goals. Theoretical framework and documentary review. Types of research: description, explanation, exploration. Hypothesis formulation around variables.</td>
<td>Project-based learning. Application of knowledge, abilities and competences to the proposal of students. A written and oral exposition is due, to share proposal amongst all participants of the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research group organization, sharing tasks, coordination of participants and supervision by the instructor.</td>
<td>Scientific tasks. Sharing and explaining roles in a research group. Structure and coordination of works.</td>
<td>Project-based learning. Publication of knowledge, abilities and competences to the proposal of students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even if our whole design is based on learning through projects, at some stages of the subject taught we need to propose problem-based learning as well. The main advantage of it is that it has an influence too in the final paper to be delivered by students (we tend to name them participants, since it is a term which insist in the importance of their active role in an iterative process), even it is an indirect influence though, and avoids memorization of contents, which we consider of limited value. We present the use we propose of this teaching and learning methodology in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning results</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Evaluation methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasoned defense of a research topic, mentioning specifically a research problem, research questions, variables and hypothesis, formulation of goals.</strong></td>
<td>How to choose and planning a research topic and the different parts of a research project.</td>
<td>Problem-based learning. Publication of knowledge, abilities and competences to the proposal of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opting for the most appropriate methods to be applied according to the aforementioned section.</strong></td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative research. Experimentality degree. Research design and strategy. Delimitation and design of the universe, sampling, case study. The research practice. Checking, verifying and generalization of results. General principles of research. Main research techniques and tools.</td>
<td>Problem-based learning. Publication of knowledge, abilities and competences to the proposal of students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, our proposal is based on including different evaluation techniques, considering the most widespread ones in the scholarly community as well, so it helps us to a) involve the rest of the classmates' group in evaluating each others, so evaluation no longer relies exclusively in the instructor and b) to contribute to knowledge and to the application of the most extended evaluation systems, such as peer review or open peer review. So, students' proposals and results will be submitted in their different phases to the consideration of both the instructor and to a previous autoevaluation of the group, so an initial quality level is guaranteed, and later to the scrutiny of the whole students' group, so to share ideas. Criticism is not avoided but encouraged. A cooperative evaluation is required and encouraged. At any time we pretend to overcome a "reproductive" learning process. Innovation and contribution are important concepts for us.

**A Communication Strategy for Research: a Teaching Proposal**

We cannot be more specific on how we focus on teaching and learning research methods. Which is important, and pretends to be our contribution here, is that, to complement this subject taught and its syllabus, we propose to incorporate and integrate the other profile, dominant in the Spanish journalism degrees (and the most popular amongst students), to the teaching of research methods. Expertise on journalism, the predominant training our students receive during the journalism degree, could help to have a greater interest in this subject as well, which he perceive such different from a practitioner-oriented training. In this case, a communication strategy is designed to be at the service of both the general audience and the media, when they need to access the research results or the researchers. The concept behind this decision is the necessity of placing dissemination of scholarly knowledge and knowledge transference also at the core of the researching activity as well.

In practical terms, it is convenient to nominate one the researching students' group members (usually we tend to propose three-members working groups) to be the link with media, and the whole group is encouraged to design a communication channel strategy with media. It is also important to underline that, as it happens in real researching activity, it is a good idea to be in contact and coordination with the communication section of the institution, a university, in our case.

To design a **communication plan**, the steps we recommend are these ones:

1) **A situation analysis.** If the group is already constituted and if its individual members have a career behind, it is necessary to define which presence does the group want to have in media, and
which kind of journalistic pieces, so to say, could be created to enhance that presence: interviews, opinion articles, reports, science popularization. It is recommended to analyze the presence and impact of other researchers of the area dealing with similar topic in the world, in both media and the Web, using which resources and platforms, e.g. digital social networks, so to know which models can be useful for the students. This is a work they, once again, have to carry on their own, supervised by the instructors. We seek for the students or participants to understand that it is possible to have an influence on actuality in two ways. First, when some newsworthy event makes our speciality and the expertise of our members valuable for the media, which could ask for our opinion on the topic. We can also send it spontaneously, for instance as a news dispatch or an opinion article. The second way is when we and our work is newsworthy, for instance because we have made available a report, a monograph book, an important article or have organized a congress or a seminar. According to those previsions, members of the research group are assigned in advance some functions, for instance, to write and send opinion articles, take part in interviews or be available as a source of information for media and journalists, or, this is important as a first step, influencing directly on newsworthiness through the publication -usually making them available at our website- reports, briefings, press notes, organizing press conferences or using other communication tools as well.

2) **Defining goals:** Why do we consider that we need to be in the media and why should we create our own communication channels -never forget videos, for instance- using digital technologies, such as the Web and online platforms? It is important to determine which audience are we addressing to, before implementing the tools and resources to have an influence on them and, ultimately, on public opinion. Concretely, we specify three of them:

* The international scholarly community.
* Media.
* Larger, on specialized audiences.

There are some other crucial goals to be considered in a communication plan to disseminate our own research, especially when we use digital media:

* To maximize our presence using different formats and platforms, to diversify the message, from the most specialized to the divulgation of science.

* To transmit the same image everywhere. Graphic design tools (another subject present in our curricula and syllabi) are important in this respect. We recommend to design logos, and to write a design internal handbook, considering aspect as structure and navigation of the web, colors and other graphic elements etc. The group and the communication plan they are asked to design must take care of unifying all the messages, so it is extremely important to have a person in charge of this goal.

* To explore new tools and platforms.
It is important to explain in that communication plan which kind of actions will be taken, who will be in charge of each one, and a timing to implement them. Our suggestion is to design a website to centralize all these tasks. Once done this, then we suggest to

3) **Design an editorial and dynamization plan**, which may include aspects such as:

* A list of social media, which is their reputation, influence, credibility, and how do we intend to use each of them, and with which purpose.

* A strategy to follow up our actions and, this is important, a curation of quality contents produced by media and academic journals about topics related to ours, which is crucial to focus on our contribution to science and to communication.

* Technologies to be used. Which platforms are better to achieve our goals and reach our audience? This must include a plan to start an account on the platforms, configure them and assign one administrator to each platform: website, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram accounts, Vimeo or Youtube channels, etc.

* What are we intending to do and which contents will be assigned. Never forget multimedia. infographics, podcasts or videos, for instance. A newsletter, now fashionable again in media, is another tool to be considered.

* An action plan, using for instance a chronogram or Gantt diagram defining goals and dates.

* An online crisis plan, or what could we do in case or problems in communication.

* The plan should include a monitorization or curation of our own contents, recommended to be done, at least, in a monthly basis.

Once established this, so to say, editorial plan, the group can start producing contents, both research or divulgation outputs, but with a quality control, both in academic and in journalistic terms, with due rigor. In this phase, we recommend, moreover:

* To be dynamic when producing and disseminating content. To be creative: once achieved the publication of a scholarly article, for instance, this is the starting point for a whole strategy of communication and dissemination.

* To allow users to share contents, to the extent it is possible in editorial terms for scholarly articles, and absolutely free in the case of other divulgation contents, instead.

* To allow users to interact with our research group and with its members. For instance, we will facilitate our contact with media and a channel of communication with the general audience, but there are some other complementary strategies to be considered, such as digital open forums. It is crucial to open a discussion with our community. And, somehow, it is a good idea to give a premium value to the most active and positive members of that community.
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Condor, a Demand Led Educational Living Lab in and for Journalism School: The Changing Role of the Lecturer as a Facilitator of the Learning Process

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Abstract:

This ethnographically driven case study examines how lecturers perceive their role as educator against the background of an demand-led journalism programme called Condor, which lies at the cross section between school and work. There is no real conclusion yet to make, but there are some lessons learned. Lecturers are accustomed to give answers to questions of students. One is also urged to impose plans and tell students what they should do, and as facilitator of the learning process that is not the way to go. One should also suppress the urge to give qualitative judgements about students performances.

Introduction

Journalism is facing profound transformations which create new means for journalists to collect, create, and distribute news, as well as to interact with their audiences (Robinson, 2013). Meanwhile, the expansion of multimedia platforms, systematic cost reduction and intensified market pressure challenge the conditions and qualifications of modern-day journalists (Hultén & Wiklund, 2016).

As a result, journalism schools (J-schools) are confronted with a necessity to rethink the design and content of their curricula. Josephi (2009) states that there are many different opinions about what journalists need to learn, and that there are just as many ways in which journalists are educated. According to Hultén and Wiklund (2016) journalism programmes play a conservative role. In 2017, a school of journalism in the Netherlands, Fontys University of Applied Sciences in Tilburg, initiated an innovative educational programme called Condor.

This ethnographically driven case study examines how lecturers at a Dutch J-school perceive their role as educator against the background of an innovative demand-led journalism programme, and how their role is changing when they start out within a pioneering role by (re)inventing new ways in lecturing (and doing) journalism. Hence, what does a demand-led hybrid learning environment in combination with a learning journey educational concept mean in terms of views on the role of lecturers in journalism education? Where do participating and non-participating lecturers run into? And which built-in routines are a stand in the way? A large part of the educational innovations are unsuccessful, dilute over time or have no effect because teachers have hold on to or returned to old routines (Brand-Gruwel, Bos, & Van der Graaf, 2018).
What is Condor?

Condor has been developed in the first part of 2017, after a curriculum review that started in the autumn of 2015. The management team of the J-school of Fontys gave a team of five lecturers and four students the task to design journalism education according to the new professional and educational profile. The objective was to accomplish more creativity among students, and that they feel more challenged, more independent, more in control, and to achieve higher learning outcomes. A new professional and educational profile was established in 2015 by all four Dutch J-schools at bachelor level at Universities of Applied Sciences (Hbo-opleidingen Journalistiek, 2015). The five competencies in this professional and educational profile are: (1) news gathering and research, (2) journalistic production, (3) audience focus and public accountability, (4) entrepreneurship and innovation and (5) reflection and research. Journalists should have certain knowledge, skills and attitudes in these areas.

Condor is the name of the pilot that started in 2017-2018 as an alternative educational programme in journalism with room for 35 students. Seventeen students remained in the following academic year of the programme. In 2018-2019, a group of sixteen students started this programme in their first year of J-school. The educational programme is based on a set of principles, ideals and ideas concerning ‘learning’ that differs from the traditional form of education. Condor is characterized by several traits, some of which relate to learning behaviour (how does one learn?), and others refer to the dimension of teaching (how do you teach in a particular learning environment?). First we will discuss seven traits of Condor, in order to explain this new demand-led journalism programme. We will do this in the following order; (1) a learning journey, (2) no exams, (3) no pre-scheduled lectures, (4) deep learning, (5) lecturers in a coaching role, (6) competence-based education, and (7) a hybrid learning environment. There is no hierarchy in these traits.

(1) The learning journey

Condor sees learning as a journey, in which the student maps out his route and sets intermediate goals. The student continuously reports on that journey to his coach (the lecturer). The assessment takes place continuously (over time) and is done by the student him- or herself, the peer group and other lecturers in the role of experts. During the process, both student and coach focus on particular questions concerning their journey. With the support of the coach, the student determines his or her learning objectives per competence (Dirkx, 2000).

(2) No exams

There are no exams being conducted in the pilot. ‘Taxonomies of Bloom (1956), Biggs & Collis (1982) and Anderson & Kratwohl (2001) assume that a higher level in the taxonomy presumes the lower levels. [...] If a desired performance is situated at the level of analysis, the underlying assessment levels can be referred to as ‘knowledge of’ or ‘insight into’. If students demonstrate that they have mastered the level of ‘analysis’, then ‘knowledge of’ and ‘insight into’ are also assumed to be present’ (Van den Bos, Burghout and Joosten-ten Brinke, 2014, p. 199).
(3) None-scheduled lectures

Condor does not have any pre-scheduled lectures. According to Abeysekera and Dawson (2015), lectures are not the most optimal form of transmission. ‘Although a traditional lecture might be as good as other approaches to perform transmissive teaching of this sort of information [...]’, the flipped classroom approach of moving transmission teaching out of the classroom may allow better management of cognitive load’ (p. 9). In a reversed classroom, the information transmission component in a traditional face-to-face lecture has disappeared completely. This is replaced by active tasks that require cooperation (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015). Condor focuses on an integrated method of learning and knowledge transfer with a short and clearly formulated assignment as a starting point, a so-called wicked problem in this educational model.

(4) Deep learning

Condor is about informal and deep learning. Research has shown that informal learning is very effective (Eraut, 2004; Marsick & Watkins, 2001). In addition, it is important to provide the current generation of competencies that are permanently valuable and sustainable for the rest of their professional career. This is in line with the concept of lifelong learning in which ‘informal and non-formal learning environments can also contribute to the expertise of students’ (Joosten-ten Brinke, 2011, p. 8). Condor’s aim is that students switch from a ‘surface approach’ to a ‘deep approach of learning’ (Biggs & Tang, 2011, p. 24-27). Mayes and De Freitas (2013):

For deep learning of concepts a constructivist pedagogy is emphasized, with a learner actively involved in the design of his or her own learning activity. Giving meaning to the whole process is an engagement with the social setting and peer culture surrounding it. (p. 23)

(5) Coaching

The four abovementioned principles or traits concerning learning behaviour – i.e. the learning journey, no exams, no pre-scheduled lectures and deep learning – ask for different approaches to teaching. Tigelaar, Dolmans, Wolfhagen and Van der Vleuten (2004) state that in higher education the pedagogics used are increasingly student-centred, which requires different educational competences for lecturers. In Condor, the lecturer’s role of ‘teacher as facilitator of the learning process’, as described by Tigelaar et al. (2004), is one crucial role. Their study shows that within this role there is a consensus among experts from higher education (N=63) about the importance of designing activating materials, building education in such a way that students gradually learn to become self-directed learners, giving feedback and designing tests that are suitable for the desired learning outcomes. All these aspects correspond to constructivist approaches to teaching in which the student is seen as an active, self-regulating student (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

Dochy (2015) states that teachers could act more as experts, coaches and assessors. That means that learning in particular from tests, and especially from feedback, could and should take an even greater part in the process. Teacher and student each play an important role in turning the inadequate rating of an assessment, which is perceived as an unpleasant activity, into a pleasant conversation with a future perspective or a test with a motivating outcome (Dochy, 2015). Feedback is information provided by an agent (for example, teacher, colleague, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of a person’s performance or understanding (Hattie & Timperley,
Feedback can be seen as a ‘consequence’ of performance, but also as a predictor of performance. It is one of the most powerful sources of influence on learning and performance (Hattie, Bogaarts, & Dogger-Stigter, 2013).

According to Dochy (2015) coaching is releasing someone’s potential qualities so that that person performs as well as possible. He summarizes seven coach rules: (1) challenge and ask the question behind the question, don't give solutions; (2) ensure safety; (3) plan stand-ups for sharing, cooperation, and interactions among students and be there if necessary; (4) approach the group as much as possible as a group; (5) request feedback about your functioning as a coach; (6) don’t put yourself above the group by imposing plans and schedules or by forcing interventions; and (7) share your own qualitative judgment as little as possible. The lecturer is a coach and the student’s competence growth goes beyond the quality or quantity of the productions.

(6) Competence-based education

Integrated education requires integrated testing (De Bie & De Kleijn, 2001). According to Gulikers and Van Benthum, the amount and the way students are being assessed (the quantity and the forms of assessments like exams) is the strongest driving factor behind student learning (2014, p. 219). Therefore, the number of summative tests in Condor has been reduced. There are only two summative assessments per college year, at the end of each semester where students can earn thirty ECTS per assessment. After some adjustments over the past two pilot years, the current status quo concerning ECTS is as follows. In the first semester of the first year: 5 ECTS for the competence of focus on audiences, 10 ECTS for gathering news and research and 15 ECTS for reflection. In the second semester of the first year: 16 ECTS for production, 2 ECTS for innovation, and 4 ECTS for each of the following competencies: gathering news and research, focus on audiences and reflection. In both semesters of the second year of the programme all competencies are each worth of 6 ECTS.

The fact that the pilot does not work with pre-defined learning objectives, assessment criteria and performance indicators, does not mean that the importance of a high-quality assessment is not recognized. ‘A teacher’s ability to assess pupil performance is critical to success’ (Schafer, 1991, p. 3). Furthermore, it needs to be added that there are no clear-cut boundaries between the domains of knowledge, skills and judgment (Hultén & Wiklund, 2016, p.107). Various authors (Baartman, 2008; Baijens, Dams, De Leeuw, Van der Net, & Willemse, 2008; Straetmans, 2006) argue in competence-based assessment for applying a method mix and spreading the assessment moments over a longer period of time. Not all educational goals can be tested with a single test form. The diversity of test forms must be high (Geerligs, Schmidt, Kokx, De Graaf & Van Berkel, 2014). Condor has several types of tests: performance assessment, portfolio assessment, self– and peer assessment. Gulikers and Van Benthum (2014) state that performance assessments, self-assessments, peer assessments, reflection reports, portfolios can all fit within competence assessment, but cannot be a goal in itself. They must be used to provide insight into one or more of the three components of competence testing: integration into professional behaviour, underlying processes and / or development capacity (p. 223).

According to Biggs (1996) it is important to have ‘constructive alignment’ in the educational design. This means that there must be a logical connection between educational tasks and testing tasks. It is also essential that the examiners of the pilot group use the same terminology during the...
assessment process (Schafer, 1991). For this reason, a four-eye policy is applied within Condor during the assessment at the end of each semester. One assessor was not involved in the conduct of education within Condor.

(7) **Hybrid learning environment**

Condor is a so-called social lab, a 'hybrid' learning environment that lies at the cross section between school and work (Cremers, 2016; Zitter, 2010). Condor is not located inhous but in a separate location in Tilburg. It’s part of Mind Labs; a collaboration between the academic university of Tilburg, Fontys, and media company De Persgroep. Cremers (2016) gives a clear overall picture concerning (the design of) hybrid learning environments. Her research has shown that participants such as students, lecturers, researchers and other stakeholders are often enthusiastic and appreciate being part of activities that are relevant and important for society.

But, they also face the challenges and insecurities that come with being pioneers and crossing boundaries between different worlds and perspectives. Questions are, for example: How do we establish lasting relationships between all stakeholders? How can we organize the processes of innovation, research, and learning, each with their own dynamics and characteristics? How can the students’ learning be supported and assessed and how does the work in the hybrid learning configuration relate to the learning outcomes required by the study programmes? How do the different participants relate to one another? Which roles are relevant and which competencies are required to fulfil them (Cremers, 2016, p. 114)?

This research focuses specifically on the changing role of the lecturer who is required to give substance to this new form of education ‘as a facilitator of the learning process’ (Tigelaar et al., 2004) in a classroom without walls (Wilson & Stemp, 2010). From the knowledge that the desired change is often slow (Cochran-Smith, 2003), especially when it comes to unlearning built-in habits and routines (Scoppio & Covell, 2016), and accompanied by innovation resistance (Dochy, 2015), the research focuses on the way in which the mindset of lecturers can be adapted to the desired change towards a demand-led educational programme.

**Method**

This ethnographically driven case study examines how lecturers at a Dutch J-school perceive their role as educator against the background of an innovative demand-led journalism programme, and how their role is changing when they start out within a pioneering role by (re)inventing new ways in lecturing (and doing) journalism. Hence, what does a demand-led hybrid learning environment in combination with a learning journey educational concept mean in terms of views on the role of lecturers in journalism education? Where do participating and non-participating lecturers run into? And which built-in routines are a stand in the way? A large part of the educational innovations are unsuccessful, dilute over time or have no effect because teachers have hold on to or returned to old routines (Brand-Gruwel, Bos, & Van der Graaf, 2018).

This research is carried out from and by the practice itself. That is, the researchers engaged are closely involved in the design of Condor. Furthermore, through participatory observation, they are
enabled to experience activities and interactions directly in situ. This approach offers the possibility to observe processes in a setting in addition to the social interactions (Berthelsen, Lindhardt & Frederiksen, 2017) in order to create meaningful educational transformations with accompanying mindsets both students and lecturers.

The students in Condor were not selected a-select, but volunteered. ‘Qualitative researchers’ concerns are not whether or not their findings are generizable, but rather, to which other setting and subject are the findings generalizable to?’ (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997, p. 7). The assumption is that human behaviour is not random or idiosyncratic (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). This research therefore does not lead to an irrefutable yes or no for Condor for every student, but sheds light on the issues raised during an innovation process in a demand-led educational approach. This paper specifically focuses on the perspectives of educators.

The implementation of the aforementioned data collection method is closely related to the methodological point of view of the researchers of this report and the perspective from which they perceive the world. It was therefore decided to use Kathy Charmaz's grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 1996). In her constructivist perspective, she assumes a relativistic epistemology. This approach ‘sees knowledge as socially produced, acknowledges multiple standpoints of both research participants and the grounded theorist, and takes a reflective stance towards our actions, situations, and participants in the field setting’ (Berthelsen et al., 2017, p. 415). In the first Condor year both researchers only participated as a designer and researcher, not as a coach or expert. One researcher has also participated as coach in the second year of this educational programme. Condor was studied based on different types of data, in order to be able to see Condor and its meaning through the eyes of different stakeholders.

In the fall of 2017 a total of thirteen lecturers with different backgrounds were interviewed. This includes both lecturers who were involved at the start of the review of the curriculum in the autumn of 2015, as well as teachers who were not involved in this process. The group of lecturers interviewed includes both (suspected) enthusiasts and sceptics or critics. What do they know about Condor? What are they worried about? What are they enthusiastic about? In short face-to-face interviews, the lecturers provided answers to the following questions submitted to them by means of a supporting writing assignment: what do you think of considering Condor? What are positive associations? What are negative associations? The interviews were conducted by the researchers of this paper, who were and are working at the same school as the interviewees. This fact may have affected the answers and must therefore be considered a potential methodological weakness. All interviews were done at the respondents’ workplace. The interviews were recorded and lasted 15 to 25 minutes. The transcripts of the interviews were then analysed in a qualitative way through the use of Atlas.ti software. Anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed.

Results

Views of lecturers of J-school

The interviews with lecturers of Fontys’ J-school yield a range of different associations. Lecturers are curious about Condor and the new educational or didactic model, but conspicuous of the lack in the fall of 2017 a total of thirteen lecturers with different backgrounds were interviewed. This includes both lecturers who were involved at the start of the review of the curriculum in the autumn of 2015, as well as teachers who were not involved in this process. The group of lecturers interviewed includes both (suspected) enthusiasts and sceptics or critics. What do they know about Condor? What are they worried about? What are they enthusiastic about? In short face-to-face interviews, the lecturers provided answers to the following questions submitted to them by means of a supporting writing assignment: what do you think of considering Condor? What are positive associations? What are negative associations? The interviews were conducted by the researchers of this paper, who were and are working at the same school as the interviewees. This fact may have affected the answers and must therefore be considered a potential methodological weakness. All interviews were done at the respondents’ workplace. The interviews were recorded and lasted 15 to 25 minutes. The transcripts of the interviews were then analysed in a qualitative way through the use of Atlas.ti software. Anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed.

Results

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of information about the programme. The interviewees are more divided on other aspects: there is both enthusiasm and concern about Condor.

Concerning the positive aspects of Condor, it is mentioned, for example, that such a form of education is the future of education. Teachers also call Condor challenging, on the one hand it seems difficult, but also instructive for students to have to organize so much themselves for their learning path. Teachers who have become acquainted with Condor students because they have been asked for a lecture, speak of fun lectures, with motivated students. It is also mentioned as a plus that students can really profile themselves in Condor, because they have a lot of options and are hardly guided by the preferences and specializations of their lecturers. It is also mentioned that the programmes seems to be very suitable for serving independent students. It is striking that this form of education is considered as suitable for a limited group: that group can consist of more gifted, older, highly motivated or more than average independent students.

There are interviewees who talk about the lack of exams to test certain knowledge of students in Condor, and encourage programmes such as Condor to focus on (critical) thinking rather than on skills - which would be much quicker and easier to learn. Positive associations also include the view that education in Condor, in which it is not predetermined who should learn what at what time, fits a profession in development. It is also mentioned as positive elements that it is good to experiment, and that teachers are expected to be able to develop themselves if they start working in a different way.

The concerns regarding Condor that exist among J-school teachers at Fontys are the aforementioned lack of visibility. This concerns both the lack of clarity about the programme and its status within the university and about the physical absence of students and teachers on the location of the school (because of the fact that Condor is located somewhere else). There is also concern about Condor and the transfer of knowledge. First of all, there is criticism of the lack of knowledge tests, because it is feared that the students will no longer gain knowledge. The absence of courses is also mentioned as a danger. That too would result in a decline in student knowledge. Some do not so much mention the disappearance of knowledge, but the disappearance of the possibility of securing that knowledge as a risk. Others fear the disappearance of the teachers’ expert role, which they consider as an erosion of their profession.

There is also doubt as to whether such a method of education is suitable for adolescents at all. It is said that students who enter with a limited interest leave the school with the same limited interest four years later. It is said that students do not learn some things if they are not obliged to do so. These concerns express a fundamental difference in the vision on education and testing, mentioning a lack of evidence or substantiation for the models and methods used in Condor, and where there appears to be little confidence in a substantiation based on practical experiences. That lack of confidence is also expressed in the opinion that the organization cannot cope with this: there are not enough lecturers who would like to participate and who are capable of participating in Condor.

Condor and this research reveal how different the views of individual teachers are and how firmly those views are anchored in their thinking. It seems as if the possibility of reinventing the teaching profession magnified the differences between the lecturers in J-school. Now let us take a look at the perspective of those involved.
**Implementation and designing issues of coaches**

The coaches ran into several issues during the last two academic years. Putting Condor's principles into practice did not go easy. In terms of content, the participating lecturers had questions about their role as coach, how they could continue to motivate students, how to deal with (peer) feedback and how to deal with the Me-scan (a research and development interview that is being offered to give students more insight into their talents).

With regard to coaching, it appeared that the lecturers had to get used to their new role in their interaction with the student. The first few weeks of the start of the pilot the coaches had to find their own style and voice. One coach was quicker self-assured than the other, which sometimes led to doubt and frustration. In addition, there appeared to be a difference of opinion about the roles in this educational practice, and how to fulfil them. One group believes that a coach should not steer and should never be tempted to take on the role of expert because this kind of action would undermine the educational approach, while the other believes that a coach should be able to fulfil both roles, that of coach and expert. The question in the meetings was to what extent an expert role can be identified with the coach role, and how to make those two roles explicit.

How to continue to motivate students is an issue that has been discussed more often in the meetings of the coaches. After the first assessment, the coaches experienced difficulties in getting students back into the flow. After the relief or disappointment of the assessment, some students struggled to pick up their workflow again. According to the coaches, one of the causes is the group structure and a certain fatigue within the groups. At the beginning of the year, the students had divided themselves into three groups, and had chosen a coach themselves, but looking back, that grouping was made more out of an organizational perspective and out of habit than out of didactic considerations. In the second semester, it was determined that a fixed grouping probably does not fit well with a hybrid learning environment, and may even have an adverse effect. It has therefore been decided that Condor will continue working without a fixed grouping if there is no didactic reason to do so. A second reason given by the coaches is that the wicked problem - the assignment in the second semester that activates students to learn - has not been sufficiently addressed.

Condor’s starting point was that (peer) feedback is important to help students discover where they are in their growth. They receive this feedback through the coaching of the teacher, in the form of peer feedback from the students and from practice (the client of the wicked problem). The feedback was limited in the first semester. The coaches opted for a restrained role in which there was little room for feedback, with the objective of breaking free from the circle of powerlessness that connects the student with the explicator. It is an attempt to participate in education in such a way that it emancipates instead of stultify. The underlying question here is whether it is possible to teach at all without giving an explanation.

The organizational issues that the coaches have encountered concern time constraints, lack of clarity about decisions regarding continuation of the programme, available (own) space (in Mindlabs or the home location of the school), visibility and parochialism within J-school, and the continuity of the programme regarding personnel (which lecturers to include in the expansion?). The last three issues are related to how lecturers and students respond to and talk about Condor as an educational programme within J-school. The assessments were used to give colleagues a glimpse of the pilot and to involve them in Condor.
Another aspect that did not contribute to the development of Condor, and has cost a lot of time and energy, was the uncertainty about when which committee or body should be involved in the designing process. The design team was often given room by the management team to act freely, and at other times the team got the assignment to deliver a document (e.g. an explanation of refraining of assessing students on a ten-point scale because the designing team of Condor has decided to assess competencies with ‘achieved’ or ‘not achieved’). Sometimes Condor had to comply with the standards and rules similar to project education, then again Condor was free to deviate from the standard. The pilot appears to affect the work of the entire organization and all its employees, and shows how difficult it is to guide this innovation process in a well-managed and -organised way in terms of responsibility, accountability, success, and keeping overall control of the process.

Assessments and intervision

There are a number of moments where the perspectives of the teachers – the involved lecturers who have been busy with the transition, and the perspectives of those who were not (so) involved – came into contact with each other within Condor. This was during the assessments and intervisions.

During the intervision of the second assessment of academic year 2017-2018, an assessor asked whether the work of Condor students after one year in the programme is comparable to the work of students from project education. In the following peer review discussion, the question arose as to what is being assessed during the assessment: the student’s journalistic work, his efforts, or whether he has demonstrated the competencies. The fact that the above-mentioned question was asked during intervision testifies of a professional organization that is not afraid to address hot issues during an innovation process, even (or perhaps precisely) in the heat of battle, at the end of the academic year where the ECTS are distributed to the students.

Asking this particular question is a form of professional constructive contradiction that can be seen as a mark for ensuring the quality of testing. Organizing an intervision does not by itself provide the necessary guarantee. It is precisely what is discussed within this kind of meeting. The discussion that emerged exposes the difficulty of testing integral education in an integral way. What is the actual workload of a Condor student during a whole semester? And what exactly did the student learn? The assessments had to provide insight into three components of competence testing: integration into professional behaviour, underlying processes and development capacity of students. Some assessors find it difficult to assess a student if they have not been involved in the student’s education and learning path.

Competence control can be expressed in both the work and a description of or reflection on the process of creation, that is: the way of thinking and action that led to the product, and a review or evaluation of (the quality of) that product and its reception. Basically, an assessor tests competence management on the basis of various evidence in which the product is not necessarily the most important.
Concluding Thoughts

There is no real conclusion yet to make, because there is no clear picture of what a demand-led educational model yields in terms of insight into those changing roles of lecturers. There are some lessons learned, especially for those lecturers who participated in Condor as coach. All coaches are experts in their field, and as experienced lecturers they are accustomed to give answers to questions of students. One is also urged to impose plans and tell students what they should do in way to many circumstances, and as facilitator of the learning process that is not the way to go. One should also suppress the urge to give qualitative judgements about students performances.

Another lesson learned is that the introduction of Condor in our J-school functions as a pressure cooker. When working under strict, more or less standardized circumstances – i.e. in a programme with fixed curricula, schedules, tests, etc. – there is less focus on the individual role perceptions of educational professionals. But when challenged to innovate and do things differently, it is noticed that it affects everyone who is lecturing within the school.

More and more educational institutions – from primary to higher education – are experimenting with so-called demand-driven education where the student and his or her learning needs are central because of the fact that testing is the strongest driving factor behind student learning. In Condor, there has been a departure from the principle of maintaining knowledge exams. The starting point here is that the knowledge of a bachelor student of journalism, which is required to become a professional journalist, can be tested within the study programme at the level of analysis and application through assessments. If students demonstrate that they have mastered the level of ‘analysis’, ‘knowledge of’ and ‘insight into’ are also assumed to be present.

A more fundamental point emerges in this educational aspect, because not everyone agrees on this vision of education, specifically on the principle of learning and how to asses it. This dissension also exists within the J-school which is the subject of this study. According to the literature, the interviews and participatory observations within this research, teachers differ fundamentally in their views on knowledge, learning and didactic methods. That is why there is a fundamental difference about the content of the curriculum. These differences are in a way unbridgeable. This difference is clearly visible in innovation processes in which the balance between practical and contextual knowledge must be resolved, and can even be traced entirely to the motives of lecturers to teach.

The coaches struggled in their new role as facilitator of the learning process. This struggle is illustrative when asked by students to give them feedback on their work. According to a part of the teachers involved, taking on the expert role by definition undermines the didactic principle of the educational model, but the Condor team does not unanimously agree on this. This shows that the team is in transition: there are team members who think that different roles can be played side by side. A recommendation for further research is to pay attention to this matter, to make explicit where the differences and similarities are, and which roles in education are fit for which people with certain views.

The assessments had to provide insight into three components of competence testing: integration into professional behaviour, underlying processes and development capacity of students. Some
assessors find it difficult to assess a student if they have not been involved in the student’s education and learning path.

According to Scoppio and Covell (2016) organizations must undergo a process of ‘unlearning’ to change built-in habits and routines to welcome a different pedagogy, such as Condor’s. It is not only the question to what extent this process of unlearning is feasible in everyday practice (and within which time frame), it is also the question of how an educational organization should anticipate, facilitate and/or demand of their personnel to participate in this kind of educational innovation.

Finally, Condor is a world apart: both in philosophy, as in terms of the location and (learning) environment, as teachers and students. There are positive – a select, close-knit club of working professionals in a nice place with motivated students – as well as negative sides to it – a sectarian, non-transparent group which is set apart, and takes a defensive stance towards outsiders. One side note: if there is a desire to continue or even expand Condor, this position is not tenable or ideal.

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SOCIOLOGY OF JOURNALISM IN A FAST-EVOLVING SECTOR
Data, Statistics and Science Journalism in the Arab Region: Beyond Pre-conception, Below Expectations

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Abstract:

This paper examines how science journalists in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt engage with data and statistics when articulating science news. In so doing, the paper explores how the political and cultural context define this engagement both in terms of approaches and outputs and how this defines different levels of professionalism and professional autonomy. It looks at similarities and difference across these three Arab nations while assessing the issues and challenges they face. The paper is based on a fieldwork research carried out between 2017 and 2018 in these three countries. In includes the triangulation of several research strategies, which includes content analysis in Arab newspapers, semi-structured interviews and expert panels who read the journalists’ outputs. The overall conclusion is that both, the degree of education with regards to the use of data and statistics and, the degree of professional autonomy plays a key role in determining the ability of journalists in these Arab countries to engage effectively with data and statistics in the construction of science news.

Introduction:

All in all, statistics have become an important part of the world and a universal feature of daily news reporting (Nguyen and Lugo-Ocando, 2015, p 1). They play a significant role in delivering information in a way that helps the public to understand key social issues (Dorling and Simpson, 1999; Fioramonti, 2014) while facilitating scrutiny and critical examination of public policy and governance in general. Many decisions are based on, underpinned by or justified with statistics and data. These numbers are used to underpinned various individual and collective issues that affect our lives, such as equality, governance and policy-making among others (Spirer et al., 1998, p3). Overall, statistics have become a key component of daily news, being particularly relevant to news beats such as science news.

Having said that, most research so far has suggested important gaps in the use and interpretation of numbers in news reporting (Lugo-Ocando and Brandão, 2015; Nguyen and Lugo-Ocando, 2015; Brand, 2008; Maier, 2003), something that has received ample attention from scholars. According to Utts (2010), misleading science reporting of statistical results can be found easily, and tends to be widespread. For instance, she cites a 2008 study titled ‘You Are What Your Mother Eats’, which asserted that pregnant mothers who eat cereal for breakfast are more likely to have boys than pregnant mothers who do not. This was refuted by a group of experts the following year in their own analysis, which showed that this result was almost certainly a false positive. However, this did not stop the study from gaining widespread media attention (Utts, 2010) and people making the wrong assumptions. This problem is not limited to the West and in fact it seems prevalent in many
other parts of the world, including Arab countries where there are, in addition, limited capabilities in terms of science news reporting in general.

**Importance of Science News**

Indeed, the lack of scientific communication culture in the Arab region is a core problem in the region (El-Awady, 2009; Mahmood, 2008; AL-Qafari, 2009), which is aggravated by contextual restrictions to the practice of journalism in general. To be sure, the specific culture that fosters professional and organisational dynamics to produce science news and promote public interest in science in Arab countries is constrained by elements of the political environment and nature of the media system. A culture that, as we know, is an essential source of science information for many people (Long, 1995) and that it is critical in underpinning public awareness and engagement with science in general. Take for example Atwater’s study, which found that newspapers were a significant source of environmental information for Michigan residents (Atwater, 1988: p34). In addition, Pierce et al. obtained cross-cultural evidence of people’s reliance on the media for scientific information (1988). It is precisely because it has such an effect on the public understanding of science that there are long-standing concerns about the accuracy of media reporting of science (Seale, 2009). According to Goldacre,

There is an attack implicit in all media coverage of science: in their choices of stories, and the way they cover them, the media create a parody of science. On this template, science is portrayed as groundless, incomprehensible, didactic truth statements from scientists, who themselves are socially powerful, arbitrary unelected authority figures (2009, p.225).

Having said that, and in defence of science journalism, some studies, such as that carried out by Long (1995), have found that the majority of science stories in newspapers do contain some scientific explanation, although scarce.

In Arab context, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization has highlighted for some time that Arabic countries suffer from a lack of an effective scientific media, which could inhibit the spread of a scientific culture (Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, 2002). Furthermore, Mahmood (2008) argues that Arabic media suffers from a number of challenges, such as inaccurate data that is not based on scientific sources, which should be faced and solved. In addition, it was noted by the World Federation of Science Journalists (2015) that efforts to promote better use and interpretation of science statistics have a positive impact, bringing about many changes in the Arab society. This same Federation reports that these efforts have promoted concerted efforts towards address current problems such as AIDS in many Arab areas and have triggered the urgent delivery of safe sex practice items such as condoms; the implementation of cheaper AIDS testing programmes; parliamentary debates on taking maternal mortality seriously; the action of NGOs, delivering bed-nets and malaria drugs; stopping environmental damage caused by the felling of trees for military purposes (Jordan); halting an environmentally harmful petrochemical plant (Egypt); and motivating public and private sector groups to protest against toxic waste and electronic waste in Jordan. However, as we discuss in this paper, science news is highly dependent on the identification and appropriate interpretation of data and statistics. Consequently, one of the key issues discussed in this paper is how much preparedness and formation do journalists in this region have in order to engage effectively with data and statistics in the context of science news gathering, production and dissemination.
Factors in Using Statistics

The context of the Arab countries one can broadly pinpoint issues such as the political system, religion and culture, economics, media ownership, and the background, education and training of journalists in that region.

Among the elements that may influence the way the news media produces and disseminates news, it is perhaps religion and culture that are most important in the case of the Arabian region. Indeed, religion and politics are considered the most important categories influencing journalistic practices. Of these two elements, politics is considered the most important factor affecting the media in this region (Hamdy, 2013, p.71) as most scholarly analysis has been performed from the perspective of secular liberal democracy.

Therefore, when looking at the Arab media, the analysis has often been closely associated with authoritarian governments and the role of Islamic culture (Rugh, 2004, pp.5–8) even after the Arab Spring that took place in many countries (Lynch, 2015). In this sense, Arab governments continue to be at large the main funders and owners of the media since the emergence of the press in those countries. Because of this, Arab media outlets tend to contain official government guidance and ‘authorised’ editorials (Rugh, 2004, p.6) and their main role has mostly been to promote government policies (Hamdy, 2013, p.71) rather than to scrutinise and challenge those in power. One can argue that this historical tradition was not only a product of a particular political system that did not emulate the emergence of liberal democracy in Europe. These political systems were, and continue to be, mostly monarchical or authoritarian. They are more importantly, still considered a reflection of their societies in which the distinctions between the private and public spheres and between religion and secularism have never occurred (Fitzgerald, 2003; Asad, 2003). Nevertheless, this has to be also analysed in the context of a very long societal tradition around scientific knowledge, which is often seen as political neutral and more open to discussion. Equally, the use of numbers and statistics which are perceived as factually-based and therefore beyond debate. Both put together present a unique opportunity to examine the potential and limitations of science journalism in the region.

Methodology

The departing question for this paper was: How do science journalists in the Arabian region (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt) engage and use statistics to articulate science news and does this use make science knowledge more or less accessible to the public? The key focus of the paper is to look at how professional autonomy is reflected by and affects the ability of journalists in this region to use effectively data and statistics to produce science news with rigour and verifiability within their work places. The paper is based on the triangulation of several research strategies, which includes content analysis in Arab newspapers, semi-structured interviews and expert panels who read the journalists’ outputs. The paper is based on a fieldwork research carried out between 2017 and 2018 in these three countries.

The first method content analysis was conducted on science articles published during the years 2015-2016 by newspapers from different parts of the Arabic world: Al-Ahram (Egypt), Al-Masry Al-Youm (Egypt), Al Riyadh (Saudi), Okaz (Saudi), Al-Qabas (Kuwait), and Al Rai (Kuwait). The
method used to examine whether the use of statistics in science news by journalists and editors is positive or negative.

Expert panels were our second method used in the study. Expert panel method was considered useful for several reasons. First, it provided some background on the use of statistics by science journalists in Arab countries. The method also helped in formulating questions that journalists were to be asked in semi-structured interviews.

Interviews were conducted with five Arabic academic specialists who work at the University of Leeds and still live there. The participating specialists worked in different scientific fields: three in health, one in technology and one in statistics. A total of 25 science news articles were chosen from the sampled Arabic newspapers.

The third method, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with science journalists to examine and understand, in detail, how journalists in the Arab region deal with statistical data when they report science news. The study carried out interviews with 18 journalists and editors who write about science news at the eight newspapers mentioned above, with two journalists and one editor from each newspaper. The purpose of the interviews is to explore the difficulties or opportunities, which these science journalists face in their journalistic practices.

**Findings and Discussion**

Overall both, the degree of education in regards to the use of data and statistics and, the degree of professional autonomy plays a key role in determining the ability of journalists in these Arab countries to engage effectively with data and statistics in the construction of science news.

Content analysis revealed that in more than half (521 of the 932) of science articles in Arab newspapers, the statistical information came from official sources, such as governments, universities, and science journals. In this sense, Manning (2001, p.55) has observed that

> The pressure of news deadline and the importance of obtaining information rich in news values encourages a dependency upon official sources, whether they be government departments or sources associated with parliaments. All these institutions are likely to be newsworthy precisely because they are powerful and have affect on daily lives of news audience in innumerable ways.

Although official sources provide information of interest to the public and the public is more eager to hear from them than from other sources, some governments may aim to pass their agenda through these sources, especially when coverage turns to politics or the economy. In addition, the statistical information issued by the official sources may be incomplete, either intentionally or unintentionally.
This finding agreed with those of Lugo-Ocando and Faria Brandão (2015), which showed that unknown sources, at 41.5%, represented the second most common type of statistical sources. Non-official statistics, such as those from non-governmental organizations, came last on the list. Overall, these findings support the common belief that journalists rely on official sources to produce their news stories (Goldacre, 2009; Lewis, Williams and Franklin, 2008; Manning, 2001).

Another important finding was the ‘timeliness’ of the statistics used, which is considered to be a sensitive given that claims of inaccuracy or errors are often attributed to time pressures (Chibnall, 2013; Blanes and Kirchmaier, 2017). The findings of content analysis shows instead that the majority of science news, 67%, made use of statistics which were ‘timeless’ and which therefore did not impose deadlines upon journalists, contradicting normative claims often made by reporters.

The findings in Table [2] below showed a gap regarding the use of statistics in visual information. A high percentage of science articles, nearly 99%, do not use any visual information. This supports AL-Qafari’s (2009) findings who have suggested the lack of interest among journalists in embedding graphics into scientific news. This is an unexpected result because of the significant role that visual elements can play in simplifying and delivering information in ways that make it understandable for readers. Visual statistics are very important in facilitating the delivery of information; for several reasons, this is especially true for an Arab audience. More than twenty percent of the Arab population suffers from illiteracy (UNESCO, 2018). Further, the enormous amounts of money spent by a number of Arab countries in the field of science would seem to support an easy delivery of scientific information to readers there.
This is not a problem exclusive to Arab countries but one that also occurs in the West. To be sure, Faria Brandão’s (2016) findings highlight that 86.7% of science news stories do not present any visual data. This issue may also reflect cultural limitations of technological media convergence. Journalists must think differently in the new media world, one in which audiences are changing very quickly; they should be aware that it is important not only to produce content, but also to create the environment in which content can be consumed (Hall, 2001). Along these lines, what this data reveals is that newspaper journalists in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt are thinking in much the same way as journalists elsewhere who persist in the belief that the only important thing is to write.

In Expert Penal findings, showed that 1) Statistical data were misrepresented in a majority of the items read. 2) In more than half of the items read, statistical information was not used effectively to communicate science. 3) Statistics did not comply with the principles of reliability in 13 out of 25 articles. 4) Statistics complied with the principles of validity in only 7 articles.

In 13 of the 25 articles, the participating specialists felt that journalists had presented statistics inappropriately. This has previously been noted as a problem in science articles, as many journalists struggle to engage with, accurately interpret or adequately report numerical data (Maier, 2003b). The specific form of misrepresentation was found to differ from one article to another, perhaps because journalists do not understand how to present the statistical information in a consistent way or because they simply misunderstand the significance of statistical information. As one example, consider the following review of article [24].

This article contains clear falsehoods, and, judging by the use of incorrect statistics, I think the journalist does not know what he is writing about. It is not true that Gaucher disease is widespread in America, Europe, and the Middle East, or that the prevalence of this disease is 5 out of 100,000 births. Where did the journalist find the statistic that 25% of babies are infected with this disease? I do not know, and there is nothing in the article that indicates this ratio. This would mean that of every 4 births, one baby is affected by Gaucher disease. (INT05)

In this case, the journalist’s use of statistics seems to indicate a lack of the necessary statistical skills or knowledge, and the way in which the statistics are presented suggests they are not specialized in that scientific field. This issue contributes to doubts about statistical information in the news as a whole, aligning with Al-Qafāri’s (2009) view that Arabic newspapers suffer from a scarcity of specialized science journalists.

Overall, our findings suggest problems in the process of using statistics in news reporting. There were five reasons for this: 1) inadequate use and interpretation of statistical data; 2) inaccurate statistical data; 3) statistics were used for marketing purposes rather than for delivery of science information; 4) statistics were used to address emotions rather than to convey science; and 5) the data were not of relevance to Arabic countries.
These problems are key in hindering public understanding of science as statistics play a key role in delivering science information to help readers to understand social issues (Fioramonti, 2014). By missing data or failure to use them appropriately means that scientific ideas are not delivered, which in turn has a negative effect on the reader as this reviewer suggests.

Statistical data were not used extensively in this article, although the volume of information it provided is greater than in some other articles. Additionally, the data were not used appropriately, as for example [in the reference to] “Huge Information”; the accuracy of this is difficult to judge, as the statistical information was presented in too general a way, and the science was not well communicated. I would not say that the journalist intended to mislead, but the scientific information was not delivered well. (INT02)

The implicit statistics used without interpretation in several of the sampled articles (e.g. ‘six times’, ‘long battery life’, ‘the battery is very good’) is likely to confuse the reader and fails to deliver the scientific idea. The role of statistics should be to simplify and deliver information to the reader rather than to confuse them. For example, INT05 questioned the meaning of the phrase ‘six times’? Does this mean that if a person has six children, one of them will be infected? Or does it mean that, if one person is aged 30 and another is over the age of 40, the former will have no infected children if he has six, or that the sixth child of the person over 40 will be infected?

Statistical information plays a fundamental role in reinforcing the accuracy of science stories, which impacts directly on the quality of the news (Nguyen and Lugo-Ocando, 2015, p.6). For this reason, scientists stress the need for accuracy in science news reporting (Murcott, 2009; Hansen, 2016). According to Utts (2010), misleading reporting of statistical results is a widespread problem. The present findings highlight the presence of inaccurate statistical data in the communication of science to the public, which has the effect of misleading readers rather than delivering accurate scientific information.

The statistics the journalist uses in the article suggest that the probability of injury is very large, and in fact this is scientifically incorrect and unproven. The journalist should also have explained what was meant by the words “after 40”, and whether this refers to the ages of 40, 60, or 80. The journalist uses a circular argument, which is also problematic. The use of the phrase “more damaged” is correct, but the extent of the damage must be explained. This use of statistics leads to misunderstanding and to the manipulation of the ideas in the article, creating public fear with no scientific evidence. (INT05, article [21])

In some of the science news items analysed by the specialists, there is evidence that the main purpose of using statistics was for marketing purposes rather than to communicate scientific ideas, as for instance in article [4].

The statistics in this article were used not to deliver science but for the purpose of marketing. While the journalist did not offer his opinion about the mobile phone, he seems to be trying to sell something through the use of these statistical data. Readers of the article want to know the details
and advantages and disadvantages of this phone, but in this article, the journalist is promoting it. (INT02)

This issue emerged in relation to 6 of the 25 sampled articles [4, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 20]. Interestingly, although three times as many health news articles (19) were analysed, four of these five articles were technology-related while only one was a health news item. These results suggest that the statistical data used in technology news items in Arab countries are controlled by commercial enterprises.

All such statistics were seen to be used to intimidate people without scientific justifications. According to INT03 and INT05, who are health specialists, many of these statistical data are wrong. One example was article [13], entitled ‘Women with migraines are more likely to have heart disease’.

The article said that the research found 15,541 cases, and then said that 17,500 cases have migraine headaches while 6,389 suffered migraine headaches during follow-up. It then noted the number of people who have heart and circulatory problems. The statistics here did not indicate whether participants had heart attacks before they were diagnosed with migraines or after, or whether migraines caused fewer heart attacks. Some migraines are caused by diseases of the blood vessels. Do these diseases cause migraines and heart disease at the same time, or is migraine the cause of heart disease? All of this delivers a message that will confuse ordinary readers. I am sure that some women who suffer from migraine now will think that they might have cardiovascular problems. (INT3)

The findings also indicate that statistical data were not used effectively in some articles because the data were not relevant to Arabic countries. For example, the percentage of alcohol use in article [21] has nothing to do with Arab society, where there is very little alcohol consumption as compared to Western countries. According to INT05, scientific news stories should be relevant to society. In Arab communities, it would make more sense to talk about serious issues such as the use of shisha, a tobacco commonly smoked in the Arab states, which merits wider news coverage.

In some articles, journalists used sentence the phrase ‘international statistics’ without identifying the source, implying that the source was reliable when this was not the case. Serious mistakes were also noted in how sources were referred to. For instance, article [21] described the source as a newspaper; this is a misrepresentation, as the American Journal of Stem Cells is a journal. The journalist also used the name Georgetown University to convince readers of the credibility and strength of the cited statistical information; in fact, Georgetown University has nothing to do with this journal. (INT05). INT01 made a similar point about article [2].

In the beginning, the statistical source of the information may be unreliable and unknown at the scientific level. Here, the journalist should have background information on the classification of the magazine published—whether it is classified as a powerful and reliable journal—as well as confirmation of this source and even
The interviews with Arab journalists show that in the three Arab countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait), journalists covering science have little or no access to official sources which they need in order to obtain statistical data. However, there is a sense of difficulty when it comes to accessing government sources in Arab societies.

Most of the journalists tend to use government sources to obtain numbers due to the lack of other sources available for obtaining reliable figures. The confidence of some journalists is greater in those sources than in other statistical sources.

*I rely on anything concerning Saudi Arabia by asking the Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia, not others, because the World Health Organization is able to receive information from more than one source and this source can be unreliable. I depend on the source who exports the information from the base of the source.* [INT12]

Sometimes, blind trust in government sources is negative for a journalist or newspaper, oftentimes resulting in a loss of public credibility because of inaccurate figures. Therefore, the journalists should diversify their statistical sources in order to finally obtain reliable figures.

These results coincide with Lugo-Ocando and Faria Brandão’s study (2015): They found that journalists are over-reliant on official sources when producing news stories. This may affect the handling of numbers in terms of checking and verifying the validity of statistical information through other sources. Not all of the data from government sources is valid and reliable (Messner and Garrison, 2007).

The results of the interviews with the journalists showed that the majority of journalists working in the field of journalism are not specialists in the field. Eight of the journalists graduated from media colleges, and one of them holds a master’s degree. Eight of them graduated from different disciplines such as physics, chemistry, radiology, sociology and English. Two of the journalists did not have university degrees (only secondary certificates) and both of these journalists were from Kuwaiti newspapers. Some journalists believe that the employment of journalists without qualifications in the field of journalism contributes to the incorrect handling of statistics:

*Unfortunately, there are no specialised journalists. Most of the journalists in Saudi newspapers are not journalism graduates.* [INT09]

*Unfortunately, many journalists are not media specialists. Therefore, dealing with numbers causes them embarrassment. They cannot explain these figures or explain them to the public in order to convey the real media message.* [INT16]

The large number of journalists who graduated from different fields outside of the field of journalism and who use statistics to create scientific news delineates how the Arab newspapers do not care about scientific news. Furthermore, these newspapers also do not trust the outputs of the media colleges because of the weakness of the media students, not only in terms of dealing with numbers but also in their field work, as one journalist interviewees mentioned,
There is no doubt that there is a significant lack of awareness of the importance of dealing with figures from media students in Egyptian universities who are still new at work. [INT04]

The scarcity of training courses that deal with how to handle numbers in news stories. It has been shown that the background and training of journalists both play a crucial role in allowing reporters to examine and validate claims made on the basis of statistical information in the press (Nguyen and Lugo-Ocando, 2015). However, the findings indicted that the majority of journalists did not take courses in dealing with numbers in relation to science news. This finding may reflect that the majority of Arab journalists have no interest in developing their skills, especially in terms of how to deal with numbers. Although I conducted interviews with seven female journalists, none of them had taken any courses related to numbers.

Only four of the journalists took courses in dealing with numbers, [INT1], [INT09], [INT16], [INT18], two from one newspaper, Al Rai, one journalist from Al-Ahram newspaper and one from the Riyadh. Two of those who took courses did not chiefly focus on how to deal with numbers, but the figures were mentioned as very small parts of their courses and the main purpose of the courses was to develop the journalists’ skills in different areas and the courses were not about dealing with the figures directly. This means that the journalists from the Kuwaiti newspaper (Al Rai) had more interest regarding the development of their skills in terms of dealing with numbers in scientific news than the other journalists from the Arab newspapers did. Interestingly, one of these journalists from Al Rai newspaper – who took courses in dealing with figures – was commended in terms of the accuracy and clarity of statistical information by the experts during one of the news-analysis segments of the expert panel section [see expert panel section]. So, taking courses in handling numbers has a positive influence on Arab journalists, which reflects on using statistics in science news. One of the journalists who took a course in numbers pointed out:

Of course, the course helped me to know how to deal with the numbers, giving indications and evidence, especially in the parliamentary and political fields and when testing the attitudes of society. [INT16]

On the other hand, the responses from the journalists who did not take courses in numbers differed in how much they placed importance on, or acknowledged the usefulness of, these courses for journalists when writing scientific news: They all pointed out that having sufficient experience was more important. They felt that there was no time for courses and no need for these courses under the pretext of knowing how to deal with numbers. They claimed that access to the government sources was sufficient enough and that it reduced the importance of taking those courses,

I honestly do not think that taking courses in dealing with numbers will add anything to me, especially since I have about 12 years of experience. I know how to deal with numbers. For me, I think the government sources are enough to ignore the necessity of taking courses in dealing with numbers. [INT15]

Conclusion:

The overall conclusion is that, the degree of education in regards to the use of data and statistics, the degree of professional autonomy and the lack of engagement with science plays a key role in determining the ability of journalists in these Arab countries to engage effectively with data and
statistics in the construction of science news. The results also suggest that in order to improve capabilities in the region it is important to address both skills and contexts, including the relationship between universities teaching journalism, scientists and news media in general. Therefore, journalists engagement with science in their reportings should be more accurate and effective than what it is now its current state.

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Enemy of the People: Perceptions of Students Studying in a Post-secondary Journalism Program in a Climate of Attacks on the Media Profession

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Abstract

In a climate of attacks where a world political leader is calling the news media “enemy of the people” and “fake news”, this research examines a two-year cohort of Canadian post-secondary journalism students’ perceptions of these attacks. Students were surveyed voluntarily and anonymously to gauge their reactions to news stories where U.S. President Donald Trump challenged media outlets or individuals. Findings indicate students are determined to enter the field and make a positive impact, that it is imperative for journalists to freely question those in power, and that the urgency of maintaining truth as a journalistic standard is critical.

Keywords: student journalist perceptions, journalism career, journalism education, enemy of the people, fake news, Donald Trump, watchdog in journalism, news media, questioning those in power, fundamentals of journalism

Introduction

The ushering in of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States has brought an unparalleled climate of divisiveness and attacks upon the press. Three months after being elected U.S. President, Donald Trump used social media, specifically Twitter, to deliver this message about the news media:

President Donald Trump made it clear he did not trust traditional media as he openly and publicly antagonized U.S. news media calling them the “enemy of the people”. Since then, the consistency
and voracity with which the profession of journalism has been attacked has created a challenging climate in which to teach post-secondary students studying journalism. A world leader was lending credibility to the notion that encouraging people to attack news media was acceptable and facts were open to interpretation. The authors acknowledge their own bias feeling discomfort with what was happening in the United States, our neighbour to the south. As journalism educators the lens turned to our students; were they being impacted and how? Very early on, questions began to surface among faculty: How do we continue to encourage students when they read or hear a world political leader disparaging the news media? How do the students feel about this? How is it impacting them? Perhaps most importantly, is it dissuading them from wanting to work in the profession? It became clear that it was critical to know how students hoping to enter this profession were feeling, and as educators, how to respond.

These questions provided the impetus for this research; the desire to know how students felt, and how they were perceiving the news stories that were fueling these attacks. Further, it was determined that by collecting this data it could potentially help inform journalism teaching practice. As the refrain “enemy of the people” was repeatedly cheered in Republican rallies led by President Trump, the discourse often spiraled into further derogatory language like “crazed lunatics” (Wagner, 2019) when referencing the news media.

This research was undertaken to answer the following question: What are the perceptions of students studying in a Canadian post-secondary journalism program in a climate of attacks on the journalism profession by a world political leader? This paper does not purport that the responses of these journalism students is reflective of cohorts everywhere, rather it clearly acknowledges that this research is only dealing with one post-secondary journalism program in one college in Canada and offers a glimpse into the perceptions and impact on this particular cohort. The college is located within an hour of the U.S. border and is heavily influenced by access to both American and Canadian news media.

The research was conducted through surveys over a four month period beginning in the fall of 2018. It was distributed to a two-year post-secondary journalism cohort. The goal of this research was to gauge the impact and shifts in perceptions, feelings and attitudes of the students as they study journalism and prepare to enter this field.

As themes were identified from the data collected, it became apparent that traditional aspects of the profession were under the microscope. Based on the identified themes, this research seeks to understand how faculty maintain teaching the fundamental principles of journalism: truth, accuracy, fairness, balance, objectivity and representation of the people when journalists and journalism are under attack by a world leader. It is hoped that by identifying the perceptions of the students as they reflect on various news stories within this adversarial climate, faculty can use the information to aid future curriculum delivery. Further, it is anticipated this research paper will provide valuable data contributing a unique point of view to an important discussion, as well as identify future research opportunities.
Literature Review

To contextualize this research project, it is necessary to identify the history of the term “enemy of the people”. The phrase dates back to Nero in Roman times and Ibsen made it famous with his 1882 play, it was also used by Nazi Joseph Goebbels as propaganda and justification to attack and kill Jews. Joseph Stalin also borrowed the phrase to threaten anyone opposed to the state ideologies at the beginning of the Soviet Union and later it was used by Lenin in 1917 (Bondarenko, 2017).

President Trump has consistently used the term to describe many traditional news media in the United States, accusing them of being the disseminators of “fake news”. Several researchers (Jacobs, 2017; Richardson, 2017; Journalism Education, 2019), have endeavored to examine the impact of the rhetoric of “fake news” on a variety of groups within the United States and around the world, including educators. This research highlights the challenge facing journalists and educators to “inspire students” in an environment where journalists “are now constantly undermined by a determined counter-offensive that purports to show ‘truth’ and ‘accuracy’ are pliable concepts in the hands of the mainstream media” (Richardson, 2017).

While this paper acknowledges there is likely other scholarly work underway to identify how this climate of attacks and the President’s divisive rhetoric is impacting post-secondary students hoping to enter the journalism profession, we were unable to locate any that examined this through the students’ viewpoints. This will undoubtedly increase as the President’s term in office continues to be examined in a historical context for both its domestic and global impact on the future of journalism, journalism educators and students studying this field. Consequently, the timeliness of this research is important.

A study conducted on a cohort of introductory psychology college students at a southwestern U.S. university looked at the impact of the Presidential election, but from the perspective of “clinical distress.” (Hagan, Sladek, Luecken, & Doane, 2018). The researchers “identified a high rate of event-related distress symptoms” (Hagan et al., 2018). The idea that these students were responding with strong feelings further supports the validity of examining the perceptions of journalism students and how they were feeling.

While our research was underway, a study was conducted in the U.S., primarily with high school educators, examining their views on the impact of President Trump’s criticisms of the media and how it is being discussed in their classrooms (Jones, 2019). The survey found 44 per cent of teachers reported a rise in journalism class enrollment and more than 30 percent showed an interest in majoring in journalism as a career (Jones, 2019). Many in this survey indicated that Trump’s language of “enemy of the people” and accusations of ‘fake news’ was likely a motivator (Jones, 2019).

The role of journalism and the debate over core values and fundamental skills has come under scrutiny in the era of the U.S. Presidential election by the public, journalists and academics. A determination of the required skills needed in a world where many students get their news from Facebook is required (Richardson, 2017). In light of how legacy media missed the potential outcome of the U.S. election Richardson noted “…journalism looks not only out of touch but also from a different generation.” (Richardson, 2017). Fact checking remains central to the role of journalists (Richardson, 2017) as “fears about fake news are pervasive” and as is the case in
Canada, “we are seeing Canadians turning back to credentialed experts in their efforts to dispel them” (Edelman, 2018). As with any profession, the authors acknowledge that journalism is not without its faults and challenges, however examining specific failures of journalists is outside the scope of this paper.

A study examining how students and professional journalists perceived the function of journalists in society was conducted in a random sampling from across the U.S. (Coleman, Lee, Yaschur, Meader, & Mcelroy, 2016). It was found that both groups, while they differed slightly in their ranking, maintained their belief in the same fundamental roles which they defined as “Interpretive/Investigative, Adversarial, Disseminator, Populist mobilizer” (Coleman et al., 2016). This study, however, did not place their research against the backdrop of the 2016 election.

The discussion of the roles and responsibilities of a journalist in this literature helps to position our research project in the context of how students are impacted by the rhetoric of a prominent world leader and how the researchers as educators may develop curriculum moving forward.

**Method**

Surveys distributed in-class were chosen as the method of data collection as they provided the most direct access to both the first and second-year student cohort and ensured that surveys were completed only in the allotted time. Five surveys were conducted between October 2018 and January 2019.

There were several key ethical considerations in conducting the research. Students participated on a voluntary and anonymous basis. Each student provided a unique ID so that results could be tracked over the course of the semester as well as for each year. To maintain anonymity for this paper, responses have been labeled randomly but consistently from Participant 1 through to Participant 46. Students were also allowed to opt out of a survey at any time even if they had previously completed a survey. Conversely, they could opt in at any time. Personal identifying factors, such as age, ethnicity or gender were not gathered as this could potentially risk identification. The cohort consisted of domestic students.

The chosen articles were never discussed with the students either prior to or after the survey. Each story was selected on the basis of U.S. President Donald Trump challenging media outlets or individuals, or on the fallout to journalists as a result of his comments and/or actions. As the stories covered a foreign President’s actions and comments, it was decided that it was appropriate to primarily use a variety of American sources as well as international sources as the stories arose. It was not intended by the authors to avoid any domestic news sources. Inherently, by the very nature of choosing a news source there is bias in the process that we acknowledge.

Students were asked the same 5 questions in each survey, for each story, in order that themes could be identified across all of the data:

1. How does this story make you feel about the journalist who authored it?

2. How does this story make you feel about the profession of journalism as a whole?
3. Please identify how this story impacts your perception of the fundamentals of journalism: Truth, accuracy, balance, objectivity, trust, fairness, representation of the people and/or the ability to question authority. Choose what resonates with you most as a result of reading this article. Please explain why.


5. How is the role of a journalist more or less important to you now? Explain.

On the first survey they were asked one additional question, “What prompted you to enter a journalism program?” On the final survey they were asked an additional question, “Do you still anticipate working in the journalism profession? Why or why not?” The additional question was given on the first survey in order to provide a glimpse into the motivations of students for entering the journalism profession. The supplementary question on the last survey was created to evaluate if the participant was still interested in continuing professionally in the field, or if the verbal attacks and climate of disruption would have caused them to change their mind. Those answers are discussed in both the results and the conclusion.

The composition of the questions was chosen by the researchers to elicit the greatest potential of data to examine the research question. The questions were purposely constructed so that students could reflect on their feelings and perceptions as relating to the field of journalism and their reaction to the journalist who authored it. By asking students about the journalist, it offered them the potential to address their perceptions of the role of the journalist, their tone, level of objectivity or potential bias.

Procedure

Selection of articles

Survey 1 – week of October 2, 2018 (article October 1, 2018)
(“Trump insults female reporter in tense exchange: 'I know you're not thinking,” 2018, Independent)

During a press conference to announce the signing of the Free Trade Agreement between the U.S., Canada and Mexico, U.S. President Donald Trump insulted a female reporter in a tense press conference exchange saying: “I know you’re not thinking. You never do” (Mindock, 2018).

The authors saw this event as significant because it was a direct attack on a reporter. The ‘Independent’ provided a relatively unbiased report of the events covering the story with balance, appropriate editorial content and no inflammatory language. It was also a publication from outside the United States.

Survey 2 – week of October 29, 2018 (article October 29, 2018)
(“Trump Attacks Press As ‘True Enemy Of The People’ Days After Bomb Sent To CNN,” 2018, Huffington Post)
Initially the dominating headline was that Trump had praised Montana Republican Rep. Greg Gianforte for body slamming The Guardian reporter Ben Jacobs in 2017. This came on the heels of news that Washington Post reporter Jamal Khashoggi was missing and presumed murdered. No sooner had the authors decided on this story when the mass shootings at a synagogue in Pittsburgh happened and pipe bombs were sent to prominent Democrats and CNN. Five days later, President Trump tweeted this:

![Tweet by Donald J. Trump](image)

(Trump, 2018).

The authors agreed this particular tweet by the President directly demonstrated his approach of attacking the media through accusations of “fake news” and calling them “enemy of the people”. A Huffington Post story was chosen as the coverage of the events provided context for students who might not have been familiar with the full lead up to this story.

*Survey 3 – week of November 12, 2018*
(“Sarah Sanders Accused of Sharing Doctored Infowars Video To Justify Acosta Ban,” 2018, *Huffington Post*)


In this survey students were given two sources. They were able to watch the video from a link to the Huffington Post and read a Washington Post article as it thoroughly covered the background to the original event as well as the contentious manipulation of footage at President Trump’s press conference. This event was chosen for the survey as the President directly attacked a reporter trying to ask a question and the authors felt it highlighted the idea of the journalist as a watchdog. Further, the manipulated video directly addressed the implications about “fake news”.

*Survey 4 – week of December 3, 2018 (article December 4, 2018)*

While attacking CNN, President Trump suggested a “worldwide” state-run news network to combat what he called CNN’s “powerful voice”: 

![Image](image)
This article was a response from NPR, “an independent, nonprofit media organization that was founded on a mission to create a more informed public” (NPR, 2019). This publication was chosen because it was from an outside source not being directly targeted by the President and the story itself showed President Trump attacking the legitimacy of the news media.

**Survey 5 – week of January 21, 2018 (article Jan 19, 2019)**


The timeframe of this final survey was conducted more than 30 days into the U.S. federal government shutdown. Nancy Pelosi (Speaker of the United States House of Representatives) had refused to allow Trump to make his State of the Union Address. Roger Stone, a Trump advisor and friend to the president had just been indicted by a grand jury on seven counts resulting from the Robert Mueller investigation and was arrested. This story was chosen to see how students would perceive a news outlet defending itself against potentially getting the facts wrong. A New York Times article was chosen to ensure a balance of publications were represented in the surveys that had come under attack from the President.

**Analysis of Data**

Thematic analysis (six step guide) was chosen to analyze the data as “it offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data.” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In approaching the data, the intention was “to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations - and ideologies - that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data.” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes were developed through NVivo software to determine the themes.
Results

The potential sample size for this research was 71 students. There were 35 students in first year and 36 in second year. Seventy-seven percent (or 27) of the first-year students and 53% (or 19) of the second-year students answered at least one survey. In response to the first question, most students indicated they wanted to enter the journalism profession because they had an interest in writing and storytelling.

Response rates for each survey varied and there could be a couple of reasons for that. Students may not have attended class that day or they may have decided to opt out of participating in that survey. Analysis of the results were evaluated on all the responses over the entire length of the research time frame rather than comparing first and second-year or any one article specifically as that is not the intent of this research. Consequently, the data as a whole was looked at to identify themes.

Three themes were identified from the data. These themes provide an answer to the initial research question: “What are the perceptions of students studying in a Canadian post-secondary journalism program in a climate of attacks on the journalism profession by a world political leader?”

1. The need for truth (n = 76)

“Truth” was the most cited word in all of the surveys. It was used 76 times by students. Collectively, “trust” and “truth” were mentioned 95 times in the 5 surveys. Students consistently raised both the importance and urgency of truth as a journalistic standard throughout the surveys. Trump calling the news media “fake news” was often the underlying editorial direction of the stories. A large number of responses spoke to telling the truth as critical to the role of a journalist.

“In today’s society, the public knowing the truth is crucial.”
Participant 1

“The time to tell the truth is more relevant than ever”
Participant 28

“There needs to be a lot of truth and accuracy for people to trust news sources.”
Participant 34

“I think it’s up to journalists to safeguard the truth.”
Participant 37

“The need for factual and reliable news is dire.”
Participant 41

Several students also discussed how important truth and accuracy was in their training and the work they are doing. They stressed how verification and fact-checking was important.

“I would have to be 100% precise with everything I cover.”
Participant 34
“It makes me understand the importance of getting good facts and evidence before assuming anything.”

Participant 47

Students expressed the importance of separating their personal feelings on a story in defence of the truth. The notion of objectivity seemed to be at odds with the truth for some students. Responses at times referred to the perceived bias inherent in some of the reporting and the need to combat that.

“Journalists don’t stand for truth anymore, I feel like they stand for their bias.”

Participant 22

“Stand up for what is true, not necessarily what you feel.”

Participant 44

2. Journalists have a responsibility to question those in power (n= 30)

Analysis of the data identified the importance of this theme for students as prospective journalists. “Power” came up 30 times in the data. Most often, it was in a context where students recognized the need to question those in authority, even if the journalist was being attacked. The word “authority” also came up 26 times in the data.

“I think journalists should be allowed to question authority, if they don’t want to comply it does not mean it gives authority the right to belittle.”

Participant 35

“It’s tough that for the most part, since journalists are basically the watchdogs of society, we have to isolate ourselves and have an "us" vs "them" mentality.”

Participant 42

“This story emphasizes, to me, how difficult but crucial it is to be impartial and question authority.”

Participant 16

“There needs to keep being journalists who don’t get intimidated by those in power and continue to seek the truth for the "little guys" who elect these politicians.”

Participant 17

Reflecting on the need to challenge authority some students indicated a malaise with the state of politics and what they see as the abuse of power.

“It’s disappointing to see how someone can abuse their power and attack a profession that is there to inform the world.”

Participant 2

“I think it’s disgusting that people of authority think they can get away with whatever they want.”

Participant 40

“There will be politicians like Trump who condemn you and try to intimidate you. But we must continue holding these figures accountable.”

Participant 16
3. Students are emotionally ready for a career in journalism (n = 35)

This third theme was identified from data that showed a positive range of emotions from students in support of pursuing a career in journalism. It is important to note that while the final survey asked an additional question to the students as to their future career goals, this theme was identified across all the data, on all surveys. This theme also directly answers the research question, highlighting the feelings of students pursuing journalism as a career in this climate of attacks on the profession. In spite of the negative rhetoric and the journalists being under attack with name calling, students most often indicated their excitement for pursuing the profession and for wanting to make a difference. The word excited came up 35 times in the data.

“Excited to be a part of an industry where it’s raw and so informational.”
Participant 4

“I’m incredibly excited to be able to do things that are true and honest, while making an impact at the same time.”
Participant 1

“Inspired, challenged, motivated”
Participant 3

“I feel excited to become a journalist so I can help deliver the truth to the public.”
Participant 8

“We need answers for this world. This is our job. Investigating is key to understand the world more efficiently. Makes it more exciting now.”
Participant 4

Students were also realistic. Some expressed how their excitement was tempered with feelings of fear and nervousness. While it could be argued that students are nervous or fearful in any circumstance leaving school to enter the workforce, the responses were provided in the context of the climate of attacks providing a direct correlation to that circumstance.

“I am excited, but nervous as there is a huge stigma the media is facing, and journalists have been painted in a negative light.”
Participant 8

“I am somewhat frightened to become a journalist. Am I going to be putting my life at risk reporting the facts?”
Participant 16

“I feel proud and nervous. Proud because journalists are the immune system of democracy. They let the people know when there is a problem. Nervous because the future of journalism is becoming more and more focused on entertainment.”
Participant 4

Overall, students seemed to express a desire to continue to pursue a career in this field, although this was not the case for all. This would indicate that the negative rhetoric did create strong feelings for a few students. For the majority however, it resulted in a determination to contribute to the profession.

“I feel passionate that now is the best time to be a journalist. We need truth and accountability now more than ever.”
Participant 44
“Scary, with fake news these days and journalist’s reputations on the line, but just as motivated to share important information with the world.”

Participant 2

“Over the past few months I have gone from interested in journalism to 100% convinced that I am somehow in any capacity involved in the freedom of information in the democratic process.”

Participant 6

“Love it! Still my dream career. Now more than ever!”

Participant 32

“I want to be a fair, unbiased journalist that nobody can call “fake news””

Participant 11

Discussion

In an age of accusations of fake news and attacks on the news media, what is evident is that these students desire accountability in journalism. They are digital natives (Prensky, 2001), technologically savvy and are quick to navigate the overwhelming information landscape for what interests them. They want to see integrity in the profession and importantly, they want the public, in turn, to trust them. The research identifies that students want to be able to turn to the news as a source of truth.

Analysis of the data strongly identifies that validating facts, a foundation of strong journalistic practice, has taken center stage in the battle against accusations of fake news and the verification of truth. Students have recognized the importance of this journalistic principle and the need to apply it, especially in this current climate of attacks on the profession.

While there are potentially many factors that inspire students to study journalism, it is evident that the climate of attacks on the journalism profession has encouraged some to pursue this career, noting “fake news” and attacks on the media as a reason (Jones, 2019). It is evident from the identified themes in the data that holding those in power accountable for their actions is important to students as future journalists, especially since becoming President, and as of the writing this paper, Donald Trump has made 4,913 false claims (Dale, 2017).

Discussion of the research findings joins the healthy debate among academics and professional journalists about what the future holds and how we should prepare the next generation of journalists (Coleman et al., 2016). The question has been raised as to whether maintaining and reinforcing the fundamental basics is key (Richardson, 2017) or if there should be a push towards journalists taking a stronger role as watchdog (Jacobs, 2017). Analysis of the data reinforces the need for both, demonstrating that educators need to stress traditional notions of journalism fundamentals with strong editorial skills to drive the process. Further, the perceptions of these students in this climate of attacks points towards the need to not fear investigating those in power. This is the traditional notion of watchdog journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014).

Ensuring that curriculum addresses these notions throughout a program could help alleviate what some point to as a weakness in journalism education around the world and a need to enforce the basics of verifying facts and getting the story right (Bhaskaran, Harsh & Pradeep, 2017).
Conclusion

Applied to the classroom, this research provides the authors insight into areas that need to be stressed in curriculum. Through examining the perceptions of this cohort, it is evident that there is a need to shore up foundational practices to ensure students are developing both critical thinking and ethical standards. The awareness and follow-through of applying those standards consistently, in spite of a climate of attacks, speaks to the important challenge facing journalism educators. This is a volatile point in North American journalism history, and arguably for the role of future journalists. While this is a cohort of Canadian students, journalism students in other areas of the world are likely feeling the impact of the climate of attacks on journalists as this is not limited to the West. It can be concluded however, that the research data overall is positive for the future of journalism education as it shows a determination by students to still enter the profession in spite of ongoing criticism by a world leader. Further, students’ desire to pursue the truth and report with integrity and accountability is encouraging and points to the need to ensure curriculum stresses these foundational concepts.

Navigating notions of truth, authenticity and the fundamentals of good journalism is critical to maintain the integrity of the profession. This is evident in the data. Educators can reinforce this through review of course learning outcomes to ensure these concepts are adequately addressed and assessed in both theory and practical application. Assessment tools are outside the scope of this paper but could be considered in future research.

Additionally, a deeper understanding by students on the watchdog role and its importance in this adversarial climate may address the fear and nervousness identified by students should they need to question those in power in their future careers. Further, self-reflective practice after classroom reporting exercises could help provide insight for students as to how they can perform in this capacity. Discussions and analysis of the journalist as a “watchdog”, while emphasizing fundamentals of accountability, fairness and balance, may help reinforce for future graduates entering the profession the importance of building a connection of truth with the audiences they serve.

About the Authors

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A Small-Market Newsroom; Observing the “Field”

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Abstract:

The author, a university professor in Journalism & Media studies, re-entered the professional workforce for a 3-week stint as an "old guy intern" at a small-market broadcast station. Blending praxis and theory, he recounts that experience using Bourdieu’s field theory and that theorist’s claims of objectivity. Unlike Bourdieu, this author found objectivity and subjectivity to be mutually exclusive. That’s because of the sweeping changes in the field. In Bourdieu's terms, the doxa and habitus have changed so radically that objectivity has been compromised. Using anecdote and theory, the author outlines why this is the case.

Keywords: Bourdieu, doxa, habitus, speed-of-change-has-changed, contemporary small-market newsrooms, old-guy internship, objectivity, subjectivity, economic realities of journalism

Introduction

Pierre Bourdieu wrote in his Outline of a Theory of Practice (1972) of doxa, “(It is) that which goes without saying because it comes without saying” (12). Doxa is a sort of common sense that informs the decisions and distinctions we make about the world and our place in it. It, simply put, is the way things are or “the rules of the game.” Doxa might best explain our place within or relationship to fields, those competitive arenas in which people strive for reward, for example, professional workplaces or politics and, of course, academics. Fields in turn have a mutual relationship with habitus, or the role or position played by the actors involved. And these positions are determined by varying structures of power, which Bourdieu dubbed capital. At a simplified level, these components constitute Bourdieu’s field theory.

Bourdieu’s field theory has been applied so often in so many varying disciplines it is dizzying; he was a prodigious intellect and legion have researched his ideas. Globally, many have focussed on the field of journalism. Zeng (2018) examines the habitus of correspondents in China and develops a typology. Kumar and Haneef (2018) examine practices of mobile journalism at the Hindustan Times through the lens of field theory. Barnard (2016) questions the role of Twitter in transforming the field. The subject of autonomy and habitus in Brazilian newsrooms is interrogated by Filho and Praca (2006). Hovden and Knapsog (2015) examined Norwegian cultural journalists through a Bourdieusian framework.

It is a rich, sometimes complex, framework and many have applied it, literally and metaphorically, to the world of sport (Wien and Dorch, 2018; Souza, 2010; Black, Crabbe & Solomos, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994; Macaloon 1988). These scholars have drawn analogous lines between the French scholar’s theory and sport competition. Soccer, for instance, provides an aptmetaphor to consider fieldwork. For example, the rules governing soccer might be considered doxa. The players, and his or her actions, are governed by a set of rules and habits, or habitus,
particular to the game. In turn, the player’s position in/on the field might be determined by his or her capital such as leadership, strength or finesse. This is an oversimplification, but a useful one to reach a base understanding of Bourdieu’s field theory. Bourdieu himself interrogated sport, notably in “Sport and Social Class” (1978) and “Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste” (Bourdieu, 1986).

In this paper, I take a micro view of the title of a macro work examining Bourdieu – *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Practice of Theory* (1990, eds. Harker, Mahar and Wilkes). For the purpose of this paper, I’m particularly interested in the subtitle of this volume of essays, that is “the practice of theory.” I’m also interested in the theory of practice. I try to embody this in my scholarly endeavors as well as my teaching. Toward that end, in July of 2018, I received a faculty development grant from the National Association of Television Production Executives (NATPE) to return to the field I was trained in and later studied and re-enter the industry. That is, I was to spend three weeks in a professional, working television newsroom, observing and practicing the art and craft of journalism. This was a rare opportunity to practice what I preach. I instruct Journalism and Media studies courses for undergraduates at the University of Northern Colorado in skills, history, and law. Attendant with each of these courses are readings grounded in theory, which I then ask students to synthesize and apply to varying assignments.

The “old-guy internship, as I dubbed it, was also a hands on opportunity to investigate what is for me one of Bourdieu’s most particularly intriguing quotes: “The most steadfast (and, in my eyes, the most important) intention guiding my work has been to overcome the opposition between objectivism and subjectivism” (1989, 15). Is that binary, that tension, reconcilable in the field of journalism in the work produced daily by a television news station? Is the cornerstone disciplinary notion of objectivity idea or ideal? I approached these questions, among others, (who are the agents?; who sets the terms?) when I temporarily joined the small-market staff of a Northern Plains newsroom. In the United States, there are 210 distinct news markets, known as Designated Market Areas; these are based on the population of the area that the news station serves. The particular market I was in comes in very near market 200. To be clear, I was there not as an ethnographer but as a participant observer whose job it was to survey the contemporary state of the field. As such, my reflections in this paper are not to be viewed as a case study, rather they are an attempt to use a Bourdieusean framework to organize my understanding of my observations. Nor may these observations be necessarily applied to other newsrooms. I was particularly situated in a small newsroom during a particular time with a particular perspective.

**Objectivity**

Many trace the advent of objectivity in journalism to the early 20th Century. Others, including Schudson (2001), believe the notion began to coalesce in the late 19th Century in part as a reaction to yellow journalism. Schudson (1978) also cites the notion of “radical subjectivism,” a fraught position derived between the tension of an unaccountable/unreliable press and the burgeoning field of psychology. Recapping Schudson’s argument, Nerone (2012) writes
Objectivity emerged out of this conflict of antitheses. It recognized the irreducible subjectivity of the journalist, and the artificial nature of news, but proposed that news might yet be rendered meaningfully objective if journalists accepted the responsibility of policing their own values and separating them out from their newwork (2013).

According to Keith and Thornton (2017), a number of factors were at play in this rise of reportorial impartiality. They attribute this rise of objectivity to include “a decline in the power of political parties to which newspapers had been beholden; a reaction to excesses of press agentry; the invention of the telegraph … and a commercial impulse to sell to readers of all political persuasions” (2). Also, then as now, a consolidation of newspapers took place meaning each city had fewer news outlets. Not wanting to offend or alienate potential readership, a move toward the center held sway at many former partisan newspapers. And, any discussion of press objectivity must include the views of Lippman (1931) who believed once the press was “freed” from the pernicious control of politicos and big business, that it might adequately and fairly deploy its mission. This mission was to be carried out by professionals trained in objective journalism. Whenever and wherever it first surfaced, it was a lofty ideal. To this day it remains such; an aspirational quality that is baked into the DNA of journalism study and practice. For many, it is a myth. If one were to enter the search term “myth of journalistic objectivity,” they would be met with well over 350 thousand results. In a New York Times article, Taibbi (2015) writes ‘Opinion can’t be extracted from reporting. The only question is whether or not it’s hidden. Everything journalists do is a subjective editorial choice, from the size of headlines to the placement of quotes and illustrations.” In fact, when the Society for Professional Journalists’ revised its Code of Ethics in 1996, it eliminated the word objectivity from its text.

Yet, news production units doggedly hold on to this ideal whilst the news mediascape has undergone radical change. Practices, policies, and politics have evolved. So, too, has the field, doxa, and habitus. In the face of such radical change, any number of conflating factors may compromise objectivity and, in fact, inform ideological biases. I would like to examine Bourdieu’s field theory and the ways in which it intersects with journalistic newsroom practice beginning with the field and exploring resulting ramifications. If objectivity is the linchpin of the field of journalism, how does it interface with the subjective nature of the workplace? With particular consideration for this field, I question who defines objectivity and how. It is a Lockean, epistemological quandary.

Field

Bourdieu did not find the reconciliation of objective (the field) and subjective (habitus) as incommensurate. He, in fact, often posited seeming polarities as being an and/both scenario rather than one of exclusion or primacy; he created bridges between dichotomies in theory and practice. For Bourdieu, the field is

A network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field as well as their objective relation to other positions (Wacquant, 1989, 39).
Agents’ positions (and alignments) within the field are embedded in the social, cultural, or symbolic capital they carry. At the news station I observed, capital (and its hierarchical manifestations) was on display; everything from wardrobe to wisdom can be considered capital in a newsroom. Small market news is the starting point for many beginning their journalistic careers and so, for the most part, everyone begins with little to no professional experience. It should be a level playing field, but it’s not.

Capital, then, becomes a way to stand out from the crowd — it is a way to advance beyond the small market. There are various types of capital: social, cultural and so forth. In today’s newsroom, awash in new technologies, being tech savvy can be considered capital. Leveraging capital, then, can advance burgeoning careers. Typically, the employees sign a two-year contract; many move along prior to that time frame. Of the eleven on-air employees that shared the workspace when I was there in July 2018, just four remain less than one year later. One who remains received no formal college training. One who left holds a journalism degree from Vanderbilt University. One who remains is a fixture at the station, having started her career there as a high school intern. She has lived her entire life in the state. One who left is a former Miss America contestant and professional body builder. One who remained is quite near her childhood hometown and has an extensive network of family and friends in the market where she works. Another who left has travelled internationally acting the part of a Disney princess in public performance.

So, a dynamic fuels, feeds and fills the newsroom, or, in a larger sense, the field of journalism. There is, generally, a move toward a goal, a concerted effort to ascend the hierarchy to gain power. And, too, there is, by necessity, overlap in fields.

In the course of this process, various domains, occupations and groups are led to codify their functioning. More precisely, for Bourdieu a field is a relatively autonomous domain of activity that responds to rules of functioning and institutions that are specific to it and which define the relations among the agents. Each field has its specific rules (Hilgers and Mangez, 2015, 5).

This is especially true in journalism wherein its agents must, in order to produce content/culture, intersect with agents in other fields such as the law or politics, environmentalists and engineers.

Overlap, then, can decrease autonomy as one agent in a field is beholden to another to provide content/culture. However, in Bourdieu’s eyes, journalism’s autonomy, where it exists, is compromised by any number of factors as he detailed in On Television (1996).

The journalistic field brings to bear on the different fields of cultural production a group of effects whose form and potency are linked to its own structure, that is, to the position of various media and journalists with respect to their autonomy vis-à-vis external forces, namely, the twin markets of readers and advertisers … It is clear that the authorities, the government in particular, influence the media not only through the economic pressure that they bring to bear, but also through their monopoly on legitimate information—government sources are the most obvious example. First of all, this monopoly provides governmental authorities (juridical, scientific, and other authorities as much as the police) with weapons for manipulating the news or those in charge of transmitting it (68-9).
Through my observations in the newsroom with reporters, anchors, and producers I can attest to these external pressures, among others, that are chiefly and overwhelmingly economic. Also, to my eyes, the reliance on such institutions i.e. law enforcement, particularly in a small market, in part compromises objectivity. I witnessed city officials (both police and emergency responders) stonewall reporters and evade direct questioning on occasion. There is decidedly an imbalance of power in the press-government dynamic that subverts the notion of hearing both sides of the story, otherwise known as reportorial objectivity.

For all its hope and promise, objectivity has been compromised by the unparalleled revolution in media industries including, particularly, the development of social media platforms and delivery systems. In an era where anyone and everyone can have a platform (blog, podcast, website, live-stream access, etc.) to espouse, the notion of one to many (broadcast) is archaic. There are, indeed, new logics in the field as Dourado et al. (2019) note in espousing the radically changing political economy(ies) of journalistic practice.

The vast volume of information available, the possibility of becoming a content producer and the speed of the exchange process, almost instantaneous, allows the establishment of new logics of production and consumption of journalism, highlighting issues from the survival of the traditional press to ethical issues related to content being produced (9).

Of course, that’s a subjective (if not demonstrable) theoretical position, and it’s worth noting Bourdieu’s insistence upon self-reflexivity in research. His Pascalian Meditations (2000) and The Weight of the World (1999) speak directly to concepts of perspectivism and reflexivity. My positionally and reflexivity is a particular component of my method. And, while I’ve already qualified this paper as not ethnography in intent, I certainly brought biases and, to be sure, privilege, to my observations. I, in fact, operated within and without a *habitus* (informed by direct experience and advanced training/education) that particularly colors and qualifies my observations. As Bourdieu notes

> The world encompasses me (*me comprend*) but I comprehend it (*je le comprends*) precisely because it comprises me. It is because this world has produced me, because it has produced the categories of thought that I apply to it, that it appears to me as self-evident (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, 128).

I am a product of a particular race, religion, and culture set in a particular place and time. My observation of practices in the newsroom and news gathering in the field are undoubtedly biased by my positionality. This autobiographical turn informs my observations.

**Observing the Observer: Subjectivity**

Here I would like to address my positionally as I approached the three-week in-residence opportunity. I came to academia later in life; I was in my 50s when I completed my Doctorate in Journalism and Media Studies. But my passion for the profession began as a child. I was a news junkie from an early age, watching Walter Cronkite each night and perusing the local daily
newspaper as soon as I was able to read. I was always going to be a journalist (either that or a veterinarian, or a military member, or a minister). Obviously, I went the journalistic route, and after receiving a degree in the discipline, gained extensive experience as a print journalist. I worked for a large, regional daily newspaper, then moved into a freelance capacity to write for magazines. I wrote about everything: arts, fashion, and entertainment related. Timing is critical here, so I should note the most active years of my career were from the mid 1980s to the late 1990s when I returned to graduate school. (I wanted to understand what all those piles of words I’d expended really meant and to get closer to the core and the essence of what I’d been writing about for so many years, so I went to work on a Masters in Art History.)

I caution my Media History students about engaging in presentism, that is looking at the past through a lens of the contemporary. However, this era, and how and where I was situated within it, inform my perspective. The daily newspaper that I worked at during this period was awash in cash. The staff included a separate investigative unit, an aircraft that could be used to dispatch reporters to breaking news events across the country, teeming photographic and graphics units, specialized reporting including staff food reviewer, visual arts critic, and classical music writer. In this milieu, I learned my craft. This was a particular era of normative journalistic practice. It doesn’t exist anymore. Deuze (2017) describes a “post-industrial” journalism.

Working in this environment demands journalists today to be committed well beyond what any profession could ask for – without most of the securities, comforts, and benefits enjoyed by being a member of a profession. Journalists are expected to reskill, deskill, and upskill their practices and working routines, generally without any direct say in the way the organizations they engage with operate. In doing so, they vulnerably move inside and outside of newsrooms and news organizations large and small, trying to both make a difference and to make ends meet in an exceedingly competitive market (176).

When I was in the market, as a features and arts writer, I had the luxury of time to report and develop stories. I also had the safety net of three levels of editing (direct editor, section editor, copy desk), which afforded me protection and helped me become a better writer. Experience and savvy and my physical stature (I’m a large, white, male human) accorded me access to areas and people generally off limits to general publics. More life events unfolded, including writing, forays into the fine arts world, and several moves around the country, before I eventually returned to the University of Oregon to get my PhD, the institution I started at some 30 years prior.

I currently live in Boulder County, Colorado. Boulder, 15 minutes south of my home, is only half-jokingly referred to as the People’s Republic of Boulder for its extreme left leaning sensibilities (or “blue” in the lexicon of the U.S. political process; right leaning areas are dubbed “red”). The great outdoors, sky scraping mountains, craft beer, and marijuana define the lifestyle. The politics of location where I worked in the newsroom during my “old-guy internship” could not be more antithetical to this stance. In this area, the first bare knuckle fist fight in close to 125 years had been sanctioned. It sold out the venue. The locals pride themselves on their Western heritage; cowboys still roam the ranges there and farmers till the soil. It is most emphatically, a Red State. These are just some of the factors that inform me as an essential part of the research process, that is my positionality governs my process as a data collector. And so this is the background, which
informed the subject/object binary that I brought into a newsroom some 30 years later. As Kenway and McLeod (2004) note in questioning “whose reflexivity?” (526)

It has become somewhat of an imperative, a doxa of post-positivist educational research that the researcher situate themselves, 'own' their investments and constructions in the research process and in the production of both meaning and 'partial' truths.

I acknowledge this reflexive process and my place within it.

My Reflexivity

In a colossal understatement, things in newsrooms have changed. I brought what Bourdieu (1977) would call my present past to the contemporary arena. As such, I found myself in a field that I could not reconcile with objectivity. The logics and logistics of the doxa, writ large habitus, of the newsroom rules out that possibility. There are any number of intervening factors contributing to this. Firstly, we might think of the digital revolution that so devastated the print industry by shrinking its enormous advertising revenues. The one-time monopolistic position it held, that of unilateral communication, has been supplanted by a plethora of avenues for voices to be heard (Undurraga, 2016; Wahl-Jorgensen, et al. 2016; Franklin 2014).

Likewise, the definitive authority broadcast television news once had has been eroded by similar voices; there are now seemingly limitless resources to receive and interact with news.

And, what is news? That’s the topic for another paper that might interrogate changing ideas of content. (Harcup and O’Neil, 2016 address this topic with their update of Galtung and Ruges, 1965 taxonomy of news values.) However, the rejoinder of the term “fake news” has become deafening; without regard for definition clinical or otherwise, consumers are inherently skeptical of what they see, hear and read because of this multitude in the mediasphere. What is a journalist? Again, that’s a topic for another paper and for argument, but the advent of citizen journalism, “expert” bloggers and vloggers, the 24/7 news cycle, the immediacy of social media, and the introduction of a never-ending onslaught of technical innovation have had a tremendous influence on the conditions of traditional journalistic habitus. Scholars, notably Wilmatt et al. (2019), Deuze (2017), Hellmueller and Mellado (2015), have interrogated this question: who and what is a journalist? Though they circle the subject in different fashion, these scholars recognize the contemporary newsroom makeup (gender, ethnicity and sheer number of employees) has been shaped by developing technologies which have shaped discourse and occupational ideologies. Or, one might ask more broadly, what is the field of journalism? Bourdieu (1977) has a definition for the formation of a field.

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g., the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to serve as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of
the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor (p. 72).

Though “durable,” Navarro (2006) notes that “habitus can be modified in various situations or over long periods of time” (p. 16). Inside the contemporary newsroom I observed, structures and practices have changed; the building blocks of storytelling are not concrete, rather they are fluid, because of rapid revolution of technologies and economic forces in the field.

Bourdieu’s notion of “structuring structures” (1977), the basis of the field’s formation, is bold and compelling but not tenable in contemporary practice. Rather, the reconstituted field is defined by the exigencies of speed and doing more with less. As I tell my Media History students, the speed of change has changed. Papacharissi et al. (2013) has a more nuanced and graceful way of expressing this.

What I think happens is that a certain graduality embedded within the notion of a habitus, the graduality that affords continuity the opportunity to reconcile change, is itself accelerated. So the reflexivity of the habitus that permits meaning making processes is augmented. This accelerated reflexivity is both sustained and remediated via a habitus of the new; a set of dispositions that are invited and regenerated via a state of permanent novelty. (p. 600)

“Permanent novelty” and objectivity are mutually exclusive based on the production of culture I witnessed and that is chiefly because of the pace of production.

Observing (Quickly) News Production

I filled several pages of a daily work diary with observations during my time at the station. They detail specific instances in which that objective ideal — getting both sides of the story — were compromised because of mandates on how journalists utilized their work time. The one-person-band variety of producing reports for television news is widespread even at larger news organizations. In this scenario, a reporter is responsible for coordinating interviews, conducting the interview, and memorializing that process with complementary audio and video, which they edit. At minimum, reporters were expected to turn two packages a day, use those packages to record VO-SOTS (video voice over by the broadcast anchor that includes a sound bite from an interviewee), post three news items to social media, rewrite their stories for the channel’s webpage, and do live shots (or go live anytime on Facebook for breaking news) when and where appropriate.

On numerous occasions I noted in my journal that the product suffered as a result of time and staffing. As a group-owned station, management frowns strongly upon overtime. A couple of notes about staffing: as previously mentioned the talent is young and at this time the station was engaged in a search for a new employee. As a result of being down one staff person some stories were either ignored or scantily reported. For instance, a story about a local policeman who had discharged his weapon during a public event several days prior was met with resistance by a police spokesperson. What may have been a more substantive story, was turned into a much smaller one
in order for it to make it to air in a “timely” fashion. Pressing the police for information in a small town does not come without drawbacks. In my short time, various news staff met with this public information officer on numerous occasions. On each occasion, they were beholden to the “authority” for information, obviously compromising autonomy.

In another instance, when a gubernatorial candidate did not return telephone calls from a reporter, she was left out of the “equal time” scenario accorded to all candidates because the piece had to air on schedule. Time is the enemy is the unspoken refrain in this newsroom. As one reporter told me about a story she rushed to get on air, “It’s a shit package because it’s a shit story.” Time is not the only enemy, a lack of bodies compounds this problem. Anecdotally, one day a number of phone calls come in to the newsroom in rapid succession. “There’s something floating in the sky. What is it?” The object turned out to be a balloon from an auto dealer’s eye-catching display. Reporting on this may stretch the limited of how news is defined, yet the community clearly was interested. The incident went unreported.

Another instance of a shoddy product being aired occurred when a news story involving some controversy took place about an hour’s drive from the station. By the time the drive, the setup and breakdown of equipment, the interview, the shooting of b-roll, and the return drive took place, there was little time for the story to make it to air because the news director decided, after the fact, the piece would benefit from person-on-the-street reactions. Given that this story had taken place in another community, no-one in the station’s home locality had interest in speaking on camera. Instead the reporter, a former student of mine, went to the station’s Facebook comments and turned some of the reactions into a graphic to accompany the story. Enterprising? Yes. Good journalism? Probably not. Again, time was too limited in order to present a balanced account of the story.

As mentioned, time and space (in print media) are the great enemy of journalistic endeavor; there never seems to be enough. These are the norms of the field. According to Bourdieu (1984)

_Habitus_ is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these (170).

I would suggest — because the speed of change has changed — that this is not interplay on an equal basis. Current conditions, economic and political, have altered this commingling in favor of the newsmakers, not the story tellers. Newsrooms can’t keep up as they inherently (and increasingly) lack economic autonomy. They are beholden to viewers (via ratings and often representation) and to advertisers because of the need for fiscal capital. The field has shifted so fast that _doxa_ and _habitus_ have become compromised and at odds with the ideals journalism continues to espouse. Though more of a critique of content than the field at large, Bourdieu (1996) offers of broadcast news: “What is certain is the connection between thought and time. And one of the major problems posed by television is that question of the relationships between time and speed. Is it possible to think fast?” (28).
In my experience, I discovered it is possible to think fast, but speedy synaptic firing led time and again to an inferior product; audio was poor, shots were visually composed haphazardly, interviews were too brief and not penetrating, the idea of story was abandoned, rather a recitation of “fact” passed for narrative, context was not provided to aid viewer understanding, a consistent graphics style and look seldom eventuated. If, as I’ve noted, the speed of change has changed, the ability to match it has not kept apace. Engrained behaviors and practices from an industry in revolution die slowly. Bourdieu, (19960 in a prescient sense described this

This means that journalists-the day laborers of everyday life-can show us the world only as a series of unrelated flash photos. Given the lack of time, and especially the lack of interest and information (research and documentation are usually confined to reading articles that have appeared in the press), they cannot do what would be necessary to make events (say, an outbreak of violence in a high school) really understandable, that is, they cannot reinsert them in a network of relevant relationships (such as the family structure, which is tied to the job market, itself tied to governmental hiring policies, and so on) (7).

To be sure, there still exists vestiges of a history in the industry that has changed so radically as to be almost unrecognizable. These include the quaint notion that news will happen on schedule and, thusly, will be reported on a schedule that allows for a morning show, a noon show, an evening show, and a late night show and the co-equal (misguided) notion that audiences will tune in to pre-selected time frames for pre-selected durations. The cobwebs might similarly be dusted off the journalistic dictum that reporters report the news, not become it. No “diva behavior” was tolerated at the news station I observed; that was a stipulation from the top down. But, in today’s mediascape, outsize personalities dominate discourse; outspoken opinion stars garner the most eyeballs. It is, of course, a way to stand out above the chorus of voices all singing the same song at the same time. Theirs is not an even-handed relating or a just-the-facts presentation; it is decidedly personality (or subjectively) driven. Scambler (2015) notes “People’s representations, in turn, affect objective structures” (para. 1). Are facts — the journalists’ supposed stock in trade — objective structures? Such a topical discussion must examine contemporary historicities and fundamental epistemological underpinnings and, importantly, involve field research, interviews, surveys, and data science. Science? For scientists, facts are the limitations of interpretation and that, interpretation scientifically derived, may as close as we come to objective facts.

“Real” Objectivity

What can be properly quantified is particular newsroom data. By this I mean what is the demographic, ethnic, or financial makeup of those who constitute the field? In my most recent newsroom experience, no people of color were employed station-wide (on air talent, advertising sales, administrative, technical and managerial positions), and I would place the oldest on-air talent at the station as being ten years my junior. The on-camera staff was comprised of three men and eight women. With the exception of one individual, none had received an advanced degree. (Because of the enormity of student loan debt, this individual delivered pizzas for extra income to augment his wages at the station —$10.10 an hour to begin.) At the time of my placement at the station, I was still white, still a sizable human, and had not had my PhD revoked. None of these attributes necessarily qualifies me to make assertions based on my experience.
However, I do still possess the quality that drives all good journalists and scholars—a sense of curiosity and a keen sense of observation. The aforementioned observations are, to my mind, neutral findings of the things I experienced. But, what is so neutral—so objective—about a big, white guy with a PhD taking notes in a small market newsroom? Objectivity, it turns out, is subjectively defined. There is no reconciliation. Earlier this year, the Oregon Humanities Project hosted a panel of Pulitzer Prize nominees and asked its members about the topic of objectivity. Journalist Inara Verzemnieks responded, echoing the “No diva behavior” I’d heard professed at the station.

Objectivity can sometimes be used as a kind of cudgel, especially for people who come from certain communities. They can be told “you need to be objective,” and what that’s inherently saying is “deny who you are, and deny your identity.” So we really need to think about those various layers.

In response to the panel’s presentation, one attendee noted in Bridgeliner, a community sponsored news organization in Portland, Oregon.

“Objective” is a euphemism for white (and straight). Many regard a panel of American-born white guys talking about immigration as more objective than a panel of women of color and immigrants, because dominant identities are regarded as neutral, as the default. But there is no universal default.

Or, one person’s objectivity is capable of creating subjectivity in another.

Can a trained journalist (the wheres, whys and hows of training can themselves be problematic) “parachute” into a community and objectively deliver universal “truths”? At least three of the employees at the station had strong ties to the area, either being native born or having spent significant time in the area. Might their political leanings more closely align—or might they know how to cater to those leanings by virtue of familiarity—with those of the members of the community at large when reporting “objectively”? Can we objectively give shape, form, and meaning to an idea of neutrality without regard for the complexities and heterogeneous nature of gender identity, race, economic stature, upbringing, religion? After my time at the station came to an end, an African American reporter was added to the staff. Was this person’s objectivity aligned with the 3.5% who identify as African American in this community or the 87% that identify as white?

Schiller considers objectivity polysemic and “open to different activations” (Maras, 2013). Writes Schiller (1981), “(Objectivity’s) universality as an ideal might shield open disparities in its application and interpretation” (196). Our own subjective episteme limits our knowledge and our capacities to know objective reality in and of itself and, therefore, precludes journalists from embracing it except as an ideal. Bourdieu wrote On Television close to 25 years ago; he couldn’t have imagined the sea change that has swept the industry. Few did. He did, however, concede that some media institutions (he only examined French outlets) held a particular sort of power in shaping public sentiment. He recognized that a dominant media outlet is capable of distorting the
space around itself and imposing its own views on the field (Marliére, 2000). Objectivity is rarely commensurate with enabling public sentiment.

By his own accord, Bourdieu seems to admit this; “The simple report, the very fact of reporting, of putting on record as a reporter, always implies a social construction of reality that can mobilize (or demobilize) individuals or groups” (1996, p. 21). This statement is antithetical to the very notion of objectivity and and yet is manifest in the partisan news brands MSNBC and FOX News. Dedicated audiences (and student journalists) who have a passing understanding of objectivity as a central to the profession, look to those respective news programming operations as, perhaps, embodying that ideal. Herein lies an untenable tension for journalists because pleasing viewers (via ratings) does matter; advertising dollars fund their salaries.

And so, when a slightly disheveled gentleman approached a reporter and myself while we were working a house fire story, we both greeted him amiably. His response was to inform us that the network affiliation of the station’s acronym (CBS) stood for the “Communist Broadcast System.” He was clearly not a CBS fan. Should the reporter construct the story for this (non)viewer or with someone else in mind? It’s enough to give a journalist pause about what they’re doing, to reflect on the economy, culture, and attitude of its viewership.

Bourdieu (2000) expresses this dilemma, though through his sociological lens. “The sociologist might seem to be threatened with a kind of schizophrenia in as much as he is condemned to speak of historicity and relativity in a discourse that aspires to universality and objectivity” (93). Journalists experience that threat each day on the job. The interplay of agency (or lack thereof) and Bourdieu’s “structuring structures” is fractured because socialized norms (or habitus) are an ever-changing target. In a microcosm with such rapidly changing technologies and discourse(s) — conflated by extremist partisan ideologies and economies with varying degrees of capital and attention — objectivity will forever remain an unobtainable ideal. But perhaps I’m holding on to something, an ideal, a credo, that is misinformed or misaligned with contemporary news gathering practice. Perhaps journalism is in the midst of what Kuhn (1962) would call a paradigmatic shift, though it feels more like a drift or being adrift, meandering between spaces and places on a path of Renaissance or perhaps ruin for the field.

About the Author

David Staton is an Assistant Professor at the University of Northern Colorado’s Journalism and Media Studies program. His area of research includes visual communication, particularly depictions of health and wellness, digital-age ethics, and the critical examination of sport. He’s also a documentary film maker, with two feature-length, festival toured documentaries, “Homefront Heroines” and “Pin Up The Movie.”
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Countering “Othering” through Media Classes: Teaching Empathy in an International Collaborative Online Learning Project

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Abstract:
This study explores how undergraduate students’ participation in an international collaborative online learning project affects students’ ability to empathize with their international counterparts and serves to counter “othering,” as the concept is understood in intercultural and postcolonial theories. A case study methodology in an evaluative application was employed to assess this project’s influence on the students’ ability to empathize with their international counterparts, and to gather students’ and instructors’ perceptions of and attitudes toward this two-month-long project between a journalism/media class at a university in Lebanon and a similar class in the United States. Using a combination of Deardorff’s Intercultural Competence Model (2006, 2009) and Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993) as its theoretical framework, it drew on both quantitative and qualitative data about the students’ experience, including reflection essays, post-experience surveys and comments, and teacher observations. Findings indicate that students who participated in this interactive online communication with international counterparts appear to have had an increase in their ability to empathize across cultures. They also show that students perceive an improvement in their intercultural empathy and have positive attitudes about participation in the project. Although, the findings are based on quantitative and qualitative procedures, they only focused on a single case study involving a limited number of participants, which limits the validity of the results.

Keywords: empathy; othering; intercultural competence; collaborative online international learning; virtual exchange.

Introduction

The media “is our principal lens on reality beyond our direct line of vision” (Rosenblum, 2007). Consequently, international news coverage has considerable influence on perceptions of people of other nations and cultures. Yet, traditional international news has a long history of “othering,” identified in intercultural and postcolonial theories as “a process of identity formation that defines a social group in terms of radical otherness” (Conti, 2018). Western news media have been found to “other” non-Western societies, particularly through the frame of a “clash of civilizations” (Triandafyllidou, 2013), a notion popularized by political scientist Samuel Huntington in an article in Foreign Affairs (1993) and a book (1996). Media portrayals and Western audience perceptions of Middle Eastern ethnic groups have also been influenced by a type of othering called “Orientalism” (Said, 1978), a colonial vision in which “Eastern countries are placed in a distant symbolic space, unhealthy and pathological compared to the West, which is considered the normative center of the world” (Conti, 2018). At the same time, the images of Americans in Arab
media are increasingly negative in response to what are widely considered unjust United States foreign policies (Galal et al., 2008).

Finding ways to counter the effects of othering is an urgent matter. Forced migration brings more people from different parts of the world into direct contact than ever before (UNHCR, 2018). Yet, even when not meeting face to face, in our globalized world, “humans are increasingly drawn together spatially and structurally via film, politics, Internet, worldwide television, iPods, iTunes, blogs, chat rooms, dating Web sites, and other forms of media and technology” (Calloway-Thomas, 2010). Consequently, preparing students to be global citizens with intercultural communication skills and cultural sensitivity has become “an important task of higher education” (Wang, 2011).

Some scholars suggest the best way to prepare students for inevitable encounters with people of diverse backgrounds is to help them develop empathy, “the ability to experience the feelings of another, or metaphorically ‘put oneself in the shoes’ of another” (Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012). Yet, empathy among American university students declined 48 percent from 1979 to 2009 (Konrath et al., 2011) and this phenomenon appears to be a worldwide trend. In fact, we are living in what the World Economic Forum’s Global Risks Report calls “the age of anger,” characterized by political polarization and social sorting into hardened group identities (2019).

The emergence of interactive media presents a potentially valuable counterforce to the stereotyping and othering occurring in mainstream news media, especially when used in an educational setting. Yet there is little empirical evidence to help us understand if—and perhaps even more important, how—online international communication impacts students’ ability to empathize across cultures. Likewise, although educators have applied technology to increase students’ cross-cultural exposure for at least three decades, more guidance is needed about how to conduct successful online cross-cultural collaborations (Wang, 2011).

This research explores a pedagogical approach to teaching empathy through international online interactive communication. It offers a case study in an evaluative application to assess the effectiveness of one international collaborative online learning project. The two-month-long project, conducted in the 2018 Fall semester between an undergraduate university journalism/media class in Lebanon and a similar class in the United States, aimed to counter othering through direct, student-to-student, online communication. Its primary focus is to observe the project’s impact on students’ empathy with their international counterparts, and to explore the potential of such projects as tools for increasing empathy and understanding across cultures. It also includes students’ perceptions and teacher observations of the project’s effectiveness.

In the following review of the literature, we consider key studies on the role of empathy in intercultural communication and traditional ways it has been taught in higher education. Next, we review studies examining the effects of online collaborative learning on the development of intercultural empathy in undergraduate students. After examining the relevant literature, we posit research questions, describe the project under study and present the findings and discussion of our case study, which suggest that students who participate in internationally collaborative online learning projects can experience an increase in their empathy with their international counterparts.
Literature Review

Teaching empathy

The importance of empathy in intercultural communication is well established in the literature. Empathy has been identified as a requisite internal frame of reference for effective and appropriate intercultural communication (Deardorff, 2006). It has been called “the crucible of intercultural relations. Empathy helps us to understand people whose values, views and behaviors are different from our own” (Calloway-Thomas, 2010).

It is considered especially important in the education of future journalists who will play key roles in interpreting cultural differences between groups. Empathy has been found to be a “core skill” for journalists, without which “qualitative and ethical news journalism cannot be achieved; and the authenticity and emotionality of news packages would be diminished” (Gluck, 2016).

The literature also indicates that empathy must be intentionally taught if we are to graduate empathetic human beings who are effective intercultural communicators (Deardorff, 2006). A traditional method of teaching intercultural empathy is through study-abroad or service learning programs. Learning within a group that belongs to another culture and that has different perspectives is shown to improve students’ critical thinking skills, skills of self-reflection, and construction of knowledge and meaning (Brindley, Walti, & Blaschke, 2009). International experience is found to be a tremendously powerful influence on students, shifting their perception of the other as they explore new cultures and investigate new outlooks (Keller, T., & Hodge, A., 2016). Interactive engagement with other cultures is widely understood to be an opportunity to develop empathy, as well as other skills and attitudes necessary for intercultural competence (Byram, M., Gribkova, B., & Starkey, H., 2002). Deardorff also finds that “it is important to understand that intercultural learning is transformational learning, which requires experiences (often beyond the classroom) that lead to this transformation …” (Deardorff, 2011).

The development of communication technology, including teleconferencing, social media, online discussion boards and the like, has led educators to explore alternatives to study-abroad and service-learning experiences that would be accessible to more students. Consequently, higher education institutions are exploring pedagogical approaches that increase international engagement through collaborative online learning (Marcillo-Gómez et al., 2016). In 2017, the European Union’s Erasmus+, the EU’s program to support education, launched EVOLVE (Evidence-Validated Online Learning through Virtual Exchange), which aims to mainstream “virtual exchange,” another name for collaborative online international learning (Jager et al., 2019). Likewise, the American Council on Education has worked with numerous U.S. institutions of higher education in articulating global learning outcomes that include intercultural competence. Therefore, assessing various measures of intercultural competence has become a necessity in higher education as postsecondary institutions “seek to graduate global-ready students” (Deardorff, 2011).

Assessing the development of intercultural empathy in international online learning

International collaborative learning is happening today in wide-ranging fields in the sciences and the humanities, although it is not yet widespread. However, it has been employed as a pedagogical
tool in foreign language education for almost 25 years and “since then, there has been a proliferation of research publications which have explored” its potential benefits” (Lewis & O’Dowd, 2016). In his forward to Online Intercultural Exchange: Policy, Pedagogy, Practice, a comprehensive overview of online international exchange in university education, Steven Thorne summarizes the current state of research on online intercultural exchange (OIE): “Research has demonstrated that participants in OIE activities undergo substantial shifts in cultural openness (Bruneau & Saxe, 2012), become more adept at intercultural communication with international collaborators (O’Dowd, 2006), gain experience with diverse and globally distributed worldviews (Helm, Guth, & Farrah, 2012) and build academic and interpersonal relationships of significance that can extend beyond the immediacy of OIE activities themselves (Thorne, 2003) (Thorne, 2016). However, as Helm observes, “One area where it seems to fall short … is in the development of critical cultural awareness and deeper levels of intercultural understanding (Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Lewis & O’Dowd, 2016; Ware & Kramsch, 2005).

Language educators recognize the importance of the intercultural dimension in language learning, “the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways” (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002) and see empathy, both cognitive and affective, as a critical component (Chen, 2013). Still, little is known about the role of international online learning on its development.

Numerous case studies highlight the potential of international online learning for teaching empathy. For example, a case study of a 2012 online collaboration between history classes at the American University of Beirut and the University of North Carolina-Greensboro found students appreciated the opportunity to learn from others directly as opposed to learning about them (COIL Institute Case Studies, 2012). This direct exchange creates the opportunity for students to develop empathy by encountering views from the international partners’ perspectives.

The question, says Deardorff, is “Will the learning perpetuate stereotypes or will it open students to be more appropriate and effective in their views about an engagement with other people, especially those who differ from them?” (2016). Intercultural communication is complex and multiple factors affect its success or failure. While there is widespread agreement on the importance of teaching intercultural empathy, educators call for further exploration of how to teach it (Chen, 2013).

Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

**RQ1:** Do internationally collaborative online projects increase a student’s ability to recognize the cultural values and feelings of other groups?

**RQ2:** What are the perceived contributions of the project to students’ ability to empathize across cultures?

**RQ3:** Do such projects change or broaden students’ perceptions of their international counterparts?
RQ4: What are students’ attitudes about participating in internationally collaborative online projects?

RQ5: What benefits, if any, do students perceive from participating in such projects?

Project Under Study

In the Fall semester of 2018, the Key Pal Project connected 12 journalism students from Marquette University in the United States and 17 from Notre Dame University in Lebanon through Facebook for two months of online discussions about culture and media coverage of current events. Students engaged in small group online discussions about culture, their environments, activities and opinions through videos, photos and text. They also participated in large group online discussions on current events with the purpose of comparing media coverage and perceptions in their respective countries.

Meanwhile, students learned about intercultural competence, including the skill of empathy and its importance to those working in international journalism. They also considered stereotypes, media framing and the effects of news narratives on their perceptions of each other. At the project’s conclusion, students wrote reflection essays on the experience and participated in a survey about the project.

The main collaborative activities consisted of:

1. The Key Pal Project, where they get to know other members of a small, online group with the goal of discovering similarities and differences they have with their international group members in lifestyle, culture and circumstances.

2. The Current Event Discussion Forum, where they share their analyses of the coverage of current events and compare/contrast the coverage they are seeing. They considered news coverage about the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi specifically and about stereotyping and other misrepresentations in current event coverage generally. They were also asked to consider how their own cultural background, experiences and perceptions of media affect their interpretations of the news, as well as why the news coverage itself may differ from the coverage of the same events in the international partner’s country.

3. Reflection Essays, where students address their perceptions of the online experiences and reflect on the influence of these experiences on their cross-cultural perceptions, worldviews, and developments in their own intercultural competence and empathy.

Methodology

This research employs a case study methodology in an evaluative application to assess the effectiveness of an internationally collaborative online learning project in fostering intercultural empathy. It draws on both quantitative and qualitative data about the students’ experience, including reflection essays, post-experience surveys and comments, and teacher observations. The data is examined at the level of the individual (the learning that occurs for each participant). This
holistic case study methodology has been found to be very suitable for studying individuals, institutions and programs (Yin, 2002).

**Theoretical framework**

This research uses the Association of American Colleges & Universities’ Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE Rubric to systematically measure students’ “capacity to identify (their own) cultural patterns, compare and contrast them with others, and adapt empathically and flexibly to unfamiliar ways of being” (Association of American Colleges & Universities). The rubric is informed by two models: Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993) and Deardorff’s Process Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006, 2009). It identifies six of the key components of intercultural knowledge and competence, one of which is the skill of empathy.

For each component, the rubric describes four levels of proficiency. The levels of proficiency for the skill of empathy are:

**Benchmark (1):** Views the experience of others but does so through own cultural worldview.

**Milestone (2):** Identifies components of other cultural perspectives but responds in all situations with own worldview.

**Milestone (3):** Recognizes intellectual and emotional dimensions of more than one worldview and sometimes uses more than one worldview in interactions.

**Capstone (4):** Interprets intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview and demonstrates ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.

_Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (1) level performance._

**Rationale for focus on empathy**

The authors of this study focused only on empathy (rather than intercultural competence) for several reasons:

1) Scholars have invested more than five decades in developing the concept of intercultural competence and there is still no consensus on the terminology. In research aimed to reach a consensus among intercultural experts on a definition of intercultural competence, Deardorff found they agreed on only one aspect … the ability to see from others’ perspectives,” i.e. the ability to empathize (2011).

2) Deardorff advises that “it is best to prioritize specific aspects of intercultural competence based on the overall mission, goals, and purpose of the course or program” (Deardorff, 2011). Since an important goal of this class project was to develop cross-cultural empathy, it is an appropriate focus for this study.
3) Deardorff stresses the importance of assessing “manageable portions,” which she says, “means starting with one or two clearly stated intercultural competence learning outcomes” and designing “an assessment package around those outcomes” (2011).

4) This study hypothesizes that the development of empathy through collaborative online international learning dispels stereotypes and other effects of “othering.”

**Qualitative procedures**

A qualitative case study method was employed in which the researchers followed a thematic approach to analyze students’ reflection essays and survey comments, both submitted at the end of the term. The main themes explored are empathy and perspective-taking as described in the Association of American Colleges & Universities’ Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE Rubric. Students’ reflection essays provide direct measures of learning as examples of student performance. Indirect evidence included students’ comments on surveys and teacher observations, which speak to perceived impacts of the project.

**Quantitative procedures**

The researchers administered a questionnaire in their respective classrooms. The questionnaire utilized a structured survey format (Appendix A). The appropriate informed consent (Appendix B) was obtained prior to each completed survey. Participants took approximately five to ten minutes to complete the questionnaires. They were asked demographic questions, such as native language, age and gender and experience abroad. Then using a Likert-type scale, participants were asked to rate any increase in their level of their interest in, familiarity with, and understanding of the other culture, and if they felt they were better prepared for intercultural communication. The last section of the questionnaire consisted of an open-ended question asking students to describe their attitudes and thoughts about this project.

**Sample**

In total, 24 surveys were filled (12 in each country). The students were between 18 and 24 years old. Seventeen were males and 7 were females.

Of the Marquette University students, 11 were native English speakers and one’s native language was Chinese. Ten of them (83%) had spent some time abroad, while two (17%) had not.

Of the Notre Dame University students, 11 were native Arabic speakers and one’s native language was English. Seven (58%) had traveled abroad, while five (42%) had not.
Whitehead, S., & Zeid, M. B.  WJEC 2019

Survey Results

Half (50%) agreed their interest in learning about the American culture increased during the Key Pal Project. 50 % also agreed they gained new perspectives about their own culture’s rules and biases during the collaboration.

Moreover, 58 % agreed their ability to recognize the feelings of another cultural group increased during the two months of the online communication. Half of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their curiosity about Americans (their culture and values) grew during the two-month exchange of ideas.

66.7% agreed that the project helped them to learn to ask deeper questions about the other.

Around 82% either agreed or strongly agreed this experience made them more interested in initiating discussions with people from different cultures than their own. 58.3% agreed, 25% strongly agreed, 8.3 % were neutral and 8.3% strongly disagreed about the extent to which this experience made them more confident in engaging in cross-cultural communication.

Regarding finding similarities between the Lebanese and American cultures and lifestyles,16.7% strongly agreed, 25% percent agreed, 33% were neutral and 25% disagreed.

66.7% reported finding differences between the two cultures. 50% said they became more open minded and able to conduct successful communication after this project.

66.7% strongly disagreed on not enjoying learning about other cultures. If summed up, approximately 83% of the participants learned a lot by comparing opinions with someone from a different culture.
More than half (58%) agreed that their interest in learning about the Arabic/Lebanese culture increased. A similar amount (58%) also agreed they gained new perspectives about their own culture’s rules and biases during the collaboration.

Moreover, 67% agreed their ability to recognize the feelings of another cultural group increased. 83% of the respondents indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed that their curiosity about Arabs (their culture and values) grew during the two month of exchange of ideas.

66.7% agreed that the project helped them learn to ask deeper questions about the other, while 33.3% of them disagreed.

Around 92% either agreed or strongly agreed that this experience made them more interested in initiating discussions with people from different cultures than their own. 41.7% agreed, 41.7% strongly agreed and 16.7% were neutral that this experience made them more confident in engaging in cross-cultural communication.

Regarding finding similarities in the cultures and lifestyles of the Lebanese and Americans, 16.7% strongly agreed, 66.7% percent agreed and 16.7% were neutral.

100% reported finding differences between the two cultures (50% strongly agreed and 50% agreed). Likewise, 100% reported gaining knowledge about Arabic/Lebanese culture (58.3% strongly agreed and 41.7% agreed).

92% reported that they became more open minded and able to conduct successful intercultural communication after this project (50% strongly agreed, 41.7% agreed and 8.3% were neutral).

66.7% strongly disagreed on not enjoying learning about other cultures. And, finally, 100% of the MU participants reported that they learned a lot by comparing opinions with someone from a different culture (33% strongly agreed and 67% agreed).
Survey Comments

When answering the open-ended question about the benefits of the project, the positive tone was dominant. For instance, one student responded: “If I had a chance to re-experience this project, I would definitely do it. It was a nice experience learning about other cultures and how they live their everyday lives and most importantly we proved that Arabs are not terrorists and they are well educated.” Another noted, “I enjoyed hearing first hand perspectives from the Lebanese students. When we had meaningful conversation, it was very beneficial.” Another commented, “I really enjoyed being able to learn so in depth about a culture I had very little prior exposure to.”

“It helped me a lot in thinking about and understanding a different culture.” Said another: “I have never done a project like this before and I always wanted to, so I am glad that I had the opportunity to do so.” One student noted that “what I found beneficial was talking to other students instead of adults because it was a little easier to relate to each other.”

On the other hand, several students, noted the limitations of communicating through Facebook. “I think it can be difficult to communicate over Facebook because you don’t see how someone is saying something. This can make it hard to understand the intent of what someone is saying,” wrote one. Another more negative view was: “I enjoyed the concept of this project, although I think social media puts limitations on its success. I think there was only so much to say in a post, which is a barrier.” And another added, “Sometimes writing out a deep FB post is hard.”

They all agreed that engaging in real and natural interaction with people from different cultures discloses numerous new facts and ultimately changes perceptions about the others. One said that through the experience, “I learned to recognize the feeling of another cultural group.” Another was pleased to find similarities: “I was actually more interested that we have things in common because it allows you to know that we can share the same things.”

Students’ suggestions included making the project semester-long rather than eight weeks. Several said more time was needed for a meaningful exchange. “It was fun; I just wish it had lasted longer,” one student wrote. "It went a little quick, for me, and because of that, it was too much trying to balance trying to meet our pen-pals as people, and trying to use the relationship to understand their culture. If spread out over a longer period of time, I feel as if I could’ve learned more about them as people first, on a personal basis, and then would have been better able to learn about their culture.”

Another suggestion was to require more visual content. “I think requiring more visual content would improve my experience. I loved learning through video/pictures as well as words.” Another student wrote, “I enjoyed seeing the other class’s videos. My suggestions for improving would be more videos, maybe a Skype chat with them would help us learn more, quicker. Also, we would be able to actually ‘meet’ them better”.

Reflection essays

The Reflection Essays were analyzed to identify themes that relate to proficiency in empathy as defined in the Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Rubric that is based on Deardorf’s and
Bennett’s models. At the Capstone 4 Level, the top level in the rubric, one must be able to interpret intercultural experience from the perspective of one’s own and more than one worldview and demonstrate the ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group. To achieve this, the following sub-skills are necessary: the ability to identify cultural similarities and differences, the awareness of other perspectives and worldviews, and the ability to be supportive of other perspectives and feelings. In addition, it is important that journalism students understand the importance of the skill of empathy for their profession. Comments from the essays have been categorized here under the relevant headings.

**Identifying cultural similarities**

- “We came to realize that we are not as different from them as people after all. The only thing that held our differences is the environment we each live in.”

- Pertaining to the Jamal Khashoggi case: "... when I was reading the Facebook posts, I found out that there was no difference between the humane reaction of the students in America and Lebanon; they all condemned the murder which proves that we are very similar in terms of respecting human life."

- “Our Key Pal project forced us to acknowledge stereotypes we may have about Arabs and to also look at their representations through the media. If we relied only on the second-hand accounts, we would have a violent and negative impression ... However, the project showed that a Lebanese college student isn’t so different from an American one.”

**Awareness of cultural differences**

- “To truly understand another country, we have to go beneath the surface of the iceberg and see what lies underneath.”

- “We were able to connect and begin to understand people that live different lives than us and understand what their culture is like and what shapes their realities. It was our first step at seeing what lies outside of our own caves.”

- “Lebanese folk do not celebrate Halloween. I never realized that America could be the only country that annually celebrates this holiday. It made me question what other holidays do Lebanese not celebrate that Americans do? Maybe Americans don’t celebrate certain holidays that Lebanese annually do. Even though this is a surface level example, it hints at the fact that there are probably much more intense differences between our cultures and many other cultures around the world.”

**Awareness of influences on perspectives and worldviews**

- “Whether here or abroad we are all influenced by our news outlets.”

- “Media create a lot of the landscape that we see but it is our duty as citizens or as journalists to do our own research and try to understand why things may be the way they are.”
“Much of the news that we receive in America about the Middle East depicts the area in a very negative light. This causes us to have an entirely negative perception of the Middle East even though these negative characteristics are far from what define the region.”

“Many people are so focused on their own world that they don’t even consider that any place in the world could be so different from the places they are used to.”

“This interaction also made me realize that I’m not culturally advanced and the way I see things is because of my experience in the United States and not because of interactions with other races.”

“When we are worlds away, sometimes the only reality of a story or situation is what we see in the media.”

“Our social construction of reality is created with everything we use to get information from, such as books, professors, the internet, news articles, TV, friends, family, peers and many other sources.”

**Ability to be supportive of other perspectives and feelings**

“We have to ignore our own baggage and biases and try to understand things from a different point of view.”

**The importance of empathy/perspective-taking to journalists**

“As a journalist and a world citizen, I learned to recognize the feeling of another cultural group.”

“In practice, this is the goal of all journalism. Cut through the narratives, the spins, the dull and canned quotes and find out what’s actually going on. It doesn’t matter if it’s covering small town council meetings, NBA franchises, or Amazon business practices; journalism is always about taking what we think we know and confronting it with what we need to learn.”

“To be a successful international reporter, one must first ask what they think they know about a culture, what they think they know about how the world works, and, most importantly, why they have come to think these things.”

“Before reporting on the Khashoggi case, journalists needed to have intercultural competence in order to understand the reality in Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Turkey, and be able to connect those realities to form a truthful story. In Saudi Arabia, there is an issue of access and options, where in the United States, there is an issue of partisanship and a subjective media.”
Faculty observations

Students generally like the opportunity to interact directly with students in another country and approached the project enthusiastically. Some of the small groups were more active than others and that seems to have to do with individual differences among the students (level of interest, willingness to take the initiative to start conversations, openness to sharing information about one’s life, etc.) While a good amount of information was shared about culture, stereotypes and current events, none of the conversations appeared to go to very deep or personal levels about their own lives, probably because of the limited contact time spent or possibly because of never having met face-to-face. This lack of personal revelation or intimate conversation would limit the potential for developing empathy, which requires students to be able to see from the others’ perspective.

One problem observed was the loss of momentum in conversations. One reason for this was the different holiday schedules of the universities. Just as a group began to engage, one side or the other would have a long lag time to respond. More structured requirements about the communication may facilitate more regular communication as well as reduce the possibility of a late response being interpreted from the other side as a lack of interest.

From one instructors' point of view, the main challenge was the resistance of students before they started enjoying the phases and the tasks assigned to them. In the other class, the students seemed enthusiastic, but sometimes did not follow through on posting without a push from the instructor. Moreover, it wasn't easy to convince all of them to be on Facebook, the main platform used for the project.

Discussion

The many commonalities among the derived themes in the students’ responses and reflection essays, and faculty observations support the trustworthiness of the findings. They included an increase in interest in learning about their international partners’ culture and lifestyle, an enthusiastic attitude regarding the international online communication, the limitations of communicating through social media and the desire for the project to have had a longer duration. Students also showed an awareness of the influences on their own worldviews and perspectives. The survey results provide quantitative support of these findings, as the majority clearly indicated positive attitudes towards the project. The students perceived that they have learned about another culture, and report gaining interest in it. They also indicate a rise in their own confidence in pursuing intercultural communication and in asking more meaningful questions. Thus, their survey responses and comments show that they perceived gaining the skill of empathy as described in the Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Rubric. However, these indirect measures indicate only the students’ perceptions of their skill development. A direct measure is found in the student’s reflection essays, where they demonstrate their abilities in perspective-taking and empathy, awareness of culture similarities and differences and the influences on their own worldviews.
Conclusion

The online communication has had a clear impact on the students’ intercultural empathy skills, as demonstrated by the number of observations students made in their reflection essays that corresponded with the criteria for the fourth (the highest) level of proficiency in empathy. The Key Pal Project and the intercultural experience it entailed improved their capacity to contrast their cultural patterns and values with others. This was concluded from comments in their reflection essays like this one: “We came to realize that we are not as different from them as people after all. The only thing that held our differences is the environment we each live in.”

Many of them stressed also on the role of the media in reinforcing stereotypes. “The media shed light on misleading stereotypes which has resulted in setting virtual barriers.” They also revealed their awareness of the media’s role in influencing their perceptions of each other, such as when one stated: “Whether here or abroad we are all influenced by our news outlets.”

Most important, the students experienced, as per the Deardorff model, “the ability to see from others’ perspective.” One of the students posited it as follows: “We habitually know about other countries and societies only through what the media conveys, and at many times, it is untrue; however, indulging into real and plain interaction with people from different cultures discloses numerous new facts and ultimately changes our perceptions towards those people”.

In any case, the study demonstrates that the components of intercultural empathy, if not the full ability to “walk in the other’s shoes,” developed through the project. As such, it shows great potential. In a nutshell, the most important question remains the same: do such projects contribute in breaking stereotypes to make the world a better place? The answer from one of the Lebanese students, who is keenly aware of the impact of “othering” in the media, was: “We had a chance to exchange cultural differences and similarities and to let others see us Arabs not as Hollywood portrays us.”

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About the Authors

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Sandra Whitehead is an educator, journalist and author, teaching journalism and media studies at Marquette University, where she is a Center for Peacemaking Faculty Scholar. Her research interests include internationally collaborative online learning in journalism education, literary journalism and peace journalism. Sandra recently spent seven years in Lebanon at Rafik Hariri University, where she taught journalism and served as the Languages and Humanities Department Chair. She is an ARIJ-trained instructor of investigative reporting and the author of Lebanese Americans. Sandra is blessed with a loving family—husband, Aziz Aleiou and three children, Ali, Aisha and Adam. sandra.whitehead@marquette.edu

References


Appendix A: The Questionnaire

Marquette University – Notre Dame University International Key Pal Project

Dear Students:
Your opinion is being asked for a purely educational purpose. It aims to investigate: (1) the impact of the International Key Pal Project on your intercultural communicative competence, (2) your global awareness, and (3) your attitude towards this experience in international sharing.

We assure you confidentiality and anonymity of your responses. Although your participation is optional, it is highly encouraged and appreciated.

This is not a test, so there is no right or wrong answers, and you do not even have to write your name on it. We are interested in your opinion. Hence, please give your answers as sincerely as possible as only this will guarantee the success of the research.

If there are any words, phrases or questions that you do not understand in the survey, please feel free to ask for clarification.

Sincerely,
Dr. Maria Bou Zeid
NDU Chairperson – Dept. of Media Studies
Survey

Directions: Please color in the circle for the correct category.
Gender:   O F         O M                           Age:   O 18-20         O 21-23          O over 24

Directions: Please answer the following questions.

1. What is your native language?

2. Have you spent any time in a different country than the one you live in? If so, how much time did you spend there and what was the nature of your stay?

Directions: Please indicate your agreement/disagreement with the following statements by choosing

1) Strongly agree  2) Agree  3) Neither agree nor disagree  4) Disagree  5) Strongly disagree

1. My interest in learning about American culture increased during the Key Pal Project.  
2. I gained new perspectives about my own culture rules and biases during the Key Pal Project. 
3. My ability to recognize the feelings of another cultural group increased during the Key Pal Project. 
4. My curiosity about Americans (their culture and values) grew during the Key Pal Project. 
5. In our Key Pal discussions, I learned to ask deeper questions about the other culture. 
6. The Key Pal project made me more interested in initiating discussions with people from different cultures than my own. 
7. My experience in the Key Pal Project made me more confident in engaging in cross-cultural communication. 
8. I found similarities in the cultures and lifestyles of Lebanese and Americans.
9. I found differences in the cultures and lifestyles of Lebanese and Americans.

10. I gained knowledge about American culture during the Key Pal Project.

11. I can communicate successfully with people from different culture backgrounds without knowing much about their culture if I maintain an open mind.

12. I do not enjoy learning about other cultures.

13. I can learn a lot by comparing opinions with someone from a different cultural background.

Please briefly describe your attitude and thoughts about this project. What did you enjoy? What was beneficial? What was not beneficial? What are your suggestions for improving it?
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

My name is Maria Bou Zeid. I am an Assistant Professor at Notre Dame University – Louaize (NDU). The purpose of this research is to examine students’ perceptions about Images of Arabs in the American/U.S. mind versus images of Americans in the Arab mind.

Your answers are important to us. Surveys will last approximately 10-15 minutes. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. The surveys will include no identifying information about any individual; we do not want you to put your name on the survey. Any data that identify you by name or phone number will be destroyed upon completion of this project. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. There are no anticipated risks or direct benefits to you as a participant. You will receive NO compensation for participating. After our research is completed, we will be happy to discuss the conclusions with you.
If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice or repercussion. If, at any time, there are questions about the procedure, contact Dr. Maria Bou Zeid at mbouzeid@ndu.edu.lb. If you would like to participate please read the following statement and sign and date the appropriate line below.

I have read the procedure described above. I agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

__________________________     ____________
 Participant’s Signature      Date

__________________________     ____________
 Principal Investigator’s Signature    Date
Appendix C:

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS BETWEEN MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY AND NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY – Fall 2018

These projects involve the students of Professors Maria Bou Zeid of Notre Dame University in Lebanon and Sandra Whitehead of Marquette University in the United States.

I. KEYPAL PROJECT

The components of this project are:

1. PRE-DISCUSSION OF STEREOTYPES

   - You will hold a discussion in your classroom about stereotypes of "the other" and about your assumptions of their stereotypes about you.

2. KEYPAL CONVERSATION

   - You will become a cultural "keypal" with a small group (3 – 4) of students who will be assigned to you. You will be a resource for your "pals" to learn about your country and culture, responsible for communicating with them through a Facebook group for 6 weeks.
     
     o Your goal is to discover the similarities and differences in your countries and cultures, perspectives and worldviews.
     
     o Your teachers will suggest discussion topics, but you may also ask your own questions. Topics may include college life in your respective countries, career goals, personal interests and activities, education, current events, sports, class topics, social norms – you name it.

   Your first post to the group will be a video self-introduction of approximately one minute.
     
     o Be creative in your introduction, going beyond your major to sharing a bit about your interests and your personality.
     
     o Always respond to posts in your group with either a question or a statement of agreement or disagreement with an explanation. (For the introductions, please comment on similarities you have with your pals or questions on things they mentioned you would like to learn more about.)

3. REFLECTION PAPER: You will write a reflection paper that includes:

   - Information about your keypals, who they are, their views, what you learned from them about their country, the similarities and differences you
noticed in your cultures, perspectives, world views, etc., and your overall impression of the kepal conversations experience. To what extent were you able to gain significant understanding of your pals’ lives and perspectives through this online discussion.

- You are welcomed to communicate with your group members through other channels such as Facebook Messenger video or audio chats, WhatsApp, etc., for more in-depth conversations. If you do, please note these experiences in your reflection papers and discuss what role they played in adding to your understanding. Give examples.

- What did you learn through the Current Events Discussions about the similarities and differences in the news coverage between Lebanon and the United States? Be specific and provide examples.

4. POST-CONVERSATION SURVEY AND DISCUSSION

- In your respective classrooms, you will complete a post-conversation survey and hold a discussion about your experience with the international collaboration. You will have the opportunity to assess the impact the experience had on you personally. What did you learn? Did you have any changes in attitudes, interests or perceptions about “the other?”

II. CURRENT EVENTS NEWS DISCUSSION

You will also have a discussion on current events that will be identified by the instructors. The discussions will focus on a comparison of the news coverage of the events in Lebanon and the United States, including the framing of the event, the prominence it is given by news outlets, the “buzz” around the topic in each country, the sources, etc.

Requirements:

- each student will share a well-supported opinion in the larger Facebook group on the case and about how the Khashoggi case is covered in the news you see. And you should pose a question.

- every student will post a thoughtful response to a minimum of two students, but you are welcomed and encouraged to post more if you like. All responses should be well supported with facts/research, etc.

- final responses to anyone that has responded to them and post a summary of what they learned in the discussion.
Appendix D: Samples from Facebook Group Discussions

The MU-NDU Key Pal Project between students at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S.A. and Notre Dame University in Zouk-Mosbeh, Lebanon creates an opportunity for students to gain an international perspective on the media and international events.

Introductions in the combined-classes Facebook Group (includes all participants):
The subgroups:

Breaking stereotypes
Discussion: The Jamal Khachoggi case
Whitehead, S., & Zeid, M. B.  WJEC 2019

MU-NDU Key Pal Project

Discussion

Chat

Members

Events

Videos

Photos

Moderate Group

Search the group

Shoutouts

Lebanese Filmakers

MU-NDU Key Pal Project

Gardner Ross El Elou

College Saint-Georges

ACT

EXIBITORS

(Egege_Yazaki)

YASA.org

See menu

Whitehead, S., & Zeid, M. B.  WJEC 2019

MU-NDU Key Pal Project

About

Discussion

Chat

Members

Events

Videos

Photos

Moderate Group

Search the group

Shoutouts

Lebanese Filmakers

MU-NDU Key Pal Project

Gardner Ross El Elou

College Saint-Georges

ACT

EXIBITORS

(Egege_Yazaki)

YASA.org

See menu

Jonathan Ross Halloween party guest slammed over "tasteless" costume

You, Habib Aikra and 1 other

Like

Comment

Arab Aloke

Share

English (UK) العربية (Française) (Française) Español (Português (Brasil)

Privacy Terms Advertise Ad Choices Cookies More Facebook © 2015

Privacy Terms Advertise Ad Choices Cookies More Facebook © 2015

Independent Arab media faces an uphill battle

New journalism platforms are emerging from the darkness of government...

You, Habib Aikra and 1 other

Like

Comment

Braheb, K. 이 견해를 어떻게 해석합니까?  

You, Sandra Whitehead and 1 other

Like

Comment

Sandra Whitehead shared a link.

Interesting look at trends in Arab media (and a connection to the Khansheen case)

You, Habib Aikra and 1 other

Like

Comment

Braheb, K. 이 견해를 어떻게 해석합니까?  

You, Sandra Whitehead and 1 other

Like

Comment

Sandra Whitehead shared a link.

Interesting look at trends in Arab media (and a connection to the Khansheen case)

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You, Sandra Whitehead and 1 other

Like

Comment

Sandra Whitehead shared a link.

Interesting look at trends in Arab media (and a connection to the Khansheen case)
Professional Skills for Journalism and Media Graduates

Karen Neill
New Zealand Broadcasting School, Christchurch, New Zealand

Abstract:
Graduates of the New Zealand Broadcasting School (NZBS) are highly sought after by a local broadcasting and media industry that says it places as much importance on the professional behaviour and attitude of employees as it does on applied knowledge and skills. The NZBS incorporates the formal assessment of behavioural skills into each level of its Bachelor of Broadcasting Communications (BBC) programme. Recently, research was undertaken to determine what professional skills are considered most important from three stakeholder perspectives: industry, students and educators. Results show what constitutes a professional skillset for journalism students entering today’s evolving media environment.

Background
Over the last 10 years, the broadcasting industry in New Zealand has changed radically. Following global trends, newsrooms, radio stations and television channels have merged under new entities and added digital as a brand. The way that news and entertainment is disseminated by these organisations and is being consumed by audiences has led to the creation of new jobs, requiring the updating of skills for a workforce engaged on digital platforms whilst still traversing traditional (over-the-air) broadcasting platforms. With content creation and dissemination now an important part of most media jobs, the emphasis has been on the technical skills needed to traverse the digital landscape. This includes the use of social media to engage audiences by promoting, streaming and generating content, as well as supporting and encouraging interactivity. The challenges posed by social media can be likened to a traditional broadcaster’s live stream and unable to be recalled (without someone noticing). However, on social media an error of professional judgement has greater reach than on traditional media. This is because the latter operates on a ‘one voice to many’ platform, whereas social media operates on a ‘many to many’ platform due to its viral nature (Hausman, 2015) and highlights the need for a greater emphasis on professionalism for those entering the industry.

New technologies pose an interesting challenge for media educators. Traditionally, university programmes have grounded themselves in theory, leaving vocational training to Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs). However, competition and the pressure on universities and ITPs to deliver industry-ready graduates, i.e. those with well-rounded theoretical, technical and professional skill sets, has seen on-the-job training become a staple of media courses. Whether it be via cooperative education models like that of the New Zealand Broadcasting School (NZBS) where students undertake a formal internship as a course in its own right, or shorter work-experience blocks offered by institutions like Auckland University of Technology (AUT) as part of its Bachelor of Communications Studies, the emphasis is no longer just on the ability to perform

1. The NZBS is part of Ara, an ITP based in Christchurch, New Zealand.
Neill, K. WJEC 2019

640

tasks, but on the ability to integrate professionally in to the workplace. The NZBS offers an internship as the last course within its degree programme. The internship is “a three-way relationship between internship provider (employer), student and the School” (Norris, 2008), and the close relationship between industry and education is a key feature of the cooperative education model on which the Bachelor of Broadcasting Communications (BBC) is based. Professional skills (also known as soft skills) are taught at each level of the programme and are the personal or behavioural attributes that can make a person a valuable or desirable employee - hugely important to the competitive media industry, as well as the media education market which thrives on the success of its graduates. Just as Technical skills must be updated to meet the changing demands of industry, Professional skills must also be updated.

This research canvassed the New Zealand media industry to identify a range of key Professional skills. Then, using the NZBS’s cooperative learning model as an example, triangulated the findings with real-life student experiences in the workplace and the foundation work provided at a tertiary level to determine what constitutes a professional skillset in the current media environment for those entering the industry. The results will be of direct benefit to users - the media industry, media educators and media students alike.

Method

Participants

This study set out to define what the most important Professional skills are for entrants to the media industry by evaluating perceptions from industry, student (worker) experiences, and what is considered important from a tertiary teaching point of view. Participant groups were stakeholders in the NZBS BBC programme and included industry representatives from a range of media disciplines including journalism, radio, screen and television (hereinafter referred to as screen); 700 level students on six-month, full time paid industry internships; and NZBS industry-practitioner staff. Stakeholders reflected the three parties involved in the NZBS 700 level Professional Practice assessment, namely: internship supervisors (industry-assessment), students (self-assessment) and academic supervisors (tutor-assessment). A mixed-method research approach was used to achieve best results for stakeholder groups.

Industry survey

An anonymous online survey of industry professionals on the NZBS Internship Provider database was conducted using Qualtrics survey software to determine what industry considers are the most important Professional skills for new employees. Questionnaire design ensured that individual participants and workplaces were not identifiable, but participants identified what industry they most closely aligned themselves with by selecting one of the following disciplines: Radio, Journalism, Screen, or Other. Industry ranked currently-assessed Professional skills using a four-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Somewhat important’ to ‘Extremely important’ and were asked to identify any other Professional skills that they considered important. Industry were then asked to rate someone’s Professional skills compared to their Technical skills on the same Likert scale. Finally, industry was asked if their organisation offered professional skills training for staff and, if so, to provide brief details in a qualitative format.
**Student research**

Anonymised research was undertaken to determine **what Professional skills new employees are encountering on the job**. This was conducted via a document quantitative content analysis using a group of 700 level student reflective essays completed as part of the NZBS 700 level Internship Craft and Professional Practice course. Data reflected a cohort of 59 students that graduated in 2018. The largest discipline group was Radio (37%), followed by Journalism (32%) and Screen (31%). Discipline group sizes are influenced by variables such as intake numbers and course completion rates. Names, workplaces and other identifiable data were not used, but results were collated by discipline to highlight any differences.

**NVivo coding**

Student reflective essays were imported into NVivo by discipline, and coded and analysed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. A word search was conducted on Professional skills and keywords were coded under one of the following nodes: Interpersonal, Personal or Technical Skills. Preceding this a sample of essays from an earlier cohort of students was coded to pre-populate the skill sets (for ease of coding) and additional keywords were added to the nodes as required during the analysis. Technical skills were recorded to determine the frequency of these in comparison to Professional skills.

**Tutor research**

A group teaching and learning strategy was employed to develop **an agreed set of Professional skills for graduates from a tertiary-teaching point of view**. The group of six academic staff was comprised of BBc tutors and the NZBS Internship Manager. As industry practitioners, tutors were able to draw on learning from their own practice, as well as the classroom. Key skills were negotiated via a team-consensus exercise, after an exercise to identify discipline-specific skill sets. Tutors were surveyed separately (through Qualtrics) on how highly they rated Professional skills compared to Technical skills.

**Coding**

**Industry results**

A total of 83 responses were attained from industry respondents who had recently acted as NZBS internship supervisors. Respondents identified themselves as belonging to one of these disciplines: Radio (40%), Screen and Television (38%), Journalism (15%), Other (6%). While Journalism responses were lower than the other main disciplines, Journalism was also captured as part of the Radio and Screen disciplines under the banner of the main broadcaster. As the aim of

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2. Up to 24-students are accepted per discipline per year for the national degree programme based on strict entry criteria and a competitive application process.

3. Industry participants were not necessarily supervisors of the student cohort surveyed but selected as part of a database of industry-representatives who had supervised interns within the last two years.
the research was to identify a single set of competencies for a converged industry, differences between disciplines was considered secondary. Other responses were from the education and public sectors, and digital, multimedia content, and sales staff.

![Industry Personal vs Interpersonal skills](image)

*Figure 3: Industry Personal vs Interpersonal skills*

Overall, Industry rated Personal skills higher than Interpersonal skills, with 54% of responses coded as Personal and 34% Interpersonal, with the remainder coded to Technical skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal skills</th>
<th>Interpersonal skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other skills</th>
<th>Other skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>Humility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to learning</td>
<td>Positivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Industry rated ‘Attitude’, ‘Accountability’, ‘Initiative’ and ‘Motivation’ as the key Personal skills, and ‘Communication’, ‘Reliability’ and ‘Teamwork’ as the key Interpersonal skills. There were no discernible differences between disciplines in the top skills.

*Tutor results*
Personal skills outweighed Interpersonal skills as the key Professional skills for the tutor group. Staff narrowed down a list of 18 skills identified as part of a collaborative process with consensus reached on a final tally of 11; differences between disciplines was noted prior to consensus.

Table 2
Overall Tutor results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal skills</th>
<th>Interpersonal skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work ethic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All tutors agreed on ‘Accountability’, ‘Communication’, ‘Motivation’, ‘Open to learning’, ‘Reliability’, ‘Resiliency’ and ‘Teamwork’ as key skills; remaining skills were negotiated as part of a team-consensus exercise. Discipline-specific skills that did not make the final list were ‘Personal Ethics’ (Journalism and Screen); ‘Self-discipline’ (Journalism); and ‘Time management’ (Radio and Screen).

Student results

The Student results heralded the largest range of skills and differences between disciplines. Personal skills trumped Interpersonal skills, with a range of responses. In total, there were 12 Personal skills and five Interpersonal skills identified as part of the Student research.

Table 3
Overall Student results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal skills</th>
<th>Interpersonal skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top (in ranked order)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Top (in ranked order)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening to Learning</td>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handles pressure</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-aware</td>
<td>Constructive Criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/life balance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other (in ranked order)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics (personal)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were some minor differences noted by discipline:

**Personal skills:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th><strong>Journalism</strong></th>
<th><strong>Radio</strong></th>
<th><strong>Screen</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Open to learning</td>
<td>Open to learning</td>
<td>Open to learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Organised</td>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>Respectful Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Self-aware</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Handles pressure Work/life balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ‘Open to learning’ was the top Personal skill, rating between 29%-33% for all disciplines. This skill contained the subsets ‘Learns from mistakes’, ‘Good learning experience’, and ‘Accepts a challenge’ (in order of frequency);

- ‘Organised’ was second on the Journalism list (17%) with the subsets ‘Time management’ and ‘Prepared’ (in order of frequency);

- ‘Respectful’ had a subset of ‘Professional’ (encompassing Behaviour and Presentation/Grooming) and was second on the Radio list (11%), and second equal on the Screen list (13%) along with ‘Confidence’;

- ‘Self-aware’ was third on the Journalism list (10%) with a subset of ‘Empathetic’; and

- ‘Motivation’ was third on the Radio list (10%) and ‘Handles Pressure’ and ‘Work/life balance’ were third equal on the Screen list (10%).
Interpersonal skills:

Table 5

*Interpersonal skills by Student discipline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Journalism</th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>Screen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Communication Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Adaptability Criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Adaptability Criticality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ‘Communication’ was the top Interpersonal skill and rated first with Journalism and Radio (33% and 31% respectfully), and second with Screen (21%). The majority of Communication responses were coded as ‘internal’ but ‘external’ communications also featured;

- The Screen sector’s number one skill was ‘Networking’ (52%). ‘Networking’ was second for Journalism (29%) and Radio (28%) and had a subset of ‘Relationships’;

- ‘Adaptability’ was third for Journalism (18%) and Screen (3%) and fourth for Radio (13%);

- ‘Teamwork’ was second for Screen (21%), third for Radio (15%) and fourth for Journalism (14%);

- ‘Constructive criticism’ appeared on the Screen list in third (3%) and was fourth for Radio (13%) with a subset of ‘Feedback’.

**Combined Discipline Results (Triangulated)**

*Personal skills results*

Overall, Personal skills rated higher than Interpersonal skills with the Student group having the largest range of Personal skills. ‘Initiative’, ‘Open to learning’ and ‘Resiliency’ were the only Personal skills to feature in all three-stakeholder group results, though the latter two skills scored lower for Screen. ‘Accountability’ and ‘Attitude’ were considered important by Tutors and Industry; and ‘Confidence’ and ‘Motivation’ by Student and Industry.
Table 6  
Combined Personal skills discipline results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to learning</td>
<td>Open to learning</td>
<td>Open to learning</td>
<td>Organised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td>Resiliency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>Self-aware</td>
<td>Work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work/life balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpersonal skills results

The Student group had the largest range of skills. ‘Communication’ and ‘Teamwork’ appeared in all three stakeholder results; ‘Reliability’ featured for Tutor and Industry groups.

Table 7  
Combined Interpersonal skills discipline results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tutor</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Constructive criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professional Skills vs Technical skills

**Student results**

![Student Professional skills vs Technical skills](image)

*Figure 4: Student Professional skills vs Technical skills*

Professional skills made up 87% of all references in Student sources and Technical skills just 13%. For the latter, general themes were multi-skilling and workload (where it related to job function, not organisational ability).

**Tutor and industry results**

Tutors and Industry were surveyed using Qualtrics software and asked the following question:

> How highly would you rate someone's Professional skills compared to their Technical skills? Please select by highlighting your choice:
> - Much higher
> - Higher
> - About the same
> - Lower
> - Much lower

100% of tutors rated Professional skills ‘Higher’ than Technical skills.

Stakeholders also placed greater importance on Professional skills than Technical skills.
Figure 5: Industry Professional skills vs Technical skills

50% of industry rated Professional skills ‘Higher’ than Technical skills with 17% rating it ‘Much higher’ and 32% ‘About the same’. There were differences between disciplines, with the majority of Journalism respondents rating Professional skills ‘About the same’, while overall the majority of Radio, Screen and Other respondents considered Professional skills of ‘Higher’ importance than Technical skills.

Figure 6: Industry discipline breakdown of weightings given to professional skills

- 80% of Radio respondents rated Professional skills ‘Higher’ or ‘Much higher’ than Technical skills, with 20% rating it ‘About the same’;
- 66% of Screen respondents rated Professional skills ‘Higher’ or ‘Much higher’ than Technical skills, while 31% rated it ‘About the same’ and 3% rated it ‘Lower’;
- 60% of Other respondents rated Professional skills ‘Higher’ than Technical skills and 40% ‘About the same’;

- 46% of Journalism respondents rated Professional skills ‘Higher’ or ‘Much higher’ than Technical skills and 54% ‘About the same’.

**Professional skills development for staff**

Nearly half (47%) of industry respondents indicated that their organisations offered Professional skills development for staff while 36% said their organisations did not and 17% did not know. Radio, Screen and Other disciplines were the most likely to offer opportunity for Professional development and Journalism was the least likely. Radio (63%), Screen (53%) and Other (80%) disciplines were the most likely to offer opportunity for Professional development and Journalism (42%) was least likely.

![Figure 7: Industry organisations offering Professional skills training by discipline](image)

**Professional skills development types**

Respondents provided brief details of Professional skills development offered by their organisation. Results are presented by discipline:

- Journalism: A mentoring focus including feedback via daily supervision, and some in-house training with formal (external) training reserved for new leaders;

- Radio: A mentoring and development focus via team leader and management meetings, and (almost exclusively) on-site training;
Screen: Mentoring with on-the-job training and regular feedback provided from senior staff, with leadership coaching and other development opportunities for fulltime staff;

Other: One-on-one meetings and a team-building focus for training.

Overall, most Professional skills development opportunities were in-house with a mentor or coaching focus. External development opportunities were chiefly reserved for new leaders.

Discussion

Introduction

Teaching media is challenging in today’s evolving environment and programmes like the BBC must be regularly updated to reflect current industry practice. However, this is not limited to the updating of practical work skills, such as the integration and use of digital media. Technological and environmental changes to industry have not only impacted on jobs and job shapes but meant that “individuals’ personalities and skill sets [that] might have matched job requirements when they first entered the business...might not fit anymore” (Rimscha, 2015, p. 18). If graduates are to be successful, then the Professional skills needed to succeed in the workplace must also be updated. This research uncovered the top Personal and Interpersonal skills relevant to the media. Results were coded as Personal skills or Interpersonal skills. According to Binkley, Erstad, Herman, Raizen, Ripley and Rumble (2010), ‘personal’ refers to ways of thinking and ‘interpersonal’ to ways of working. Accordingly, for this research, Personal skills have been identified as the individual capabilities needed to succeed, while Interpersonal skills reflect the capabilities needed to work with others. This aligns with the BBC learning outcome for professionalism where students must “Demonstrate the personal and interpersonal knowledge, skills and attitudes required of an ethical professional broadcaster working independently and in a team environment” (Ara, 2017, p. 37). The importance of Professional skills compared to Technical skills and workplace skills training were also explored.

Personal skills

Personal skills, or the individual strengths and skills needed to succeed in the workplace, outweighed the Interpersonal skills identified in this study. ‘Initiative’, ‘Open to learning’ and ‘Resiliency’ were the top Personal skills for all stakeholder groups, although the last two competencies scored lower for the Screen group. The lower rating for ‘Open to learning’ may be because those entering the screen industry usually do so with the focus on a particular skill, such as camera or editing. This is echoed in the NZBS BBC course which has a production-focus and sees screen students specialising in a particular craft area in their second year of study. Various and specific crew roles are also required to complete a screen production in comparison to radio and journalism professions where skills are becoming increasingly generalist. “Generalists tend to have a broad range of skills and experience across a range of disciplines within their field” (Crane, 2013, para. 4). For Radio and Journalism, transferable skills have taken priority in the mixed-media environment and practitioners now must traverse audio, visual and digital mediums. It is this emphasis on digital content, combined with competition that has seen a rise in demand for
universal skills; “organisations need more from their people with less money” (Pellowe as cited in Crane, 2013, para. 7).

‘Open to learning’ or a willingness to learn featured highly as a personal skill for Tutors and Industry as “for most employers, intellect and willingness to learn are more important than subject knowledge” (Harvey, Moon & Gaell, as cited in Stephenson & York, 1998, p. 8). This was supported by Baker and Hesmondhalgh (2013) who examined creative industries and found that interviewees looked favourably on “being able to learn as part of the job” (p. 127). Student research echoed this, with students enjoying the opportunity to showcase their skills - and to demonstrate ‘Initiative’, identified as a key personal skill by all stakeholders, such as this particular student respondent recorded; “With my previous camera experience I eagerly offered my services to the production manager and director who were amazed as ‘we’ve never had a rigger or engineer that knows how to competent [sic] operate the kit as well as administer it, it’s fantastic’” [Student respondent].

On the flip side of this, students were frustrated when they could not use the full range of craft skills they had on their internship. According to an Australian Film, Radio and Television School report ([AFTRS, 2016) people skills included a ‘“we not me”’ approach (p. 17) highlighting the importance of seeing the bigger picture. Offsetting this was ‘Resiliency’, which featured on Student and Tutor group lists of Personal skills. As well as the internal pressure to perform, resilience is required for radio and journalism personnel who apply people skills to more outward-facing roles; for example, a broadcast journalist, who is in daily contact with news sources and potential interviewees, or a radio personality who connects with people daily (and increasingly away from the safety and confines of the studio). ‘Resiliency’ was lower on the list for Screen with its production focus meaning that roles are less in the public eye.

For all three disciplines, the loss of senior, experienced staff as a result of industry consolidation has seen the addition of younger, less-experienced talent added to the broadcasting employment pool. It is anticipated that this will continue, with the current ageing workforce resulting in a further “loss of skills and experience” (Auckland University of Technology [AUT], 2015, p. 1). Without senior staff to guide them, entrants to industry are still expected to perform requiring a mix of initiative and resiliency, as well as a good attitude and confidence, both of which featured on the list of Personal skills. ‘Attitude’ along with ‘Accountability’ were considered important by tutors and industry, while ‘Confidence’ and ‘Motivation’ were considered important by students and industry. ‘Confidence’ was highlighted by one student respondent; “The lack of praise throughout my internship was something I found challenging. I am the type of person that starts second guessing myself if someone doesn’t reassure me, and so I tried to not let doubts creep into my work”.

Discipline-specific skills identified as part of this research were ranked lower but captured the essence of the three disciplines. For example, Screen respondents cited ‘Stamina and fitness’ as important for meeting the requirements of long shooting hours. This was also raised in Student essays but was unique to this stakeholder group (comparably, other disciplines cited a ‘Strong work ethic’ as a desirable trait). For Screen, the personal trait of ‘Adaptability’ i.e. working on different sets and with different people and ‘Humility’ were all tied to the internal roles undertaken on productions. In contrast, Radio identified ‘Confidence’, ‘Dedication’ and ‘Friendliness’ as other Personal skills that are also in keeping with its focus on external relationships with clients and

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members of the public. Finally, Journalism respondents noted ‘Emotional intelligence’, ‘Empathy’, ‘Grooming’ and ‘Common sense’ as discipline-specific skills that are very much aligned with presenting to the public and the ability to (respectfully) elicit information from sources.

**Interpersonal skills**

Interpersonal skills are the interactive skills deemed necessary to succeed with others in the workplace. While fewer Interpersonal skills were identified as part of this research, those that were had a close and important connection to craft. ‘Communication’ and ‘Teamwork’ were the top Interpersonal skills for all three stakeholder groups. Communication is a core part of the media industry and responses were coded to sub-categories of internal communication and external communication. The latter is also considered a craft skill, demonstrated by a radio presenter’s ability to build rapport with the public, or a journalist’s rapport with an interview subject as summed up by an industry respondent; “In our profession we meet a lot of people at very low points in their life. We need to approach them with compassion and honesty while trying to elicit information.”

Internal communication and building a relationship with peers are just as important as the industry converges, and teamwork diversifies, requiring people to be more adept at working across streams and platforms. Where radio station and television broadcast teams used to work separately towards hourly news or programme deadlines, new-media newsrooms with a potential stable of television, radio and online channels require daily meetings to prioritise stories and the distribution of content. This requires cross-stream team collaboration, before reverting to platform-specific teams to produce content. According to Dooley (2015), teamwork is central to “the adoption of specific roles and responsibilities related to the creation of a creative product” (p. 3). ‘Teamwork’ rated highly with both Radio and Screen students, with a lower ranking for Journalism students who are moving into a discipline that is becoming increasingly self-contained. This is exemplified by the rise of the role of the video journalist, responsible for shooting, editing and presenting their own stories.

To succeed in the current environment, whether working as part of a team to produce content or independently, reliability is key. ‘Reliability’ was considered an important interpersonal skill by tutor and industry groups along with ‘Accountability’ and ‘Attitude’. For students, ‘Adaptability’, ‘Constructive Criticism’ and ‘Networking’ featured as key Interpersonal skills. ‘Networking’ was of most importance to the screen group, reflecting an industry where work is often on a project-by-project basis and networking is seen as critical to securing the next job. Baker and Hesmondhalgh (2013) noted the difficulty in maintaining relationships in the pressured television environment, drawing a relationship between networking and teamwork for this sector of industry; “In television…teamwork may be particularly important…working well together on short-term projects is important in the longer term for developing contacts and a reputation that will lead to further contracts” (p. 177).
For commercial media outlets with a heavy entertainment focus such as radio, networking in a social situation is seen as part of the job. Several student essays addressed the issue of socialising with colleagues after events and the need to be mindful of behaviour and maintaining a separation between work and home life. One Student respondent noted that “there is a blurred line between partying and professionalism within the media industry…experiencing this first hand… I now know and understand how to keep these two P’s, professionalism and partying, completely separate”. The distinction the student identified points to a further key interpersonal skill, ‘Adaptability’. This refers to the ability to “tailor [your] approach depending on who [you are] working with” (AFTRS, 2016, p. 17). For students being adaptable meant being open to different styles and ways of working, and a willingness to tackle tasks that are not necessarily part of the job description. One radio student detailed an experience on internship;

I became a demolition man and a builder for two weeks…I hadn’t spoken into a mic yet, I hadn’t programmed any music, I hadn’t written any liners, I hadn’t done anything that I’d wanted to do…However I worked hard all day, and because of this I got to learn how to use all the power tools there, I learnt how to jib walls, I learnt how to lay carpet, I learnt how to tear down walls…Although these skills aren’t that valuable in radio they…gave me the chance to show…my work ethic.

In addition to having an “adaptable attitude” (AFTRS, 2016, p. 17), students must also be able to handle rejection. After all, they are heading into an industry where others will judge their performance on a regular, if not daily basis and therefore the ability to reflect on work and receive feedback is critical. Fittingly, ‘Constructive criticism’ was the final interpersonal skill identified by the student group as part of this research. But should entrants to the industry, with limited life and work experience, be “expected to master an innate skill, not a learned one” (Hodge, as cited in Dooley, 2015, p.2), and could soft skills training fill the void?

**Soft skills training**

Industry respondents were asked if their workplaces or organisations offered soft skills training as part of professional development for staff and less than half responded positively to this question. Just (47%) of respondents indicated that their organisations offered soft skills training. A survey on soft skills by Rider and Klaeysen (2014) found that employers felt it was an employee’s responsibility to develop soft skills and is perhaps a reason for the lack of training in this area.

Organizations shy away from soft skills training, and expect employees to enter the workplace with such skills already well developed. This finding underscores the importance of candidates developing soft skills prior to employment as few resources will be spent once on the job (Rider & Klaeysen, 2014, p. 8).

Ultimately, the onus falls on educational institutions to provide training for graduates entering the industry. At the NZBS, professional skills are taught alongside craft skills at each level of the degree and have been part of the programme since its inception. As NZBS founder Brian Pauling stated, “while industry could teach craft skills, attitude was harder to replicate” (personal communication, 17 November 2016). However, with the growing emphasis on the importance of Professional skills in the workplace, industry must also take an active role in skills development.
for student interns. Fleming, Martin, Hughes & Zinn (2009) agree. “Competencies need to be supported and reinforced throughout the student’s undergraduate programme in addition to being emphasized during the cooperative education experience” (p. 194-195).

This research identified the Radio industry as the most likely to offer Professional skills training and Journalism the least likely, with Screen positioned in-between. This reflects the fulltime nature of radio versus the freelance direction of journalism and contract bias of the screen industry. Although a smaller portion of overall respondents, the majority of Other industry respondents said that they offered Professional skills development for staff. This could be attributed to the fact this group included media sales and regularly engages consultants for training. Overall, research showed that most skills development opportunities were in-house with a mentor or coaching focus, saving costs and enabling the transfer of knowledge to entrants to industry.

**Technical skills**

**Industry and tutor results**

Finally, Industry and Tutor groups were asked how highly they would rate someone’s Professional skills compared to their Technical skills. Overall, greater importance was placed on Professional skills with 67% of Industry and Tutors rating them ‘Higher’ or ‘Much Higher’ than Technical skills, while 32% rated them ‘About the same’. Radio industry respondents rated Professional skills the highest, with 80% rating them ‘Higher’ or ‘Much Higher’ than Technical skills, compared to 66% of Screen and just 46% of Journalism respondents. One reason for Radio placing such high importance on Professional skills is that most aspects of the industry are outward facing or customer-focused in comparison to the other disciplines. For instance, creative, production and sales roles in radio all work with advertising clients, while voice and promotions roles deal directly with clients and the public. Radio programming roles also have an external focus, dealing with record company representatives and (sometimes) directly with artists. Fittingly, the Radio sector was the most likely to offer Professional skills development for staff.

Screen industry respondents also valued Professional skills over Technical skills with 66% rating them ‘Higher’ or ‘Much higher’ than Technical skills. Just over a third (31%) of Screen respondents rated the skill sets ‘About the same’, while 3% rated them lower. While Professional skills prevailed, Technical skills overall rated slightly higher for Screen than they did for Radio, echoing the production-focus of screen roles. Significantly, 54% of Journalism respondents rated Professional skills ‘About the same’ as Technical skills, compared to just 20% of Radio respondents and 32% of Screen respondents. This reflects the fact that journalists are increasingly being asked to produce their own content - from interviewing to filming to editing and uploading content - requiring workers to be more skilled in digital production techniques.

The consolidation of news services has also resulted in fewer fulltime staff and a corresponding rise in freelance contract work, a global trend; “From creative entrepreneurs to those paid by the
task, freelancing is on the rise worldwide” (New Zealand Herald, 2017, para 1). Unsurprisingly, the journalism sector was the least likely to offer Professional skills development to staff.

**Student results**

Professional skills also outweighed Technical skills for students, with the overwhelming theme of student essays being the ability to integrate successfully into the workplace on a professional level. Multi-skilling was the predominant theme under Technical skills for all student disciplines and is also a product of the converged environment. As one student noted, “during my internship I have really thought about how important it is to keep your fingers in as many pies as possible. Its [sic] no longer acceptable to be really good at one thing, you need to be really good at several things”. One advantage for NZBS students is that they are applying for and accepting internship opportunities in disciplines and fields in which they want to work in, and (typically) strengths would match the skills required. When combined with Professional skills such as a willingness to learn or a display of confidence, any inadequacies may be able to be overcome.

**Summary: a successful graduate**

Like the media industry, the NZBS operates in an increasingly competitive market. The internship programme and its focus on Professional skills are a strong marketing point for the school, evident in the 95% success rate of students moving into employment once successfully completing the internship course (NZBS, 2017). Former Head of the NZBS, Paul Norris, argued that “in order to maintain this position, the NZBS tailors the skills and training offered to graduates to the needs of the industry” (Norris, 2008, p. 8), and concluded that the emphasis on professionalism is key to maintaining this position. But, just as Technical skills require review to stay in line with industry developments, Professional skills must also evolve and be adjusted to the working environment.

This research has culminated in a list of 10 Professional skills that are industry-specific and meet current stakeholder expectations. A successful graduate is:

- **Accountable** for their actions
- Has a positive **attitude**
- Possesses good **communication** skills
- Displays self-**confidence**
- Shows **initiative**
- Is **motivated**
- Embraces **opportunities to learn** new skills
- Is someone others can **rely** on
- Can work with others as part of a **team**
- Someone who demonstrates **resiliency**.
This list of Professional skills serves as a guide for industry, students and educators to help navigate the evolving media environment. To paraphrase the late Paul Norris; In this period of change for industry, Professional skills could be considered a constant (2008, p. 8).

About the Author:

Karen Neill is a Senior Lecturer and Researcher at the New Zealand Broadcasting School (NZBS). Prior to re-joining the school in 2016, Karen was a Senior Manager at Radio New Zealand, and Head of Partnerships at Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision, managing key stakeholder relationships with the radio, television and film industries. Karen’s media career spans journalism, student and commercial radio, and the music industry. She has been involved in media education for over a decade.

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The Mobile Mind: Understanding How Post-Millenials Get Their News

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Abstract

As the post-millennial generation comes of age and filters through universities into the work-force and into the “mass” audience that makes up the voting and consuming public, it’s important for journalism instructors to understand how and why this cohort may reshape our concept of what constitutes the “mass media.” We are now 13 years removed from the advent of Twitter and Facebook’s Newsfeed and 12 years beyond the launch of the first iPhone. The introduction of such devices and innovations has led to the rise of algorithms aimed at giving audiences a personalized news experience. But the impact on the next generation of news consumers is not yet fully understood. This study examines this generation’s news consumption habits, providing a deeper understanding of audience fragmentation among post-millennial students. The first wave of post-millennial students (Generation Z) is now in our universities and some of them cannot remember the world before the iPhone or the newsfeed. The result is a student audience that is increasingly fragmented, each of them engaging with news sources that are often completely different from both their peers and their professors. Generation Z (born 1995-2010) have been unwitting subjects to algorithmic analysis and manipulation since childhood. Through statistical analysis and polling of their readership trends, this paper shows the extent of fragmentation among this audience and assess whether that audience shows signs of forming into a “mass” that can still be reached by traditional media. Through surveys of student readership trends, this paper analyzes the extent and repercussions of audience fragmentation, examining the mass media’s lost capacity to reach this audience and what that means to the media’s primary function to democracy. This paper also furthers our collective understanding of the impact of our newfound reality that companies like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have supplanted traditional newspapers and broadcasters as the platforms most capable of doing what Alexis de Tocqueville, the nineteenth-century French political scientist, saw as crucial to a functioning democracy: to “drop the same thought into a thousand minds at the same moment.”

Introduction

The origin of this study came from informal in-class polling of 91 undergraduate students at Carleton University’s School of Journalism who were posed a simple question: “List your top three news sources.” The objective was to better understand what kind of news students were consuming, and their relationship to both the media and the current news agenda.

The students came back with 37 unique sources. It seemed, at first glance, a relatively small number compared to what might have been. Further in-class discussions about major stories in the news revealed that students and faculty were not keeping up with the same news. These two instances revealed the scope of fragmentation/disintegration within a relatively small sample audience.

Through the initial in-class polling, it was clear that Twitter was by far the students’ most common source for news. But it wasn’t until the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement
and the murder of Jamal Khashoggi that it was fully understood just how unique each students’ news consumption on Twitter was, nor how different their newsfeeds must have been from their instructor’s. Throughout the negotiations of the new USAMC Agreement, Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs (Chrystia Freeland) had been a frequent fixture in their instructor’s newsfeeds and on the front page of all the major mainstream Canadian newspapers (both online and in print) and quoted widely on radio and TV news. After Donald Trump personally trashed her in a press conference Freeland had become one of the most talked about Canadians in the media. From the instructor’s perspective, anyone following the news in Canada would have been aware of who she was. But when her photo and name were put up on a projector screen in a lecture hall filled with journalism students, not a single one of them could identify her. A month later, the face and name of Jamal Khashoggi was placed on screen in the same lecture hall and had a very similar response. This was on October 25, 2019 and Khashoggi’s disappearance had been an international news story for weeks. The horrendous details of his murder seemed an inescapable fixture across most major news platforms.

This led the instructor to question: Did the lack of awareness about Freeland or the death of Khashoggi have any relation to the fact that *The Globe and Mail*, Canada’s “Newspaper of Record”, was tied with Snapchat as a top-three news source for just seven per cent of the students in that lecture hall? Attempting to answer that question necessitated significantly more data than the informal polling could provide. Thus emerged the formal study of this generation’s news consumption habits upon which this paper is based.

This study does not represent the first examination of the news consumption habits of post-millennial undergraduate students, nor does it represent the largest. But this study does raise unique questions and findings that add to the work of other researchers, notably the work of Head, Wihbey, Metaxas, MacMillan and Cohen (2018) and their study “How Students Engage with News”. That study, which surveyed 5,844 students from 11 colleges across the United States has been described as “one of the largest and most comprehensive studies of youth media engagement, participation and evaluation in the digital age.” The findings outlined in this paper came from a study significantly smaller in focus, both by design and necessity. The initial goal of this study was to generate data to assist the faculty of Carleton’s School of Journalism and Communication to better understand the news consumption habits of its journalism students. The second goal was to assess how those students’ habits compared with those of a wider pool of representatives from their generation.

**Methodology and Findings at a Glance**

The data used for this analysis was collected in April and May 2019. Further data collection is planned as are follow-up interviews with survey respondents in order to advance the findings.

The findings presented in this study are drawn from an online survey administered to a diverse mix of 450 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the journalism program at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. That survey, which was conducted with approval from the office of research ethics at Carleton University, yielded a sample of 158 students aged 18-25 (Journalism Students — Group 1).
Further research was conducted from a second online survey administered via SurveyMonkey to respondents aged 18-25 from across the province of Ontario (Wider Audience — Group 2). That second survey yielded 200 respondents from a diverse mix with varied educational backgrounds. The purpose of the study of the wider audience was to yield two distinct pools of respondents, allowing for an examination of the similarities and discrepancies between the responses of those specifically engaged in the study of journalism from those representing the larger population.

*Figure 1 — The respondents*

What follows are a few of my findings, presented at a glance:

1. **The post-millennial audience is very fragmented**
   When asked to list their top three sources for news, the 358 respondents came up with 73 unique responses. Only the CBC (Canada’s public broadcaster) and Twitter appeared in more than 15 per cent of the respondents’ responses.

2. **Social media is the gateway for traditional media to reach this audience**
   Social Media (Personalized newsfeeds curated from traditional news outlets) was the number one pathway by which respondents get their news (74 per cent) followed by personalized newsfeeds curated from friends and family (53 per cent) and personalized newsfeeds curated from friends and family and from celebrity influencers (44 per cent). Among the wider audience (Group 2), YouTube was the social media platform most often used to consume news.

3. **The post-millennial audience views itself as news literate**
   Heavily reliant on social media for their news consumption, 27 per cent of respondents said they would rate their ability to critically evaluate the reliability of the news and information
they receive from the media as “very good.” A further 64 per cent rated their ability as “good.”

4. **Local news is of high importance to this audience, but the vast majority of respondents don’t engage with a traditional local outlet**
   In total 77 per cent of all respondents said they were interested or very interested in local news, yet only nine per cent listed a local newspaper as among their top three news sources (other local news outlets ranked even lower). More respondents listed “Word of Mouth” as a preferred source for news than a local newspaper.

5. **Despite interest in international news, big international news stories don’t resonate with a large portion of this audience**
   Despite the fact 72 per cent of respondents indicated strong interest in international news, 55 per cent of respondents from the non-journalism student pool (Group 2) said they were “not at all familiar” with the death of Jamal Khashoggi; 31 per cent said the same thing about the Robert Mueller Investigation, and 32 per cent gave the same response for Brexit. That said, 62 per cent indicated they were “very familiar” with news about the provincial cut to university fees. The next most familiar topic among the options given: a bus crash that wiped out a junior hockey team in Saskatchewan (49 per cent) and the Ariana Grande/Pete Davidson relationship (46 per cent).

6. **Traditional broadcasters are still reaching this generation, though the audience isn’t watching the news on television**
   Traditional cable TV ranked lower than social media, newspapers, radio and YouTube as a preferred source by which this generation gets its news. And yet respondents in both pools still indicated high online engagement levels with news originating from Canada’s public broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC), as well as CNN.

7. **This generation is OK with algorithms deciding what news they see**
   Having barely known the world before the newsfeed, 68 per cent of respondents said they were either extremely aware or very aware that algorithms are being used to study their news consumption habits to tailor news to meet their individual interests. Fifty-seven per cent of the wider pool of respondents (Group 2) agreed or strongly agreed with the practice, while the journalism students (Group 1) were more divided over whether they agreed with it.

8. **This audience does not subscribe**
   Only a small portion of those respondents who listed paywalled publications like *The New York Times*, *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star* among their top news sources also indicated that they actually paid to subscribe to those platforms. This may partially explain why some of the same respondents who stated *The New York Times* was their top news source also said they had no familiarity with the Robert Mueller Investigation. It appears that many respondents listed sites like *The New York Times* and *The Globe and Mail* as their preferred news sources despite not subscribing. Further research is required to better understand whether this means that reading 10 articles a month before hitting a paywall still made those platforms their top news sources. Among respondents from the wider audience (Group 2), only one out of 200 respondents identified as having a paid digital subscription while those in the journalism student pool subscribed mostly to American media.
9. Trust is important to this generation when it comes to news

More than the cost of a subscription or compatibility with their world view, respondents in both groups indicated that “trust” is their most important factor when deciding whether to engage with a news source.

Findings in Further Details

The post-millennial audience is very fragmented

“Nothing but a newspaper can drop the same thought into a thousand minds at the same time.” (de Tocqueville, 1835) To some extent, it was this age-old truth that gave the fourth estate its democratic influence. But if the democratic function of mass communication necessitates that the media be able to reach the masses, then a potential shortcoming of a generation that gets its news predominantly from social media may be that no two people’s newsfeeds are the same, thereby rendering the task of actually dropping the same thought into a thousand minds at the same time, much more complicated.

As qualitative research by Madden (2017) and the Knight Foundation has highlighted, this generation’s preferred delivery mechanism for news is mobile. Recent studies by the Pew Research Center (Shearer, 2018) have shown that social media is the dominant source for news among Americans aged 18-29. And that “the age gaps that have long been notable have now widened substantially, with those 65 and older five times as likely as 18- to 29-year-olds to often get news from TV . . . Far fewer young Americans are turning to television news.”

Analysis of the statistical data collected as part of this research study shows that the audience continues to fragment.

As with the results of the Pew Research Center study, the respondents in this study indicated that social media was the dominant source for their news. Interestingly, no single social media source was as prevalent a source as Canada’s public broadcaster (The Canadian Broadcast Corporation) which 45 per cent of respondents listed among their top three news sources.

Twitter ranked second highest as a news source for the journalism students (Group 1), with 35 per cent of those respondents indicating it was among their top three news sources. Only 12 per cent of respondents from the wider pool (Group 2) said the same thing. Combining the responses from both survey groups revealed that six sources—CBC, Twitter, CTV (Canada’s largest independent TV network), CNN, Facebook and The New York Times—penetrated into the top three sources of news for more than 10 per cent of the audience. Eight more sources were on the list of more than five per cent of the audience while 12 other sources were listed by more than 1 per cent of the audience. Forty-six other sources reached less than one per cent of the audience. Among them: Canada’s only national news magazine (Maclean’s: 0.2 per cent), Stephen Colbert (0.5 per cent) and Vice (0.8 per cent).
**Figure 2** — *Audience Fragmentation illustrated from survey responses: “Please list your top three sources for news” — Survey Groups 1 and 2 combined*

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**Social media is the gateway for traditional media to reach this audience**

As with the results of the Shearer (2018) PEW Research Center study, the data analyzed in this study shows that what is widely considered to be “mass media” has a diminished capacity to reach a “mass” audience within Generation Z.

Analysis of the two survey groups indicate this generation as a whole is heavily reliant on their newsfeeds. The research shows the journalism students surveyed in Group 1 were found to be using social media as a source for news in significantly different ways than the respondents from Group 2.
Asked to “indicate what kind of news sources you consume on a daily basis” 89 per cent of the journalism students (Group 1) compared to 62 per cent of the wider audience (Group 2) indicated “Social media (personalized newsfeeds curated from traditional news outlets)”. Roughly 55 per cent of respondents in each survey group indicated “Social media (personalized newsfeeds curated from friends and family)” while roughly 45 per cent indicated that they also got their news from celebrity influencers in their newsfeeds.

Figure 3 — Daily news sources for entire audience
“Please indicate what kind of news sources you consume on a daily basis” — Survey groups 1 and 2 combined

Further analysis of the platforms that survey respondents are using indicated that the journalism students (Group 1) were more likely to use Twitter as a news source than were the respondents from Group 2. However, respondents from the wider audience (Group 2) indicated that they
consumed news significantly more often than the journalism students across all other social media sites listed, including YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook, Reddit and Instagram.

*Figure 4 — Social Media as a news source for Generation Z*
Breakout graph of social media platforms that respondents indicated they “often use to consume news”

The post-millennial audience views itself as news literate

As Guess, Nagler and Tucker (2019) of the Social Media Participation Lab at New York University, highlighted in their study “Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook”, the group most likely to share fake news stories over social media were people over age 65. Guess’s team found that more than one in 10 baby boomers, about 11 per cent, shared fake news stories over Facebook, compared to three per cent of Facebook users between the ages of 18 and 29. As Nagler, one of the authors on that study, told the *Boston Herald* “People who are 18-29 years old have grown up with the internet and are more aware of what a free-for-all it is. They have a basic understanding that anybody can post things online and that breeds a certain amount of skepticism.”

Analysis of the results from the surveys conducted for this study indicate that respondents consider themselves capable of differentiating between real and fake news. Respondents in both groups were asked: “How would you rate your ability to critically evaluate the reliability of the news and information you get from the media?”

One noteworthy finding, though perhaps not surprising: the journalism students (Group 1) were more likely than the wider audience (Group 2) to rate their ability positively: 34.4 per cent of the journalism students indicated “very good” while 64.3 per cent indicated “good.”
the wider audience (Group 2) rated their ability lower, with 20.5 per cent saying “very good”, 63.5 per cent as “good” and 10 per cent as “poor.”

Further research into how other demographics would answer the same survey question would help to gage whether respondents from those generations that are statistically more likely to share fake news over social media would rate their own news literacy as highly as the Generation Z respondents represented in this study.

**Local News is of high importance to this audience, but the vast majority of respondents don’t engage with a traditional local news outlet**

Despite evidence of a disengagement from traditional local news sources (metro daily newspapers, local TV news and radio), respondents in both survey groups indicated high interests in local news — 77 per cent said they were “interested” or “very interested” in local news, yet only nine per cent listed a local newspaper as among their top three news sources. But even that figure is inflated by the journalism students who were required to consume news from local news outlets as part of their studies.

As April Lindgren, journalism professor at Ryerson University and principal investigator for the Local News Research Project has found: in Canada in the last decade alone, at least 244 local news outlets have closed in 181 communities across the country (Lindgren, 2018). Lindgren’s group has been studying what she calls “local-news poverty”—what happens when a community’s critical information needs aren’t being filled by news outlets.

Despite not engaging en-masse with traditional local news outlets, survey respondents indicated high familiarity with local transit stories and other issues relevant to their daily existence. Further research with survey questions geared toward “where do you get your local news?” are planned for follow-up research with both survey groups. Analyzing the data available indicates that they may be getting much of that news from the friends and family populating their newsfeeds (a daily source of news for 15 per cent of all survey respondents) or from general “Word of Mouth” which 10 per cent of respondents listed as among their top three news sources.
Despite interest in international news, big international news stories don’t seem to resonate with a large portion of this audience

Students in both survey groups indicated high interests in the traditional sections of the mainstream news agenda across multiple sources (see Figure 4). But in an effort to grasp whether that meant they were actually following the same stories mainstream news outlets were covering, I created a list of major news stories that had received days, weeks and, in some cases, months of coverage at the local, national and international level and asked survey respondents to indicate their familiarity with each story. Among those stories selected: the death of Jamal Khashoggi, the Robert Mueller investigation, the SNC-Lavalin affair (a prolonged Canadian political scandal that resulted in the removal of two ministers from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s cabinet), the controversial arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou on Canadian soil, the trial of Bruce McCarthur (a Toronto serial killer whose arrest and trial had been a national news story for more than a year), the election of Nicolas Maduro as president of Venezuela, the Ariana Grande and Pete Davidson relationship, the Wet’suwet’en standoff (a prolonged clash between Indigenous groups and the government over a pipeline in British Columbia), the Humboldt Broncos tragedy (a major national news story about
a bus crash that killed 16 people, most of them members of a junior hockey team in Saskatchewan) and the provincial tax cut to Ontario university fees (a high impact story, given the demographic). On the survey sent to journalism students (Group 1), an additional local question was added related to delays in plans for a light rail network in Ottawa. To the wider audience (Group 2), which was spread across Ontario, an additional international question was included about familiarity with Brexit.

As expected, the journalism students (Group 1) indicated higher levels of familiarity across all story subjects. The journalism students also indicated a much higher familiarity with the Khashoggi story than anticipated given preliminary informal research. Consultations with faculty in Carleton’s Journalism department indicated that Khashoggi’s murder had become a frequent discussion point in classes in the months after his murder.

In the wider audience (Group 2) survey, 55 per cent of respondents said they were “not at all familiar” with the death of Jamal Khashoggi; 31 per cent said the same thing about the Robert Mueller Investigation and 32 per cent gave the same response for Brexit.

When the responses from both survey groups are examined together, the stories that garnered the overall highest familiarity ratings were the provincial cut to university fees and the bus crash that wiped out a junior hockey team in Saskatchewan. Further analysis is planned to better understand the results of these findings and their meaning.
Figure 6a — Overall awareness of major news stories among journalism students
“How familiar are you with the following major news stories from the last 12 months?” —Survey Group 1

The death of Jamal Khashoggi
The Robert Mueller investigation
The SNC-Lavalin affair
The arrest of Meng Wanzhou
The trial of Bruce McArthur
The SNC-Lavalin affair
The election of Nicolas Maduro
The Ariana Grande and Pete Davidson relationship
The Wet’suwet’en standoff
The delayed service of the Rideau Transit Group
The provincial cut to university fees
The Humboldt Broncos tragedy
The provincial cut to university fees

Very familiar
Somewhat familiar
Not at all familiar
Figure 6b — Overall awareness of major news stories among the wider audience “How familiar are you with the following major news stories from the last 12 months?” —Survey Group 2

Traditional broadcasters are still reaching this generation, though the audience isn’t watching the news on television

As a 2018 PEW Research Center study showed, TV news viewership is declining faster than in previous years thanks, in large part, to a growing portion of younger adults who no longer engage with traditional cable TV (Gottfried, 2018). The results of this survey indicate that this trend continues in the post-millennial audience. It is important to note that this audience still seems to be consuming news from broadcasters even if they are no longer doing so via an actual television.

Despite high engagement levels with news originating from Canada’s public broadcaster, traditional cable TV ranked lower than social media, newspapers, radio and YouTube when respondents were asked to rate a platforms’ ability to inform them of current events.
More than half (53 per cent) of the journalism students (Group 1) surveyed indicated that cable TV was not a platform they used for news while only 34 per cent said the same for YouTube. Respondents from the wider audience (Group 2) appeared to watch more cable TV news (30 per cent indicated it was not a platform they used for news) while 19 per cent said the same for YouTube. Despite these figures, and as shown in Figure 1, traditional Canadian TV networks still ranked among the top three sources for news among 74 per cent of respondents.

It appears that YouTube may be serving as the platform by which a significant portion of this audience is consuming news from traditional broadcasters, it should also be noted that in the case of the CBC, respondents indicated that they were consuming far more of the broadcaster’s content via text-based stories on their mobile device than they were from the CBC’s radio or TV networks. Further research is needed to strengthen the understanding of what percentage of respondents are still engaging with traditional news broadcasts without actually watching TV.

*Figure 7 — Relationship with sources for broadcast news*

“How would you rate the following platforms’ ability to inform you about current events?” — Survey groups 1 and 2, shown separately.

This generation is OK with algorithms deciding what news they see

Regardless of location, their world has been altered by a “quiet but epic paradigm shift fraught with social and policy implications” (Lazer, 2015). There is a long-standing tension between what the public craves from the news and what they actually need for democracy to work. This presents a struggle in traditional newsrooms where editors and journalists have become increasingly reliant on data to make sure they are producing the type of content that algorithms say meets the desired readership’s interests as well as their needs. While that fact might give pause to readers more accustomed to a traditional news agenda produced by editors and journalists based off their judgments of what content is important for the audience to know, the post-millennial audience doesn’t seem to care. Only 2.5 per cent of respondents from the wider audience (Group 2) said they “strongly disagree” with the use of algorithms to personalize their news. Respondents engaged in the study of journalism (Group 1) expressed much more disagreement over the growing practice.
These findings are significant given this generation is the first to grow up in what the PEW Research Center has called “the Algorithm Age” (Rainie, 2017).

Figure 8 — Growing up in the Algorithm Age

“Do you agree or disagree that online algorithms should be used to study your news consumption habits and tailor the news to meet your individual interests?” — Survey group 1 and 2

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This audience does not subscribe

There has been evidence since the 2016 US Presidential election that the millennial audience has begun to subscribe to legacy media in numbers not previously seen. But according to the “Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017” (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy & Nielsen, 2017), which surveyed more than 70,000 people in 36 countries, the United States was the only country that saw an increase in the proportion of people who paid for online news, jumping from 9 per cent in 2016 to 16 per cent in 2017. As the report made clear, millennials were a large part of that bump.

Given the Canadian nature of this study, it is worth noting there has been no evidence of a Trump bump north of the Canada-US border. Canada’s population size (37 million spread across a country roughly the size of all of Europe) has also impeded its traditional metro dailies from generating the required number of digital subscriptions in order to fund their editorial activities. This reality has placed the country’s metro daily structure at risk of collapse (POPPLEWELL, 2018). For this reason, the Toronto Star (traditionally Canada’s largest newspaper) attempted to rebrand itself not as a metro daily but as a national news platform prior to putting up a digital paywall midway through 2018. As reported in The Walrus magazine in 2018:
Tom Rosenstiel, executive director of the American Press Institute, has worked with news organizations across the US on strategies to move beyond print. ‘If you’re not growing a digital future,’ he says, ‘there isn’t a scenario where you survive.’ Rosenstiel warns that the industry needs to brace itself for the time when ad revenues shrink to unsustainable levels, which he projects at seven to ten years out. If newspapers aren’t up and running on digital subscriptions in time, it will be too late to reverse course. And if metro dailies—part of what scholars have called ‘keystone’ outlets for the way they can set the agenda for web, radio, and TV—keep falling, the inhabitants of the majority of cities across Canada and the United States will lose a crucial check on their politicians and institutions.

The financial struggles of the traditional mass media give critical context to the study of any survey that examines the willingness of the post-millennial audience to purchase a digital subscription to any news source. If the respondents from the wider audience (Group 2) are a representation of their generation, then the post-millennial audience does not show much willingness to pay for digital news (See Figure 8a). Looking to the journalism students (Group 1) there did emerge evidence of a willingness to pay for digital news. However, of the 57 respondents who identified as having paid digital subscriptions, more than half of those subscriptions were to the New York Times. This trend may prove troubling to the Canadian news media if an increasing majority of those willing to pay for a subscription do not want to pay for Canadian content.

Both Canada’s leading national newspaper, The Globe and Mail, and its largest metro daily newspaper, the Toronto Star currently require a digital subscription in order to access more than 10 articles per month from either outlet’s website. It must be noted, however, that the CBC, Canada’s public broadcaster, has no digital paywall. This likely has an impact on the CBC’s overall popularity as a source for digital news over the Toronto Star or The Globe and Mail. As more news outlets place their content behind digital paywalls, the amount of traditional news content this audience has access to may shrink. Whether this has already impacted their familiarity with what may be deemed major news stories is worth more evaluation.

Figure 9a — Digital Subscriptions
“Do you have a paid subscription to any digital news service?

![Figure 9a — Digital Subscriptions](image-url)
Figure 9b — Paid digital sources

“Please indicate what digital news source you subscribe to”

Trust is important to this generation when it comes to news

Despite the numerous differences in readership trends revealed while examining the two survey groups individually, their responses to the question: “When deciding whether or not to engage with a specific news source how important are the following factors” were almost completely in check with each other. Ninety-two per cent of respondents said “Trust” was either “very important” or “important.” This is significant given the same respondents showed a reliance on their newsfeeds as a primary source for news. As previous studies have shown (Guess, Nagler & Tucker 2019) this generation’s lower rate of sharing fake news online is the result of “skepticism” toward the source of information appearing in their newsfeeds. Further research is warranted to better understand what this finding really means.
**Conclusions**

Having grown up in the age of algorithms, social media, and the smart phone, this generation’s news consumption habits are unique from those of millennials and from the older generations that currently embody the “mass” adult audience being reached by traditional mass media. Further research is planned to expand this study in order to better understand what impact the fragmentation of this audience may have on the mass media’s future capacity to “drop the same thought into a thousand minds at the same moment.”

The data collected for this study seem to indicate that the traditional metro daily newspaper now has less capacity to reach a mass post-millennial audience than multiple social media platforms. Educators are teaching journalism to a generation for whom YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat rank higher than most broadcasters or print newspapers as the preferred delivery mechanism for news. Educators should also note that this generation as a high perception of its own news literacy. This finding should be considered alongside their media consumption habits and sometimes low familiarity with what would be considered major news stories. This audience may not be sharing fake news as frequently as older demographics, but they also aren’t catching major stories. Educators should also note that while this audience gets a large portion of its news from social media newsfeeds it does continue to engage with a plethora of niche, small market sources as illustrated in Figure 1. The preferred central hub by which information is channelled toward a potential “mainstream” audience appears to be through social media outlets which, though susceptible to algorithmic manipulation, have the highest proven capacity to engage
this generation. Heartening is the finding that 74 per cent of the audience does continue to engage with “traditional news outlets” via their newsfeeds.

**About the Author**

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**References**


Teaching Relational Journalism in Our Disruptive Age

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Abstract

In the midst of the disruptions and distrust that plague traditional media, a new style of journalism is emerging. Dozens of news organizations, from corporate powerhouses to home-office startups, are reviving a classic role of journalism: to inspire and enable citizens to do the difficult work of citizenship. Following visits (or in-depth video interviews) with leaders at 18 of these organizations, we describe the characteristics of what we call relational journalism, and recommend how faculty can introduce new skills -- and a new mindset -- to aspiring journalists interested in restoring democratic practices in the communities they cover.

Introduction

In the midst of the disruptions and distrust that have plagued traditional media in recent years, a new style of journalism is emerging. Dozens of news organizations, from corporate powerhouses to home-office startups, are reviving a classic role of journalism: to inspire and enable citizens to do the difficult, authentic, and ultimately rewarding work of citizenship in a democratic society. In this paper we report on one practice in particular that characterize this work.

Citizen deliberation, in the United States and in democracies around the world, has always been difficult work. In this postmodern, post-truth era, its lassitude imperils democracy itself. Public problems have become more complex. Public discourse often deteriorates into sporadic flurries of closed-minded attacks. But journalism remains one of the few institutions that can play a role in restoring the health of a democracy, by engaging in practices that consciously improve citizens’ civic capacity.

The purpose of this paper is twofold: to report on the strategic behaviors that innovative journalism practitioners are employing to help communities develop civic capacity, and to apply these discoveries to the journalism classroom, in order help aspiring journalists engage in practical ways with this new approach, which we term “relational journalism.”

News Media’s Facilitative Role in Democracy

Our theoretical foundation begins with a consideration of the normative roles of journalism in a democracy. Scanning the world’s democracies, Christians et al. (2009) identified four distinct roles for media in democracies: the *monitorial* role has journalists collecting, processing and
disseminating information about current events; the collaborative role calls for a high degree of cooperation between news media and institutions of power, especially the government; the radical role calls for news media to join in a movement to replace a ruler or government that they feel has strayed from democratic principles; and the facilitative role calls upon media to work directly to enhance citizens’ participation, deliberation and decision-making processes – for the sake of the public life – for the sake of a healthy democracy. The facilitative role celebrates journalism that promotes not only democratic practices but also inclusiveness, pluralism and a “collective purpose” in which citizens search for the common good. Christians et al. note that the facilitative role “has a constant, though implicit, presence” in the way most media scholars think about roles of the media. This paper explores journalistic work that makes the implicit explicit.

Despite – or perhaps because of – the disruptions that have upended the news business in the early 21st century, journalism is extremely well positioned to help democratic practice, even as it helps itself. The early practitioners of civic journalism, in the late 20th century, realized that if journalists were able to frame the democratic process as a conversation in which, as Christians et al. (2014), have written, “citizens engage one another on both practical matters and social vision” (159), they could turn audience’s attention away from conflicts, gossip and scandal and toward shared problems whose solutions could raise the quality of community life. And because journalism is already doing the work of disseminating information to large audiences quickly, only a modest adjustment is required to emphasize the information – verified, reliable and unbiased – that will help citizens with their deliberation on a particular issue.

But there is much more that journalism can do to facilitate citizen success. Like many institutions in American society, journalism has too often been seduced by elitism -- the ease of expertise and punditry to explain issues and problems. Paradoxically, the journalists, pundits and experts often have no personal experience in the issue they’re analyzing. Citizens quite often do. A truly facilitative journalism will not simply listen to ordinary citizens whenever they happen to have the microphone, but actively seek out the experiences of those ordinary folks and grant them legitimacy alongside the expert analysts and political advocates.

In fact, journalists have no choice in the matter. Thanks to “Web 2.0,” that is, the developments that enabled the internet interactivity we call social media, ordinary folks have been sharing their experiences with vast audiences for more than a decade. If anything, there is too much authentic experience available on social media. Media scholar Jeff Jarvis (2014) sees a fundamental shift in the outlook of today’s facilitative journalism. For 200 years, journalism followed a dynamic of the few not only disseminating information to the many but basically controlling that flow – selecting what is “news” every day and thereby setting the agenda for citizens’ public consumption and discussion. But because of the explosion of grass-roots media startups, from neighborhood newsletters to the advocacy platforms of national interest groups, the traditional news media no longer enjoy that control. Journalism, Jarvis writes, is best thought of as a flow information that has many, many sources. And professional journalists are participants in that flow. They are usually excellent writers trained in fact-gathering techniques, but they are nonetheless participants alongside thousands and thousands of others disseminating information (and sometimes misinformation and disinformation).

To the extent that mainstream journalism still commands the respect of large audiences in the communities they serve, its journalists can serve democratic practice by serving as curators. Just
as curators in libraries, art galleries or wine cellars will select and authenticate the work of others and add context to that work, professional journalists have the skill to pluck out the useful information from an otherwise chaotic cacophony on the internet. If journalistic curators can organize information that serves the purpose of shared, verified information that citizens need as they begin to deliberate, journalism will indeed be facilitating the democratic process.

Another fact of today’s networked, interactive world comes into play as we think about democratic deliberation. In the past, the “public sphere” in which citizens gathered was always a physical space. Today, the sphere can more easily become available as a virtual space. Citizens can do the work of deliberation from their homes or offices, for example, via video-conferencing. As Rosenberry and St. John point out (2010), if a citizen-centered news organization wanted to help improve the public life in its community, it could easily build a web-based platform, well stocked with reliable facts and context, in which citizens could deliberate on an issue that the journalists, having already listened to citizens’ concerns, have researched. The deliberative process can be moderated by journalists so that the group stays focused on seeking the public good and steers clear of trolling, polarizing positions or tangents.

As noted above, no one group owns or controls the dissemination of new information, as the journalism profession did in the 20th century. That doesn’t mean journalism is dying, though – far from it. What it does mean is that journalists must adjust to new ways of working with the citizens formerly known as “the audience.” Again, here is where Relational Journalism can contribute. News web sites can easily construct platforms for virtual dialogue, conversation, debate – all of those dynamics that can eventually lead to deliberation. They can use the legitimacy of the news organization to guide the conversation toward common values and solutions, and away from language that divides communities. At the very least, this offers to citizens access to a sizable that formerly was reserved for professional journalists.

In fact, Zuckerman (2017) has listed seven ways in which social media alone can facilitate democratic deliberation. For all its downside risks and attributes, social media can also inform citizens in ways mainstream media cannot; amplify important voices and issues that mainstream media may not be aware of; provide a tool for connections and solidarity among citizens; serve as a space for citizens’ debate and deliberation; serve as a space for citizens’ mobilization to action; provide a tool to show a diversity of perspectives; and “role-model” behaviors for how a community can be governed democratically.

A facilitative role for media in the 21st century, then, is more complex, and has greater potential for positive change, than the civic journalism of the late 20th century.

Relational Journalism: Facilitative Media At Work

Relational Journalism refers to a style of journalism – both a skill set and a mindset – that facilitates the building of relationships with citizens, and among citizens. This term is derived from relational communication, which Oxford’s Dictionary of Media and Communication (2016) defines as communication in which the primary focus is the development of an ongoing relationship between the participants. Deliberation studies have shown that relationship-building is a reliable requisite to collective problem solving – as is shared access to reliable information. Journalism has the potential to contribute in both regards.
The four components of relational communication that apply to journalism are a commitment to the long term, the ability to cope with differences, transparency, and the ability to listen.

With relational journalism, the publication of an in-depth article is seen as the launch of a shared exploration, rather than the signal to move on to another issue. The vast majority of commercial journalism in recent decades is characterized by what we call “extractive journalism,” where the journalist views each source as an opportunity for extraction or exploitation and then moves on to the next story or project. “I just need a good quote from the opposition” epitomizes the extractive attitude, whereby that one encounter between source and writer will probably enhance the appeal of one article -- and the journalist expects never to encounter that source again. Even if the quote accurately represents the source’s point of view, that source is likely to feel exploited by a process that is essentially has only fleeting interest in the source’s deeper experience. Now imagine, by contrast, a journalism who is committed to a deeper understanding of citizens’ experiences.

With relational journalism, differences within a community take on new meaning. In traditional reporting, conflict is seen as an asset – something to be highlighted. The more dramatic the conflict, the more important the story. But relationships survive when differences are not accorded the power to end the relationship. If the purpose of relational journalism is ultimately to enhance citizens’ deliberation, the journalist should be helping citizens identify the shared values without which shared solutions will be impossible.

With relational journalism, news gathering takes on new levels of transparency. For the last few decades, journalism has heard more calls for greater transparency. In fact, media ethicists McBride and Rosenstiel (2014) identified transparency as one of the three overarching principles that define ethical journalism (the other two being “truth” and “community”). With the new mindset of relational journalism, transparency must involve more than publishing more, and more honest, corrections after mistakes have occurred. The Knight Commission (2019) urged the adoption of “radical transparency,” which calls upon editors to draw back the curtain that has traditional cloaked the process of reporting. This could include publishing links to the primary sources reporters used in researching a story; explanations as to why a certain story was pursued and why another issue was not pursued for a story; separation of commentary from factual reporting and clear labeling as to which is which; and explanation as to why some sources were named and others allowed to remain “anonymous.”

With relational journalism, “listening” becomes more complex. In traditional journalism, reporters listen for colorful quotes and for information that will ensure accuracy. To build relationships with citizen groups, reporters listen for authentic experiences that may not be recognized by official institutions; they listen to engender mutual respect; they listen for threads that might lead to shared values or solutions; they incorporate what they’ve heard into stories more nuanced than traditional narratives.

Relational journalism is a strategy to enhance citizens’ capacity to succeed as citizens. Eventually citizens deliberating must come to a public judgment – a decision or array of actions that seem likely to enhance the greater good of a community. Even here journalists can contribute without becoming advocates for one policy over others. The Solutions Journalism Network, for example, trains journalists to research solutions one community has found for a particular problem, in ways
that citizens in a different community, with a similar problem, might learn and be inspired. Instead of urging a particular solution, the journalists report on what has worked elsewhere. And finally, citizens in deliberation commit to “collective learning” to stay committed and organized for the long term. Journalism again is organized to archive – for easy retrieval – the information from past weeks, months and years regarding important issues.

The authors therefore sought evidence to verify these theoretical suppositions about relational journalism. It may simply provide information to citizens for use in their deliberations, or it may go further and foster relationships with and among citizens. It may be perceived to have benefits, either for a news organization itself or for the greater polity. Its practice in the field may have implications for the way reporting is taught in journalism education. Thus emerge four research questions for this study.

RQ1: How can journalists provide information that builds relationships with and among citizens on a shared journey toward the solution of a community problem?

RQ2: In what other ways can journalists build relationships with citizens that improve civic capacity?

RQ3: What benefits – if any -- return to the journalistic enterprise as a result of relational journalism?

RQ4: How do journalism faculty effectively teach new norms and practices with these goals in mind?

Method

The authors pursued these questions by conducting in-depth interviews with leaders of 17 entities engaged in journalism that somehow seeks to enhance civic capacity.

Results

A qualitative analysis of the transcripts of dozens of interviews, via teleconference or in person on site visits, yielded several patterns that addressed the research questions from several different perspectives.

In answer to RQ1, regarding providing information that helps build relationships, patterns emerged suggesting two approaches:

a. A long-term commitment to covering issues and problems: In most of our studies of news organizations, we observed a trend away from extractive journalism and toward a commitment to a deeper understanding and even a shared struggle with readers or listeners in coping with a community problem. In Wichita Falls, Texas, for example, the Times Record News declared that the water shortage was the county’s most pressing problem and that the paper would pursue solutions for as long as it would take. The entire staff demonstrated its commitment by standing in the county’s bone-dry reservoir for a picture, which appeared on Page One. True to its word, the paper ran 213 stories on its front page within the next year. But the commitment seems to extend beyond reporters’ staying focused on a single story. Several research subjects described a process of seeking out non-official sources, such as those impacted by a problem, and interviewing
them several times before posting a story. Mary Plummer, senior political reporter at KPCC in Pasadena, Calif., said sources returned the reporters’ attention to them with a loyalty of their own toward the station. “They’re not used to feeling listened to, by the news media” Plummer said. She goes so far as to consult sources on earlier stories for advice on how to cover newer stories. Her conclusion is that such source the station a good deal more respect than the “extractive” journalist is likely to have.

b. **Basic, factual, background information in non-narrative form:** Regardless of the relationships between journalists and communities, journalists bring an undeniable talent to the quest of addressing shared problems: They are skilled at gathering reliable information. With relational journalism, however, the process takes place in a non-traditional context. Several of the news organizations under study had undertaken difficult community conversations where they knew there would be distrust. Spaceship Media, for example, provides “FactStats” for every discussion it initiates, which contain graphics, lists and a neutral narrative with background information on the issue—carefully researched with all sources cited. Citizens engaging in the discussion are encouraged to reference only the FactStats material for support or rebuttal of an argument. Other journalists in the study sought background facts but only in accordance with what citizens, not journalists, felt was important information. City Bureau in Chicago, for example, learned from community residence that incarceration was a fact of life in low-income neighborhoods of Chicago, yet few residents had knowledge of the day-to-day logistics of the criminal justice system. City Bureau published an “Incarceration Guide,” which editors say was well received. Likewise, KPCC in Pasadena posted a “Human Voter Guide” before the 2016 election, which contained—instead of the predictable summaries of referendum pros and cons and candidates’ positions—answers to questions listeners, many of whom were first-time voters, sent to the station. Most news managers in the study seemed to agree that background information that seems neutral and responsive to citizens’ concerns will generate the trust that builds relationships.

In answer to RQ2, regarding relationship-building beyond publishing information, six approaches emerged:

c. **Deep, active listening to citizens:** Many of these journalists have committed to a new level of listening, both in the reporting of stories and in their own pursuit of story ideas. Most prominent in this realm is Hearken, a Chicago-based business that trains about 150 news organizations in citizen-engagement practices that focus on listening. Citizens are explicitly invited to ask questions of community interest, and they are then invited to “vote” for the most important and intriguing of the citizen-generated topics. Staff reporters then pursue the “winning” story. With several Hearken clients, such as Curious City at radio station WBEZ in Chicago, the citizen whose question was the top vote-getter participates with the reporter in the reporting of the story, and at times writes or voices parts of the eventual package.

Other forms of listening are less structured. Many organizations host dinners at community centers or meetings at libraries to hear citizens’ thoughts about certain issues. American Public Media in Minnesota, planning a series of stories on financial planning, invited middle-aged, single women to discuss what “financial security” meant to them. The results were in stark contrast to what certified financial planners had identified. Also, many editors pointed out that these “listening” meetings proceed “off the record,” so that citizens can speak knowing that their words will not appear as quotations in a later story. If a citizen does utter “quotable” language, the reporter returns
to that person to request a formal “on the record” interview to invoke the earlier sentiment. The attitude again strikes a stark contrast with extractive journalism.

**d. Working with Citizens, Beyond Publication, in Deliberation.** Several news organizations in the study described processes by which they helped citizens in some stage of democratic deliberation. According to Mathews (2014), citizens first identify and define a problem. Journalists who listen well to non-official sources can publish that thing the citizens have named and framed as a community issue; journalists can raise the issue’s salience in the community, and then provide unbiased background information. Citizens then identify underlying values and discover which values they all hold in common; journalists are capable also of helping to do that, in a cohesive and public way. For example, City Bureau in Chicago trains its reporters to moderate discussions at community meetings, in order to focus on a consensus message the neighborhood’s residents wish to convey to political leaders. The editorial board of *The Tennessean* in Nashville initiates meetings at local libraries, on specified topics.

Is this journalism? David Plazas, opinion/engagement editor at *The Tennessean*, believes it is: “If it stimulates conversation in the community, then it’s journalism.” Shawn Allee, a producer for Chicago’s *Curious City*, said listeners first get involved out of personal interest, not because they’re seeking political engagement, but that the deliberative process leading to problem-solving eventually “just creeps in. Somehow it works.” The least conventional of these deliberative moments in the study was “Budget Hero” at American Public Media. Referencing the popular video game “Guitar Hero,” this is a video game in which players attempt to create the U.S. federal budget, perhaps even to balance the budget. More than 2.5 million Americans, many of them students, played the game in its five years of existence.

**e. Sharing the Work of Journalism with Citizens.** Sharing journalistic tasks with citizens is nothing new, but it has often meant simply inviting citizens to offer “tips” for future stories and to provide feedback on previously posted or published work. In this study we observed a broad range of journalist-citizen collaboration. City Bureau, in Chicago, trains citizens to be “documenters,” to cover neighborhood government issues that mainstream news organizations no longer have the resources to cover. The most sophisticated form of collaboration is seen at The Membership Puzzle projects, whose centerpiece is *De Korrespondent* in the Netherlands. There, citizens with subject-area expertise are invited not only to support the news organization monetarily but to assist reporters when they cover topics relevant to the member’s expertise. According to Emily Goligoski, research director of the Membership Puzzle, about 30 percent of reporters’ time is spent working with members on stories. Goligoski sees dozens of news organizations throughout the world inviting audience members in as co-producers with various levels of involvement. Reporters at KPCC in Pasadena are encouraged to contact sources for previous stories to elicit feedback on more recent stories and advice on upcoming stories.

On this aspect of relational journalism, several editors were quick to point out that they were not turning their journalistic enterprise over to untrained amateurs. Citizen partners are valued for their knowledge and experience, they said, and journalists’ relationships with them are therefore important. But journalistic ethics and procedures are still in force, and the vast majority of the collaborative work is produced by professionals.
f. **New Levels of Transparency.** In inviting non-professional citizens to collaborate in the work of journalism, journalists are ascending to new levels of transparency. Hearken, for example, encourages its clients to involve non-journalists in virtually every aspect of news gathering -- from the inception of story ideas to the production of the final package. In doing so, journalists demystify their work and restore trust. The *Texas Tribune*, for example, is a non-profit news organization that is painstakingly aware of the appearance of undue influence from any of its many financial backers. Editors are required, therefore, to check each story for any references to sources or subjects who are connected to financial supporters. If a connection exists, a note to that effect must appear at the bottom of the story. KPCC in Pasadena makes transparency a personal obligation of every reporter: Along with the brief “bios” that often appear on news websites, each reporter posts a “personal mission statement” that explains how his or her work goals are in alignment with the news organization’s mission statement.

g. **New Levels of Diversity.** If the facilitative role turns it attention to ordinary citizens, and the issues defined by ordinary citizens, it is by necessity increasing the diversity of its work. If by diversity we mean an array of different experiences and different points of view – especially including experiences and points of view and experiences that have historically been overlooked - - then relational journalism seems to be expanding diversity. Several of the editors interviewed pointed to the traditional attitude of relying almost exclusively on experts and officials (administrators or politicians) for public-affairs information. If an ordinary citizen (with no particular clout) was used, it was often for the purpose of illustrating a theme established by the expert or official. When journalism displays a world constructed by those holding the greatest power, they may be staying close to important, official actions, but they are also exacerbating the divide that already exists between citizens and the institutions that control so much of their lives. Linda Miller, director of engagement and inclusion at American Public Media, said that citizen-centered journalism leads to greater sensitivity of subjects and sources, which cannot help but expand diversity. She said she encourages reporters to pre-test questions with members of underrepresented communities before beginning to interview subjects in those communities.

h. **Connections in Community:** Journalists provide means by which citizens can feel more connected to one another, even if such means have little to do with traditional journalistic practice. At AL.com, for example, editors invited readers to reflect on the Walt Whitman poem “Song of Myself,” and then to write their own, similar reflection on their identity in the context of Southern culture. Michelle Holmes, former vice president for news, said “It allowed people here to see each other as worthy, as authentic.” AL.com also produces a humor-based website entitled “It’s a Southern Thing,” which again encourages readers to see shared values more readily than cultural or social divisions. American Public Media asked immigrants who had voted in several elections to pair with immigrants from the same country who were new citizens and voting for the first time, to ease them through the process. The Texas Tribune hosts a “closed” Facebook Group entitled “This Is Your Texas,” by which citizens across the state can discuss current issues “off the record.” A reporter monitors the site-- to gather possible story ideas-- and suggests topics for discussion, but the primary purpose of the site is help resident across a massive geographic area (Texas) feel connected to each other. KPCC, in Pasadena, hosts a regular live event entitled “Unheard L.A.,” in which citizens are chosen (based on preliminary entries) to read a story that illuminates, in a highly personal way, some aspect of life in Southern California. Ashley Alvarado, KPCC’s director of citizen media, says the program, entirely lacking in traditional journalistic content, plays before
packed houses and is one of the most popular features on the station’s website because it brings
listeners to “new understandings of what it’s like to be living in LA.”

In answer to RQ3, regarding the benefits that return to the news enterprise as a result of relational
journalism, interview subjects offered a range, from the journalistic to the financial. By engaging
in the practices described in the section above, several editors stated, the news organization
improves its coverage of public affairs. It attains a more comprehensive view of topics, with greater
assurance that these are topics important to citizens (as distinct from elites’ agendas). Thus they
are likely to report stories that traditional news outlets have failed to discern. Several added that
their coverage is more accurate, as it relies less on elite sources’ assumptions and stereotypes and
more on the experiences of persons living closer to issues’ impacts.

Other editors felt that the most important benefits resulting from relational journalism accrue to the
community, not to the news organization. By fostering dialogue that is based on shared values and
shared facts, the conversation is less reliant on the shrill voices of extreme positions on issues.
Citizens are able to see that solutions need not “either/or” or “zero sum” solutions that will leave
most people frustrated. Other subjects offered that relational journalism builds trust – not only
citizens’ trust in their local news outlets but trust in each others’ pursuit of the common good, and
in each others’ abilities to realize workable solutions.

Still others focused on financial benefits. Relational journalism often results in stories or features
that seem different or fresh, and thus set the news outlet apart from the competition. Several
mentioned that the innovations they had adopted attracted new audience segments, which often
translated to increased memberships or other financial support. A fund-raiser at WBEZ in Chicago,
for example, said the latest piece aired by Curious City always seems to resonate with potential
donors. Beyond individual stories, several managers said that relationships provide the foundation
for long-term financial support, especially in memberships, which many believe will supplant the
dying business model that is based on retail advertising. “People will support something they feel
connected to,” a fund-raiser at the Texas Tribune stated. In answer to RQ4, the above norms can
be extrapolated and applied to the classroom context. Here are resulting recommendations:

1) The design of a reporting course should emphasize the processes of community journalism,
rather than the end-products (e.g. video packages, profile stories, etc.). Students should be allowed
to stay with one topic and one community for an entire term. One assignment might be to have
students spend several weeks listening to members of a group outside their “comfort zone,” in order
to learn which issues are important yet are to date ignored in the local or campus media.

2) New skills should be taught that foster relationship-building with citizens of a community. In
other places in the journalism curriculum students can learn social-media and multi-media skills,
which are vitally important to relational journalism. But community-building requires new skills
as well. These can range from finding “listening posts” in non-traditional places and mediating or
moderating difficult discussions among community members, to planning community events that
showcase citizen voices and creating succinct “facts sheets” to support community discussions.

3) The ethos of a relational journalism course should center on developing a “mindset” of relational
work in addition to the skill set. This includes, for example, patience with a process that doesn’t
always fit with traditional news values or with the demands of the traditional news cycle. It requires
that students engage face-to-face with a diverse range of community members, rather than relying solely on internet-based tools from a desk. This approach also rejects the arrogance of professionalism, whereby journalists seek access to elites in order to share elites’ values with a mass audience. Instead, students can be introduced to the likelihood that journalists are now contributors, among many others, in an informational ecosystem. As such, they seek to be partners with citizens and citizen groups. They are also advocates – not for a particular cause, party or policy, but advocates for citizen efficacy.

Conclusion

The debate citizen-centered journalism is more than 100 years old. Walter Lippmann (1922) argued that journalists should be trained, highly educated professionals who could draw “pictures in the mind” of readers, informing them with their expertise and through their access to authoritative sources. John Dewey (1916, 1954), on the other hand, argued that journalists’ most important role was, through their reporting and writing, to help foster community and enable citizens to participate in the public life. This paper takes the latter approach. The highest calling of the journalist in a democracy is to enable citizens to find common cause in solving important, shared problems. As Robinson has written (2017), “the journalism educator is . . . in a unique position to help improve society” (303). Instead of teaching aspiring journalists to pass along important information in appealing formats, the educator extend students’ vision beyond information-dissemination by showing them how to develop in citizens the capacity to think critically, address problems and develop strategies collectively to solve those problems. Mainstream news organizations have yet to embrace this approach, and certainly not in the United States. But with the impending collapse of the business model that had sustained journalism throughout the 20th century, journalism educators must embrace new approaches. Relational journalism is no more costly to implement than traditional approaches, and the interviews for this study suggest strongly that financial sustainability is at least as likely as with an advertising-based model. More importantly, relational journalism will introduce students to the journalism’s ultimate purpose in a democracy: to enhance the capacity of citizens to regain control of the public life.

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References


Appendix

News organizations observed

1) 100 Days in Appalachia (Morgantown, WV)
   This is one of several news startups to partner with a university journalism program. The Reed Media College at West Virginia University, working with local media partners, launched this site immediately after the election of President Trump, in response to often-inaccurate portrayals of the region in national media. The site is now a resource for audiences in and outside of Appalachia. 100 Days, located at the college’s innovation lab, works closely with West Virginia Public Broadcasting and the Daily Yonder in Kentucky. It has an “open source, co-publishing model” and shares content with regional, national and international media organizations.

2) AL.com (Birmingham, AL)
   Like many news organizations, Alabama Media Co. is in the midst of a wrenching transition from print to online production. It hopes to regain the public’s trust by working together with community members to identify, illuminate and solve complex public problems. It is exploring how to listen for a “public voice,” by hosting public forums in Alabama cities and by greater reporting transparency.Attributing citizens’ malaise to a lack of belonging, news VP Michelle Holmes supported artist Jennifer Chang Crandall’s creation of *Whitman, Alabama*, an emotionally compelling video series in which Alabamians read verses of Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself.”

3) American Public Media/KPCC (Pasadena, CA)
   American Public Media, the nation’s largest owner/operator of public radio stations, has been leading experiments to change the relationships between journalists and the public. One of APM’s leading exponents is KPCC radio in Pasadena, which, as examples, hosts “Unheard L.A.,” a series of public events where the speakers are ordinary citizens with extraordinary stories, and produces “The Human Voter Guide,” which answers citizens’ specific questions about upcoming elections. But APM and KPCC still adhere to time-honored standards of accuracy and compelling narrative. In fact, KPCC won a Murrow award for its coverage of Southern California’s wildfires in 2017.

4) City Bureau (Chicago)
   Founded in 2015, this nonprofit news outlet in Chicago trains and pays citizens “to participate in the newsgathering process and contribute to a communal pool of knowledge.” These “monitorial” reporters, who primarily cover public meetings, are only one way this South Side “civic journalism lab” is trying to “bring journalists and community members together in a collaborative spirit to encourage civic participation and hold powerful forces to account.” City Bureau founder Darryl Holliad thinks of journalism as citizenship. He is working “to disaggregate the skills of journalism and distribute them to the citizens, to build civic capacity.”

5) GroundSource/Listening Post Collective (Atlanta)
   GroundSource is a mobile engagement platform that help journalists listen more carefully to members of the communities they serve. It enables one-to-one communication through mobile messaging and text. This infectious idea helped spawn the creation of the New Orleans Listening Post project in 2013. This grew into the Listening Post Collective, which today supports projects with community media groups in New Jersey, Baltimore, Omaha, Georgia, Minneapolis and
abroad. The collective is founded on the belief that communities benefit when residents identify issues, seek information and share it directly among themselves.

6) Hearken/Curious City (Chicago)

People-powered journalism is the mantra of Hearken, a media platform and consulting group that advocates for story development that begins with -- not ends with -- feedback from the public. First, ask the public questions and listen with respect to the answers. Then, report the story and check in with the public throughout the story cycle. Hearken CEO Jennifer Brandel created this process in 2012 while working for WBEZ radio in Chicago, with Curious City, a program that still airs weekly. Hearken’s groundbreaking methods have been used in more than 100 media outlets in the United States and abroad.

7) KALW and “Voices” (Oakland, CA)

How can journalists help people work across their differences to talk, and then uncover solutions to shared problems? KALW News Director Ben Trefny turned to the Maynard Institute’s “Voices” program to work with his station. The institute trains residents from underserved neighborhoods to tell the stories of their communities. The Maynard Institute calls it “news from the inside out.” In describing the value of this co-production approach, Trefny explained that the neighborhood reporters contribute community knowledge and context that is invaluable for framing news reports, while “we bring a lot of the professional skills to them.”

8) The Membership Puzzle Project/The Correspondent/Join the Beat (New York)

These are outgrowths of the NYU research project that explores membership as a sustainable model for journalism. The idea is that a news organization can be more accurate, more comprehensive and more engaged in its communities if it invites collaborations with knowledgeable non-journalist members – who also pay an annual membership fee. The idea’s “proof of concept” is De Korrespondent in The Netherlands, which now has 60,000 paying members who contribute to the reporting as well. The “American version,” The Correspondent, crowdfunded $2.6 million in 2018 before even hiring a staff of journalists.

9) Neighborhood News Service (Milwaukee)

This hyper-local news outlet was founded to report on city neighborhoods the mainstream media had long ignored or, worse yet, portrayed only in a negative light. Its overall mission is to deliver a more complete narrative about these neighborhoods to the general public. The news network is a project of the Diederich College of Communication at Marquette University. The news service is led by Sharon McGowan, an accomplished professional journalist who rigorously upholds the time-honored values and principles of journalism. She does this while working with a wide array of contributors: Marquette students, neighborhood resident/reporters and her own staff.

10) New Jersey News Commons (Montclair, NJ)

The News Commons, at the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State, facilitates collaboration among news outlets in New Jersey, most pointedly among small, local newspapers - mainstream or alternative -- and radio stations. It passes along research findings on audience and citizen engagement, as well as business management tips and technological trends. In this way, former competitors are now collaborators sharing best practices. Also, small, alternative media that otherwise would struggle to be heard are now engaging successfully with their audiences by virtue of the help they're getting from the Commons.
11) Solutions Journalism Network/Seattle Times (Seattle)

Solutions Journalism is a New York-based nonprofit that is developing and spreading the practice of solutions-oriented journalism. The Seattle Times was an early adopter. In 2013, it created the Education Lab, whose aim was to broaden the conversation about public education and engage community members in generating solutions. In addition to keeping a steady reporting focus on public education, the newspaper hosted community meetings with parents, students, teachers and education advocates. Five years later, the Education Lab, with five journalists, continues its efforts to “create a new conversation that connects teachers, parents, students and others around innovation in schools.”

12) Spaceship Media (Oakland, CA)

This startup, founded by two experienced media professionals, is pioneering what it calls “dialogue journalism” to bridge different perspectives and reduce polarization. Co-founders Jeremy Hay and Eve Pearlman work with news organizations to design and manage conversations from the ground up. They help news organizations constructively dive into messy, highly-conflicted public problems in ways that help citizens find solutions. Their process promotes careful listening and empathy as essential to civic dialogue. “To do that right, the best journalistic values — fairness, thorough research, accuracy — must be held to now more than ever,” they say.

13) Storyful (Dublin, Ireland/New York)

This is a company that uses proprietary technology to quickly verify (or debunk) possibly newsworthy content from a variety of social-media sources, in order to protect the trustworthiness of its media clients. Storyful also trains clients in how to conduct their own verification of available content. For example, it has a protocol for determining whether a photo posted on social media was taken when and where its alleged authors claim it was, and another for determining whether alleged authors of posts are who they claim to be.

14) The Tennessean (Nashville, TN)

In addressing complex and persistent public problems, the paper’s mission is three-part: to hold a mirror to Nashville; to give voice to the voiceless, and to provide solutions. When reporting on affordable housing, the paper sponsored a forum, launched a book club and concluded its reporting by producing a documentary. Book club members came up with ideas that the newspaper shared with the mayor’s office and the public. Throughout the year-long project, the newspaper published 40 guest op-eds on housing. These efforts motivated more than 50 organizations to create a coalition called “Welcome Home!” to advocate for housing solutions.

15) The Texas Tribune (Austin, TX)

From Congress to health care, energy to the environment, The Texas Tribune provides non-partisan, ad-free, digital-first reporting of news, interactive data, and unique live public events, where people can learn, discuss and seek to resolve challenges that face the communities of Texas. The Texas Tribune is a non-profit Section 501 c-3 media entity. Its support comes from members, corporate underwriters, donors, foundations and from funds generated by live events. For example, tickets to the three-day Texas Tribune Festival cost from $45 to $500. This model for non-profit journalism has been sustainable for nearly 10 years.
16) **The Times Record News (Wichita Falls, TX)**

In 2014, Wichita Falls, was three years into such a bad drought that officials feared the city would run out of water in two years. The city’s reservoir was down to 28 percent of capacity. Editor Deanna Watson instinctively knew that her news staff would need to respond and lead differently. The paper created consensus around building a treatment plant that could make sewer water drinkable. It printed one water-saving suggestion a day from readers. Eventually it rained, but Wichita Falls will never be the same again, say city officials, who note that water consumption is down significantly.

17) **Your Voice Ohio**

This is a collaboration of 53 print, broadcast and web-based news organizations in and around Ohio that shares coverage of issues identified as important by citizens in community discussions. The project’s aim is to guide journalists away from the agendas set by politicians and institutions and toward the priorities of citizens. In its first two years, Your Voice Ohio produced a huge volume of solution-oriented stories on the opioid crisis in Ohio and on ways to revive the local economies of Ohio’s small towns and cities.

18) **Zocalo (Los Angeles, CA)**

A nonprofit founded in Los Angeles in 2003 by Gregory Rodriguez, Zocalo works to connect people from diverse backgrounds to ideas and to each other by examining public questions in an “accessible, broad-minded and democratic spirit.” It convenes events and publishes “ideas journalism.” “Because democracy is as much a culture as it is a system, we believe that creating meaningful opportunities for citizens to communicate with - and learn from - one another both nurtures and protects it.” Its journalism is syndicated to 290 media outlets worldwide, and Zocalo has held events around the world.
More than a Cliché? Futureproofing Meaningful Notions of Professionalism in Journalism Teaching

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Abstract

Despite the existential challenge posed by a notion of professionalism within journalism both individually and organisationally, for many practitioners, it has become synonymous with good or even ‘ethical’ journalism practice. This has led to the contention that ‘professionalism’ is now an inherent component of a broader understanding of what constitutes ‘quality’ journalism. And although a paradigm of professionalism such as that alluded to in the Leveson Report might be effective within real world journalism practice, a pilot study demonstrates that when it comes to journalism teaching, identifying the contexts in which such a notion is understood appears to be problematic.

Introduction

Journalism professionalism has long been identified as integral to the broader concept of the culture of journalism itself - one which Hanitschz defines as ideas and practices used by journalists to give legitimacy and meaning to their work and role in society (2007). As a consequence, it echoes the broader historical context of the idea of professionalism itself being used to perpetuate a perceived entitlement and control of access to a special status (Larson, 1977), a level of knowledge, a commitment to public service, standards of behaviour and symbols of achievement (Barber, 1965, cited in Ahern, 1971). Ultimately however, the concept of professionalism can be understood as a social construct (Holroyd, 2000) which is a continually-changing process determined by contexts and agendas (Helsby, 1999, cited in Evans, 2008).

In an attempt to pivot a notion of journalistic professionalism around these concepts, Singer (2003) identifies three fundamental characteristics or specifically, dimensions of a profession a journalism practitioner might reflect, with the aim of furthering an understanding of what a journalist is and does.

The first of these characteristics is the cognitive, through which professionals seek to establish control over expertise as well as entry into their field (Stark, 1985, cited in Singer, 2003). The subsequent standardized body of knowledge equips aspiring professionals with the sense of superiority over the so-called ordinary person and therefore legitimises the social division of labour on which their continuing status depends (Larson, 1977: 46-47).

The second characteristic is the normative, that can be used to justify the profession’s autonomy (Singer, 2003) and in turn, is typically expressed through self-regulation, because, so the argument goes, only professionals are qualified to assess and control their own ability to provide it - through the prescription of responsibilities of those inside the occupational group to those outside it (Maelver, 1966). This would usually be reinforced through codes of conduct, which, in the context
of the UK newspaper industry for example, would be the Editor’s Code – this in turn provides the framework for ethics codes used by (currently) two print industry regulatory bodies – the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) and IMPRESS.

The final characteristic is the evaluative – where the nature of the professional service is defined by the professional community itself through the setting of its own standards of adequate practice. This is underpinned by an ideology that justifies such an approach based on the belief that it best serves the public interest (Daniels, 1973). Furthermore, it places greater emphasis on status than financial incentives which, as a consequence, reinforces its claim that self-regulation derives from an expressed commitment to public service (Barber, 1965). However, as Singer is keen to stress, no profession meets these characteristics fully.

**Journalistic Professionalism and Normative Theory**

This paper argues that of the three characteristics of journalistic professionalism outlined above, the most complete claim journalism has to professional status is to be found in the normative characteristic.

However, it is important to emphasise that the term ‘normative’ has two distinct but related meanings in this context. The first meaning refers to the sociological characteristic of journalistic professionalism. The second, is understood and articulated in the context of normative theory and relates to journalistic practice.

Therefore, what is taken as the starting point for professional practice - linking both meanings of ‘normative’, are the principles of acceptable media behaviour; in other words, the normative issues about what should be done and the ideal way for a media system to be structured and operated – that is, not as it is but how it should be (Baran & Davis, 2009).

McQuail (2010) takes a broadly similar approach to defining the role of ethics in any given construct of journalistic professionalism, asserting that it refers to the ideas of rights and responsibilities that underlie expectations of benefit from the media to individuals and society, that is, “…how the media ought or are expected to be organized and to behave in the wider public interest and for the good of society as a whole” (p. 162).

There is a link here to what Singer terms the ‘journalistic theory of democracy’ – the idea that a primary role of journalism is to provide information to citizens in order for them to take more effective participation in democratic processes (Singer, 2003). This approach is further reflected in the normative paradigm espoused by Hanitschz (2011) which is associated with a detached watchdog role and the dissemination of populist and political information. However, although it could be acknowledged that there is some merit in adopting a perspective that journalists have sought to specify norms of conduct, standards of practice and ethical guidelines as a way of meeting what is perceived to be democratic obligations (2003), it fails to account for the political and commercial realities of operating in an environment that has become increasingly dominated by audience-driven agendas, continually and further undermining the role of the journalist as gatekeeper – which in itself is a permutation of the idea of the need for internal controls on professional (Singer, 2003) or, in this context, perceived normative, practice.
Furthermore, the transformation of online journalism into an ever-increasing variety of manifestations over the past 20 years has also had an impact - to the effect that one of the key distinctions made between online and so-called traditional news media can be found in perceived standards of ethical behaviour. The differences are further compounded by those who argue against any moves to simply transplant normative (ethical) practice from the traditional sphere to online platforms, even if it is seen as a good starting point for revisiting the fundamentals (Black, 1998: 16), because the latter is fundamentally different enough from the former for a compelling argument to be made for the introduction of bespoke guidelines (Deuze and Yeshua, 2001).

This also has the effect of justifying subversion of the journalistic ideals of individual practitioners to those of the news organizations they work for (Merrill, 1974; Soloski, 1989: 207; Birkhead 1986). And in the context of journalism education, this perspective is reinforced in Nel’s (2010) study which suggests a narrow definition of those attitudes and practices closely linked to organisational expectations of what is professional.

But while the case for maintaining core journalism competencies at the centre of journalism education remains compelling (Deuze, 2007; Baines and Kennedy, 2010), on its own it is insufficient and relevant programmes need to offer greater flexibility to enable students not only to adapt and specialise (Nel, 2010) but also to develop greater efficacy in enhancing key transferrable skills. These would then enable emerging practitioners to thrive in an environment that demands competencies that go beyond the traditional skillsets inherited from their educators (2010). Overholser (2010) takes this further by replacing the concept of journalism with the idea of ‘information in the public interest’ to enable practitioners and educators to continue to be effective participants within conversations around the changing modus operandi impacting on an industry where the audience are both news-shapers as well as news-consumers. Taking this approach into the sphere of journalism education, it is argued, would help to ensure journalism’s long-term survival.

**Contemporary Normative Theory and Journalistic Professionalism**

The concept of a normative theory for the media emerged out of an early 20th century attempt to make it more ‘professional’ through improvements to its respectability and credibility. This typically committed journalists to serve the public as effectively as possible and “uphold standards of professional practice” (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 109).

Taking its cue from this point, normative theory would therefore attempt to provide answers to broader questions about the role of media in a given society and address issues concerning its day-to-day operation, such as the type of moral and ethical standards that should guide media professionals (Barran & Davis, 2009).

However, it would also be fair to say that, insofar as the UK context is concerned, because of the commercial realities of the environments within which most (‘mainstream’) journalism continues to be practised, in addition to the fact that a significant number of ethical codes are voluntary (the OfCom code that governs broadcast media being the exception), a failure to adhere to them would not necessarily lead to a loss of professional status (Black, Steele and Barney, 1999). It is also the case that thanks to relatively recent developments in English law in relation to the media, such as the Defamation Act 2013, as well as precedents being continually established through Privacy case
law, it has been indicated journalism ethical codes would be taken into consideration in judicial decisions regarding the publication of material perceived to be in the public interest (Banks & Hanna, 2018; Quinn, 2015).

Ultimately, the point is that the broadly accepted obligations journalists have requiring them to serve citizens can become conflated with the requirement to serve customers. This in turn bolsters the criticism of ethics codes ignoring the influence and, indeed, even power that commercially-driven corporate organisations have to drive journalistic practice and decision-making. Paradoxically, this leads to less concern about public service and greater focus on maximizing profits and satisfying shareholders (McManus, 1994, cited in Aldridge and Evetts, 2003).

And as a consequence, a further paradox is highlighted concerning an over-emphasis on the normative characteristic of journalistic professionalism having the potential to hinder the construction of ethical rules balancing the theoretical ideals and realities of the news production process because “an approach that adds practice to principle should be better prepared to offer rich media ethics scholarship and maintain real world relevance” (Joseph & Boczkowski, 2012).

In light of this, it is acknowledged that more specific types of questions might be required. These would include whether the media should do more than distribute content only driven by commercial considerations; for instance, does the media have an essential public service role that transcends the need to make a profit; should the media be involved in addressing social issues; is the media’s watchdog role necessary or advisable? And what should be expected of the media during times of crisis? (Baran and Davis, 2009).

Alternatively, explanatory concerns could be raised about why action might diverge from normative expectations.

Theoretical framework: Social Responsibility Theory

The contemporary understanding of the normative paradigm is derived from Seibert et al (1956) who identified four models: The first two are the libertarian or free press model (which focuses on what the audience wants rather than what it needs) and the social responsibility model (which reflects the libertarian ‘free market’ principles but stresses the media’s duty to promote democracy, truth and social justice). A combination of these two models are regarded as characteristic of Western liberal democracies. Then there is the authoritarian model – the idea that media must and should be subordinate to government and state control to maintain order (1956) and the communist – which is similar to the former but essentially based around the principle that the media should serve the interests of the masses - the working class.

These paradigms are further reflected on in the ‘four professional milieus’ identified in Hanitzsch’s (2011, also cited in Ornerbring, 2016) study of journalists’ values and notions of their societal role which are apparent across national and organizational parameters and articulated in an arena termed ‘the journalistic field’ (2011). This is grounded in the work of Bourdieu (2005) who characterized the structure of the journalistic field as “a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field… containing] …people who dominate and others who are dominated” [Bourdieu, 1998, p.40]). Hanitzsch utilizes this theory to devise a framework for the analysis of journalism as an arena to compete for the power to impose the dominant vision of the field (2011).
As a concept, Social Responsibility theory identifies journalistic standards that its proponents argue the media should aspire to uphold, including obligations to society and that ownership of it should be a public trust; it should be truthful, accurate and fair, objective and relevant; it should be free but self-regulating and follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct. It also asserts that there is a public interest in government intervention under some circumstances (McQuail, 2010, p. 171).

The origin of this approach appears to emanate from an ontological basis for freedom and responsibility put forward by William Hocking, one of the members of the (Hutchings) Commission on Freedom of the Press (in the United States): “Inseparable from the right of the press to be free has been the right of the people to have a free press. But the public interest has advanced beyond that point: it is now the right of the people to have an adequate press” (Hocking, 1947, cited in McQuail, 2010, p. 171).

Hocking’s approach derived from a concept of positive freedom that diverged from classical liberalism which perpetuated a negative conception of freedom he saw as bankrupt and equated with an absence of restraint (Christians & Fackler, 2014). Positive freedom could therefore be considered “a mature state of decision making, free both from internal constraint such as fear and ignorance and from external constraints” (p. 334), such as government regulation.

Ultimately however, Hocking holds the state responsible for ensuring the liberty of its institutions - with education being the primary means of achieving this. However, he stressed that such an approach “must aid the development of a worldview and moral base” (p.335).

This remained a framework adapted more readily and, to a limited extent, more effectively in Western Europe and precipitated commissions and enquiries into the press and its practices in subsequent years in some countries – such as the United Kingdom’s 1962 and 1977 Royal Commissions on the Press which examined its diversity and concentration with a view to maintaining the health of its democracy (Royal Commission Report, 1977, cited in Burnet and Rees, 1978). However, despite recommendations subsequently made to introduce measures limiting monopolization of the UK press, which was recognized by both commissions as a consistent threat to the very ideals they sought to uphold and the subsequent government legislation put in place in an attempt to ensure this, it has not proved effective (Curran and Seaton, 2001). Elsewhere in Western Europe, other schemes were introduced which aligned more closely with the positive freedom model proffered by Hocking, ranging from subsidies to assist publication launches, to grants and tax concessions designed to prevent their closures (Curran and Seaton, 2001). More recently, the European Union has robustly pursued large media conglomerates attempting to purchase swathes of media platforms across the continent (European Union, 2014).

This approach has also left its mark on the relatively recent Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the (UK) press. Hocking had emphasised that positive freedom should not be used as an excuse for government interference or political intervention in media regulation, stressing its role as a “…residual legatee of last resort” (Christians & Fackler, 2014, p. 336). Lord Leveson also reflected this notion in his report’s recommendations - describing a “backstop regulator…required if either the whole of the press industry had failed to accept the principle of independent regulation [and] refused to engage with an independent regulator [which] would
undeniably reinforce the need for some statutory system of standards to be put in place” (Leveson, 2012, p. 1793).

**Journalistic Professionalism in the Context of Education**

The sociological definitions of professionalism alluded to earlier expose further challenges when applied to journalism, despite consistent use by many of its practitioners to describe the excellence to which they aspire (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996: 125). Indeed, there is a compelling view that in journalism education, the notion of professionalism is not only used as part of a socialization process but also as a marketing tool – to emphasize the specialist knowledge that both the discipline specifically and wider industry generally, use to bolster its claims to professional legitimacy (Singer 2003). But this cannot necessarily be said to apply just as equally to those practitioners working from online platforms, which draws talent from a much broader skillset than more traditional media, and operates in an environment that is as rapidly changing as it is unpredictable – coupled with a lack of tradition and provision for much opportunity to reflect (Lynch, 1998), this has led some to argue that journalists’ self-perceptions of their status and their role are more important than fitting into a set of sociological criteria (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

Indeed, with the benefit of hindsight, Carey’s (1987) observation that “the public will begin to awaken when they are addressed as a conversational partner and are encouraged to talk rather than sit passively as spectators before a discussion conducted by journalists and experts” (p.17, cited in Christians and Fackler, 2014), could be interpreted as a canny presage of the current online, social media-dominated environment which appears to have created the conditions for just that – in spite of what appears to be increasingly sophisticated incarnations of fake news and the widespread perception that more and more online participants explore and understand the world only within the comfort zones of their own social and ideological boundaries (Zuckerberg, 2018).

As a consequence, the impact of the internet on such notions of journalistic professionalism is unavoidable. Broddason (1994: 241) argued long before it became apparent to most that the gatekeeping function of journalists would diminish as newsgathering expertise became more readily accessible to the general public, consequently leading to a ‘deprofessionalisation’ of the field. Fast-forward a few years and Lasica (2001) was envisioning the personalization of news – which has since morphed from tailoring online tools enabling the consumer only to access the information they want to see, into algorithms that tailor information according to the consumer’s online browsing habits, and developing into yet even more sophisticated algorithms capable of targeting online information at consumers based on personality types – due to an ability to garner information about how a consumer uses the web as opposed to what they use (or see) on the web (such as tracking an individual’s eye movements) to predict character, personality and more recently, emotional state (Hardy, 2015; Hoppe, Loetscher, Morey & Bulling, 2018; Zuboff, 2019a). Such technological advancements effectively provide consumers with the opportunity to move beyond a focus only on information reflecting their worldview, to a consumption of media content that offers up a mirror to themselves. In turn, and more concerning however, is that the data harvested from these latest algorithms are currently fuelling a new kind of commerce - a market specializing in trading predictions of consumers’ future behaviour – in other words, ‘behaviour
futures markets’ (Zuboff, 2019b) – the protagonists epitomized by the likes of the now defunct data firm Cambridge Analytica and its controversial harvesting of personal information from private social media accounts (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018).

But others, such as Dennis (1996), maintained the view that journalism’s commitment to public service and its demand for practitioner expertise supersedes these concerns and make it a profession for all practical purposes, therefore compelling a greater focus on practice itself rather than the environment in which it takes place (Singer, 2003). This reflects the generally established consensus that a journalist is committed to honesty, fairness, independence and respect for the rights of others – regardless of the technology or platform (MEAA, 2019) and additionally includes original reporting and writing, a commitment to truth over novelty or expediency as well as autonomy from commercial and governmental influence (Singer, 2003). Ultimately the nature of the professional activity and the determined norms under which it is conducted take precedence and in light of this, it would be fair to conclude that most journalists do consider themselves to be professionals with many of the attributes of a profession being relevant to their practice (Singer, 2003).

There is also a further, but an apparently contrary, consideration – of the view that taken in its entirety, the concept of journalistic professionalism – particularly of the type that might be taught on journalism teaching programmes, encourages a homogeneity that undermines a diversity of styles and approaches; epitomizing one of the defining characteristics and strengths of a thriving, free press (Glasser, 1992).

This is a perspective reflected in cultural studies that argues against the idea of journalistic professionalism – that practitioners are beholden to corporate interests and influences consequently leading to the assumption that journalism skills mirror a corporate agenda (Greenberg, 2007) with the journalism educator’s agenda defined by the media industry (Chapman and Papatheodorou, 2004). This is therefore incompatible with the idea of critical reflection due to its “unquestioning approach to set rules” (2004) based on a competence model holding scant regard for reflection beyond nothing more than “a reconsideration of how better to apply the rules guiding journalistic practice in order to achieve pre-specified objectives.” (2004)

Methodology, Research Design and the Challenge of Evaluation

The overarching aim of the study outlined in this paper is therefore to identify whether there are clear and viable notions of journalistic professionalism in current journalism teaching content and whether, as well as to what extent, it has any bearing on the development of notions of journalistic professionalism in undergraduates who progress to being full-time practitioners. More specifically, there is particular focus around how concepts of professionalism manifest themselves in the learning and teaching of journalism law and ethics.

The research design is focused around the framing of a theoretical concept of professionalism formulated from a response to the following questions:

- How is journalistic professionalism defined and measured in the context of journalism teaching and practice?
• Are current teaching models for law and ethics on undergraduate journalism programmes consistent with the development of journalistic professionalism in practice?

At the commencement of any analysis into notions of journalistic professionalism in journalism teaching, it must first be acknowledged that the act of engaging in evaluation is in itself a political statement and reformist in nature, which has the aim of developing initiatives that would help solve a ‘social’ problem (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

Therefore, if an exploration based around accurately defining journalistic professionalism is approached from the prism of the lack of a definition being a social problem, the starting point for articulating a methodology robust enough for this study should be to establish why the perceived lack of clarity in the definition is problematic in the first place.

With a view to establishing a surer footing for the rationale underpinning this approach, a pilot study was undertaken with the aim of identifying whether key topics relevant to media law and ethics could provide a clearer construct of notions of professionalism than is currently available.

The first stage of this approach was therefore to identify how such notions might currently feature within the journalism teaching content itself. It therefore began with a conventional review of documents related to courses delivered and/or accredited by the two leading journalism training bodies in the UK – the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) and the Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC).

The review was a deliberately broad attempt at describing a general phenomenon (Hseih and Shannon, 2005) prior to pursuing a more in-depth approach to establishing the proposed hypothesis on a more reliable foundation. In the initial study, the focus of the analysis was on the use of the term ‘professionalism’ and variant terms such as ‘professional’ in the participatory documents. It was envisaged that as a consequence, the study would later be replicated with a more systematic analysis involving content analysis and subsequent interviews of specified stakeholders from which more specific conclusions could be drawn (Rose et al, 2015) and meaning identified (Berg, 2009).

**Data Analysis**

In the NCTJ course information documents examined online, the only reference to the terms ‘professionalism’ or ‘professional’ was in general reference to two of the programmes – the Diploma in Journalism which is described as equipping trainee journalists with the knowledge and skills for professional entry level journalism (NCTJ, 2018) and the National Qualification in Journalism described as the industry’s professional qualification that trainee journalists with a minimum of 18 months employment can take to achieve senior status as a journalist (2018). It is also described as “the NCTJ’s professional senior qualification that examines all-round competence in a range of essential journalism skills.” (NCTJ, 2018). Throughout all the documentation analysed, there is no definition of what is meant by the term ‘professional’ in the context in which it is used, nor are there any explicit examples or implications that might explain the term in the context in which it is used. This perceived absence of a clear meaning of the term is compounded in a reading of more detailed course documentation, including the qualification specifications and programmes of study for the four core topic areas – the news report, news
interview, media law and practice and e-logbook – none of which mention the terms ‘professional’ or ‘professionalism’ or any other variant throughout.

The BCTJ course documentation on the other hand, refers to the term ‘professional’ on a number of occasions throughout its online course documentation, referring to members of its council as “professional journalists who advise and inspect the course” (BJTC, 2018). Another document describes one of the key roles of the BJTC as inviting training providers to “define their own educational and professional objectives against which they are judged” (2018). Other documentation describes the BCTJ as offering “a model of professional accreditation as being valued by industry and higher and further education institutions because it represents a benchmark of best practice and in setting the standards for multi-platform journalism training” (2018), and another document refers to the same model of “professional accreditation…against which potential students can judge prospective courses and those new courses seeking accreditation can measure their progress” (2018).

The results of the analysis pointed towards both sets of documentation appearing to reflect the hypothesis that there are no clear measurements for professionalism in key journalism teaching narratives.

Conclusion

The problem with defining clear notions of journalistic professionalism in journalism teaching is contrasted with the significantly clearer concepts of professionalism in areas of practice such as medicine or law which some sectors of the media industry historically sought to emulate (Singer, 2003). However, taking this approach would not be without its limitations, because unlike those sectors for instance, such a concept in journalism education would not include standards for training and licensing with “…media practitioners having less independent control over their work” (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 111). This is most explicitly laid bare when examining the challenges of teaching ethics on practice-focused journalism courses such as those accredited by the NCTJ; which serve as a useful reflection of the ongoing tensions between the delivery of theoretical and practice-based disciplines within journalism education.

However, an alternative perspective as to why the problem of a definition of journalistic professionalism in journalism teaching is difficult to pin down, would be based on the proposition that if professionalism is defined within the ethical parameters set out earlier, it would be imperative for the methodological approaches relied upon for this study to attain a level of consensus on how ethics should be defined.

However, it has become apparent that one of the challenges in formulating a methodology for this research is the perceived paucity of adequate methodological approaches implemented in ethics research. A potential parallel to what could be found in journalism ethics research was highlighted in Randall and Gibson’s (1990) review of 94 business ethics research papers which revealed full methodological detail was provided in less than half of the articles examined.
It would therefore be more appropriate to turn to a contemporary but arguably more generally applicable definition of journalism ethics as a reliable basis for this study. The first volume of Lord Leveson’s report of the inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press (2012) puts forward a definition of ethics that it states “…can be understood at a simple level, by reference to the choices available to a free press, where those choices may have consequences for the benefit or harm of others, whether individuals, groups or the public as a whole.” (p. 81).

The report expands on this - explaining the choices are those by which journalists can exercise their freedoms in order to either fulfil or undermine their role in a democracy and that such choices fall within the framework of the law, even though these do not necessarily complement one another. It then gives examples of areas which would reflect the sort of ethical behaviour expected under the definition and argues that these further serve to re-emphasise that press freedom by itself is not enough to protect the benefits of democracy for which it is a prerequisite (2012), covering freedom of communication, accuracy, the protection of sources, holding power to account and respect for the individual the self-determination of others.

This is a perspective on journalism ethics echoed by Pickard (2011) in his apt description of normative journalism practice as a ‘public good’ but in doing so roundly rejects the influence of the what is termed in the context of this discussion, the ‘commercial imperative’ (ie. The impact of operating within a commercial environment on ethical decision-making):

“…it is an essential public service with social benefits that transcend its revenue stream. In its ideal form, journalism creates tremendous positive externalities. It serves as a watchdog over the powerful, covers crucial social issues, and provides a forum for diverse voices and viewpoints. As such, journalism functions as democracy’s critical infrastructure” (p. 76)

Therefore it follows that the duties and responsibilities of the press follow on from the reasons underpinning a desire for a free press (Mendus, cited in Leveson, 2012).

However, Leveson endorses the argument that if press freedom is regarded as an end in itself, it becomes insensitive to the factors that underpin it in the first place, such as the aforementioned prerequisites as well as others, including rigour, balance and avoidance of conflicts of interest (Megone, cited in Leveson, 2012). But this is also problematic because “assuming that a process (a free press) will achieve a beneficial goal allows journalists and editors to fail to address carefully the question of what exactly that distinctive purpose is, or how it relates to other parts of the public interest.” (Megone, 2012, and cited in Leveson, 2012, p. 83)

Furthermore, there is a public interest in press diversity and accountability, as well as freedom (Cruft, cited in Leveson, 2012) which in turn, goes hand-in-hand with responsibility (Megone, cited in Leveson, 2012).

Leveson uses this expanded definition of ethics to reinforce his overarching point that ethical standards are consistent with press freedom and necessary for it to fully realise the value of such freedom (2012) and summaries it thus: “With freedom, rights and privilege therefore come choices, and with choices, responsibilities as to how they are exercised and with what consequences. With choices which affect the public sphere, come also public accountabilities” (2012, p. 85). But he
warns that although an ethical approach requires care and awareness, diversity and plurality, in the context of a free press operating within the framework of what is understood to be a democracy (ie. the Western model) this (would normally) take place in a highly competitive environment which in turn impacts on what would be perceived to be the public interest (2012).

However, the view that notions of journalism professionalism in journalism teaching, along with professional education in general, are inherently part of a socialization process as well as a marketing tool – to emphasize the specialist knowledge that both the discipline specifically and wider industry generally, use to bolster its claims to professional legitimacy (Singer 2003), could also indicate a level of an inherent, but as yet undefined and unaquantifiable quality which, if considered sufficient, equates content and structure with normative practice, or, industry standards – whatever those standards are perceived to be.

Therefore, any notion of journalistic professionalism at the very least, ought to reflect the view that an idealised perception of professionalism taught in journalism education continues to pivot around the reporter and his/her basic functions as a gatherer of news, evaluating information, production and distribution (Mensing, 2010). Or, from the perspective of significant numbers of students undertaking journalism courses, the experience of learning efficacy should emanate from the reproduction of established bodies of knowledge which they, in turn, would legitimately expect to be related to professional journalistic practice (Wright, 2012).

About the Author

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“Teachable Moment”: Fostering Communities of Practice in Student Newsrooms

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Abstract

This research examined the role of the media adviser in collegiate student newsrooms. A qualitative study used a series of focus groups (N = 34) to examine the role of media advisers through the lens of Communities of Practice. Findings indicate the role of a media adviser within a CoP is one of a participant-observer that is heavily influenced by factors of curriculum and structure. Media advisers foster communities of practice through the four pillars of CoPs. Findings also revealed that issues such as convergence and recruitment illustrate the role of the media adviser.

Keywords: media advisers, Communities of Practice, high-impact practices, student journalism

Introduction

The role of a media adviser on a college campus can vary as widely as the programs themselves. A media adviser, whether a faculty member attached to a journalism program or a professional staff member providing structural support to a large, independent newsroom, affects the learning that occurs within the newsroom and outside among the broader community. The College Media Association, one of several national organizations that support collegiate journalism, defines a media adviser as “primarily a teacher” (Ingelhart, 2019, para. 2). Yet, there is a dearth of academic literature examining how the media adviser affects the dynamic learning environment of a student newsroom.

Communities of Practice is a scholarly lens to view how groups of people learn and work together (Wenger, 1998). Although Communities of Practice has been applied to professional newsrooms, its application to student newsrooms is only in the early stages (Smith, Hettinga, Norman, & Payne, in press). This lens is particularly salient to media advisers, who are both participants and observers in student newsrooms. In this context, participant-observer refers to the fluid nature of the advising position in which media advisers move between the role of participant, in which they facilitate
everyday practices, such as helping organize student meetings, events, etc., and the role of observer, as seen when media advisers remove themselves from but observe editorial decision-making processes. This differs from the definition of participant-observer common to anthropological and qualitative research (see for example, Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2013; Bernard, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The shared experiences of media advisers are notable and add new insight into how student journalists learn in student newsrooms and the theoretical model of Communities of Practice. Further, as colleges and universities focus on high-impact practices and experiential learning, it is critical to review the role of facilitators, such as media advisers, coaches, and project leaders.

**Literature Review**

*Communities of practice*

Communities of Practice are a theoretical framework first developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) to help understand learning within a community that is centered around a shared practice. At their core, such communities foster engagement, critical thinking, identity negotiation, and mentoring. Communities of Practice include four pillars: Community, Practice, Meaning, and Identity. Practice is the way learners explain shared resources within the community, or learning as doing (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). Community is the way learners talk about proficiency in that community, or learning as belonging to the group. Identity is how learners articulate how the learning has changed them, or as learning as becoming. Meaning is defined as learners’ changing ability to describe the value of their shared experiences, or learning as experience. As Communities of Practice are understood, individuals will engage with the four pillars as they move into and through the community; moving into and engaging with the community manifests while learning the shared practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Scholars have accepted professional newsrooms as Communities of Practice (Weiss & Domingo, 2010; Filak, 2014; Lynch, 2015). Smith et al. (in press) explored Communities of Practice in student newsrooms and discovered not only that CoPs are present, but also noted that within those CoPs: 1) Student journalists learn to confront criticism and conflict from audiences; and 2) Student journalists develop a deep sense of responsibility to their communities. Their findings suggest that understanding the work of student journalists through the CoP’s four pillars can support a student’s development of abilities and understandings that are key in professional journalism and related industries.

*Teaching journalism*

There is no singular model for journalism education. Particularly at the collegiate level, journalism education can vary widely based on academic department, faculty training, access to professional journalists, technological resources, and university support in regard to student reporting. Although programs vary, a multitude of calls seek to align some of the values reflected across journalism education. Journalism scholar Dan Gillmor (2012) proposed that journalism programs become cross-disciplinary laboratories that include entrepreneurship, data analysis, academic partnerships with other academic divisions, data programming and coding, deep research on key media issues,
and an acute understanding of evolving business concepts. Newton (2013) proposed a shift in journalism education that included the following changes: 1) students doing journalism, 2) professionals mentoring students, 3) professors bringing in topical knowledge and research issues, 4) media advisers and journalism faculty members introducing new tools and techniques, 5) journalism programs undertaking large research initiatives, 6) and student journalists working to engage the community (para. 18).

Experiential learning remains a constant, integral component to most journalism education (DiBiase, 2017; Tu, 2017). In the early 1900s at University of Wisconsin, Williard Bleyer pioneered a model of journalism education that integrates the study and practice of journalism within the broader landscape of liberal arts learning (Hatfield & Shaffer, 2010). The result, Hatfield and Shaffer noted, is a “learning by doing” environment with complicated relationships that facilitate education, “guided by reflective interaction with more experienced mentors” (p. 4). This often manifests in a publication workshop course that provides credit for contributions to the student newspaper (Bergland, Rosenauer, & Thorne, 2013).

Many programs, particularly smaller programs with challenges in staffing college media, rely on such courses. The journalism workshop class, sometimes called a practicum or lab, has also been described as a “marriage of convenience,” acting as both a useful and sometimes problematic curricular tool that varies widely in frequency depending on the size of the school (Bergland, Rosenauer, & Thorne, 2004). A majority of colleges and universities offer some form of academic credit for contributions to the newspaper, with the highest percentages at two-year institutions and smaller schools (Bergland et al., 2004; Kopenhaver, 2012).

In this learning environment, students hone analytic thinking and professional practice, all while engaging with a broad range of topics and lenses that demand a well-developed set of journalism values, ethics, and principles. This model of learning has been likened to a complex ensemble, or epistemic frame, not unlike other professional communities of practice, ideally suited for a practicum class (Hatfield & Shaffer, 2010, p. 4). Yet professors of these courses also express concern over difficulty in grading such work and misgivings about evaluating student work they often don’t read until after publication (Bergland et al., 2013).

**Pedagogy for adults**

At the college level, students have passed into adulthood, and the classic literature in adult pedagogy, especially when examining CoPs through the adviser/educator lens, informs this research well. Freire (1970/2012) noted that educators must have a “profound trust in people and their creative power” and calls for educators to “be partners of the students in their relations with them” (p. 75). The Freirean approach is to be “students among students” (p. 75), to use the teacher-student relationship to explore subjects and to create “an encounter of the educator or educators with a community” (Escobar, Fernández, Guevara-Niebla, & Freire, 1994, p. 28). Palmer similarly centered his pedagogy in the relationships, “student to teacher, student to student, and teacher to student to subject” (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, p. 29). He envisioned a subject-centered model in which the instructor and students explore the discipline, the “great thing,” in a community (Palmer, 1998, p. 116). In this model, the teacher opens a learning space, creates a structure conducive to learning, and asks questions that are broad enough to encourage exploration but specific enough to guide the conversation. The instructor then consolidates and reframes what students have said to
provide them the language of the discipline to understand what they have discovered during the discussion. For Palmer, this is creating a “community of truth” (1998, p. 135).

Palmer observed that such communal learning is messy, and that teachers taking this approach must be able to “think on their feet in order to help students learn to do the same” (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, p. 39). This thinking on their feet is a key feature of Schön’s reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983; Sheridan Burns, 2004). When the reflective practitioner model is applied to journalism education, it requires the educator—in student newsrooms this would be the media adviser—to engage in critical reflection of the practice of journalism and to teach their students the decision-making processes used by journalists (Sheridan Burns, 2004).

**The role of the media adviser**

As with many aspects of student media, the role of the media adviser is commonly dictated by the size of the publication, its resources, and whether it is connected to a curricular program. Terracina-Hartman and Nulph (2014) documented an increase in college media advisers who had earned doctorates or Ed.D. degrees, whereas fewer college media advisers had only bachelor’s degrees. Their findings were supported by Kopenhaver (2015), who also found increasing numbers of media advisers in tenured or tenure-track positions, though the largest group identified as instructors.

In surveying college media advisers, Kopenhaver (2015) reported that media advisers were also lasting longer in their own positions, with more than half of participants serving as media advisers for more than 9 years, and more reporting greater professional experience. These media advisers differ in their contracts, home departments, and classroom responsibilities; for example, media advisers at 4-year public universities were more likely to have no teaching responsibilities, compared with their compatriots at private institutions and 2-year programs.

Despite these differences, college media advisers often share common concerns or encounter similar issues. Recently, there has been a push to increase protection for student journalism at the high school level, including their media advisers (Will, 2017). College media advisers also face challenges to press freedom and can be targets for repercussions in the event of journalism failures. An article in Editor & Publisher (“Shooting,” 2005) observed that media advisers “know that if their newspaper or its student journalists get crosswise with practically anyone on campus, they’re likely to be transferred off the publication or fired outright” (para. 1). In discussing how media advisers handle attacks, Green (1999) noted that media advisers “know that if their newspaper or its student journalists get crosswise with practically anyone on campus, they’re likely to be transferred off the publication or fired outright” (para. 1). 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by Steelman (2016) who observed that “job descriptions are often limited or do not fully cover the roles [media advisers] feel they find themselves in” (p. 54).

Despite challenges—in defining roles and responsibilities, or in larger concerns such as those financial or related to editorial independence or issues of censorship—Steelman (2016) found that “most participants point-blank stated that their role as the adviser to their respective organization does not feel at all like a job” (p. 48). However, the nebulous role of media advisers may influence their participation in the newsroom itself and any related community of practice.

Therefore the purpose of this research is to explore media advisers’ understandings of communities of practice within student newsrooms, and how they perceive their own function within these communities.

**Research Questions**

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the role of a media adviser in a student newsroom Community of Practice?

RQ2: How do media advisers members connect the four pillars of a Community of Practice to increase learning and improve the journalism products on their campus?

**Methodology**

Because of the lack of literature examining student newsrooms through the lens of Communities of Practice, this research used a qualitative approach to explore how social interactions are experienced in communities (Creswell, 2009). Focus groups were employed because they allow these phenomena to be explored in a dynamic setting as participants think out loud and learn from one another while exploring the issues (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). As the second stage of a larger study, this research focused on the media advisers’ perspectives of their students’ learning in Communities of Practice. Four focus groups (N=34) were conducted at two national conferences attended by college media advisers in 2017 and 2019. All groups included media advisers from co-curricular and non-co-curricular programs, from four-year universities and two-year colleges. The focus groups explored the four pillars of Communities of Practice through questions constructed for media advisers and their unique perspectives (Appendix A), but follow-up questions were allowed. Because of time constraints, moderators were allowed to skip questions to ensure that all pillars were discussed.

The researchers coded the data in pairs both in directed coding to examine the pillars specifically and in open coding, noting other themes that emerged. Specifically, researchers alternated so as to code only focus groups they did not moderate, and they worked in pairs to ensure reliability. The coding was synthesized to identify themes across the dimensions and additional open-coded themes specific to the media advisers’ roles; these themes were compared across the coding pairs, further validating the data. The themes are presented in the Findings.
Findings

Community of practice pillars

Focus groups demonstrated clear evidence of the four pillars of Communities of Practice among media advisers. Yet, while students in the newsrooms are clearly immersed into all four of the pillars, media advisers described their position as one that moves both in and out of the community as a both a participant and observer. As participants, the media advisers are engaged alongside the students in key aspects of the newsroom work; as observers, the media advisers are keenly aware of how the students are engaged in the community and the media advisers support the students to lead. This unique position across Communities of Practice literature shapes all of the findings, including within the four pillars, from this study.

For media advisers, the Practice of a student newsroom becomes an obvious focus of their work. Media advisers described Practice as how their work supports the student journalism in the newsroom: “We set them up, and then the actual day-to-day systems—students teach the students.” Media advisers also described their own actual work in the newsroom as practice. One adviser said, “I attend the editorial meetings and I always pipe up, and I critique. I do a written critique online, then I critique the paper when it comes out.”

In line with Communities of Practice literature, the concept of Community proved to be a key pillar for media advisers. For media advisers, Community was highlighted as empowerment of student leaders, skill development, and support for the structure of the newsroom. One participant described the challenge of encouraging new students to recognize and embrace student leadership, rather than relying on faculty leadership:

[Students] don’t understand the systems and how it works. They’re like, “We don’t know the difference between editor and adviser.” They’re so used to, We’re the professor, and this is a class, so aren’t you in charge? Why aren’t you the boss? So getting them out of the idea that we are...It’s a perspective shift.

Another media adviser described how the role of a media adviser can be confusing for a student just entering the community of practice and how the curricular role can often further confuse a student: “Sometimes they’re a little afraid of the advisers ... but this is a practicum, there’s still a lab, it’s a learning lab, you need to learn... You’re developing your skills, but they’re afraid to ask for help.”

Within a Community of Practice, the pillar of Identity describes the change in oneself through the experience of learning within the community. For student journalists, this is often very clear: moving from a student learning to do journalism into a journalist who embraces the values of journalism (Smith et al., in press). For media advisers, the pillar of Identity (or how the media advisers see themselves) can vary based on the needs of a particular staff. One media adviser described his role as that of showing students they can ask the big questions: “They’re not great explorers all the time. It’s the rare student that I get that loves to just go, you know. So, I’m the, I call myself chief instigator because that’s, that’s really what I do.” Another media adviser described
one semester in which the staff demonstrated little need for the media adviser to be extremely hands-on; in that case the students’ ability to lead the newsroom and produce solid work were described as “self-cleaning ovens.”

A key discussion among media advisers is how the role of media adviser is perceived by outside faculty members and administrators. This can affect a media adviser’s identity both inside the newsroom and outside the newsroom, and among colleagues:

They [colleagues] think I’m the editor, that I look at all the stories, I can’t understand these mistakes, and they start to question your intelligence. So, oftentimes at the beginning of the school year, I will send out a campus-wide email saying, “We’re very excited for the beginning of the school year” ... One of the things that I put in there is, “Question: are you the editor of the paper? Answer: no.” Then I explain what my role is and why the students make the decisions.

Although learning in a Community of Practice is not a linear process through the pillars, Meaning can be considered a later, elevated stage of social learning through this lens. True to the participant-observer role, media advisers described the value of student journalists making meaning of their experience in a student newsroom. One adviser of a student newspaper at a community college described this type of Meaning as a student developing an elevated appreciation for the role of a free press:

I have not seen one student that has gone all the two years that has not had a greater appreciation for democracy, for the First Amendment, for the role of the press. I think they don’t even realize how much work it takes to tell the truth and to get this out here.

Another adviser described the value of the enduring effects of the newsroom on student journalists, long after those student journalists leave the newsroom: “They may not be a journalist when [they] leave us, but they get those skills and they have those lifelong friendships, and that’s the biggest thing I see that keeps them in there and gets them.”

In addition to the four pillars, the focus groups elicited findings that extended beyond the concepts of Practice, Community, Identity, and Meaning. These findings share insights into areas that include structure, technology, curricular support, and logistics of newsrooms and student participation. These key findings illustrate the broad reach of a media adviser, as well as the challenges that media advisers say may hamper growth of a newsroom or of the student journalists themselves.

**Convergence**

The move toward convergence—the combining of various media under a single umbrella to encourage students to produce multimedia work—is a good example of how the limitations of the media advisers’ role play out. Participants talked about the need for convergence in their student newsrooms, following the trend of the past decade in professional newsrooms, but they also described obstacles that included both adviser and student opposition. Media adviser opposition often came from the fact that the newspaper, radio, and video operations may have different advisers who may see convergence as a threat to their power. Further, some of these media may
report to different organizations or departments. Individual media advisers may have limited ability to act against this opposition.

The student opposition, however, illustrates the observer side of the media advisers’ role in the community of practice. Media advisers act in a supporting role, allowing students to take the lead, and when students see convergence as a threat to their power or preference, media advisers’ best efforts may fail. A media adviser described how she tried to encourage convergence in her newsroom by moving the furniture to create a shared work table in the middle of the room. One editor kept moving it to the side, where production occurred, and another editor would then move the table back to the center for the shared workspace. Eventually the editor who moved the table to the middle of the room gave up, and that step toward convergence waited until the editor who moved the table to the production area left the staff. The media adviser said she has tried to create structures to encourage convergence, but ultimately, it’s up to the students. Another participant noted, “We have had trouble integrating everything because people thought of themselves as broadcast students or print students, and it is because it’s student driven it depends on having a great student who wants to change things.”

In a professional newsroom, if a boss said convergence was going to happen, staffers may complain, but they would work on convergence to protect their jobs. While the media adviser may appear to be a boss by virtue of status as faculty or staff, the role clearly is more limited to ensure the news product stays in student control.

**Recruiting**

Media advisers move fluidly in and out of the newsroom community with daily access to the external bodies of administrators, faculty, staff, and current and prospective students. This function allows them to foster and maintain relationships that are critical to the student media enterprise. Media advisers, who are also often professors, can identify students in their classrooms with certain skills and aptitudes and recruit them for the newsroom. One media adviser explained that general education courses often yield successful recruiting opportunities: “We do a lot of recruiting from our general education courses, so we kind of find students that are critical thinkers and good writers and recruit them in the staff.”

Several media advisers described a kind of an evangelizing that takes place, whereby they can persuade prospective students of the value added with a student media experience. One media adviser touts the professional experience on the newspaper as attractive to prospective employers:

> It’s just a different environment, a different community that you serve, and sometimes different in how you do it. So the skill set is incredibly valuable. We broadcast the fact that there isn’t an editor we have that doesn’t have a job when they graduate. We have that record, and that’s something they look at and appreciate.

Another described the benefits by saying, “I tell them, ‘Joining student media will basically double your education. It’s like squaring your classes. Why wouldn’t you do that? You’re already out here.’ It’s everything.”
Other media advisers found recruiting success outside of the university with high school and community college groups. One explained that recruiting from a community college can be a successful technique. The adviser noted,

We recruit from the junior college. We actually have students that go to our local community college, and we just recruit the transfer students. We find that’s a really lucrative area to get, specifically because so many of our student body do transfer in.

The recruiting process is not, however, limited to academic groups. Several media advisers described more of a two-way recruiting model that reflects a symbiotic relationship with high schools that provide opportunity:

Since we’re under student involvement, we work with our student events happening, like our Club Rush, week of welcome, those sort of things. Any opportunity we see, regardless of who we work under or with, is any tabling opportunities, like Info Fairs, things like that. We use those. If we have an open house, so for admissions, somehow, within student involvement, we’ve had a part to play where they’ll have us go with them and we’ll talk about what student media does, so there’ll be those kind of transfer open house types things that we do.

The varied recruiting techniques illustrate the multifaceted nature of advising, maintaining communication and relationships with many constituencies, often concurrently. While the recruiting approaches vary, the fluid nature of media advisers within these communities of practice is clear. They recognize the need to draw in prospective members to maintain the health of the organization, yet they are also aware of the need to allow the students autonomy to make their own decisions once the recruits join. It has been described as a dance (Green, 1999), as media advisers move in and out of these sometimes amorphous roles.

**Media adviser as participant-observer**

The media adviser has a critical role in maintaining the aforementioned external relationships while also managing the internal, day-to-day functions of the newsroom. In this way, they participate in the community of practice, but, for many, a hands-off approach to editorial decision-making puts the media advisers in an observer role at different times. One media adviser said, “I always felt success as an adviser basically came down to that ability be discreet and not step on the editors’ toes, but lead when you need to lead. That’s kind of a tricky dance sometimes.” Another media adviser noted,

I try to do everything and make it apparent to my students that they have the ultimate decisions as far as editorial things go... if they want to bounce ideas off me, I’m always available, but sometimes... they are afraid to make those decisions. They ask me, “Can I do this story?” I’m like, “I don’t know, can you?”

As media advisers encouraged students to be proactive in seeking the guidance of their peers, they demonstrated their awareness of the communities of practice that formed within student newsrooms—specifically the hierarchy of student leadership, the practice of learning by doing, the formation of friendships, and the development of individual student identities. On occasion, media advisers acknowledged that their physical absence influenced the building of community.
[The students] lean on each other and it’s that late night, when they’re alone, the advisers have gone home and they lean on each other to do this and they look out for each other. They help each other, they, maybe in a way that the adviser would be critiquing or whatever, that, they are kind to one another and helpful.

The broad range of the media advisers’ roles seemed to be echoed in the diverse responsibilities identified by different media advisers. Faculty advisers at smaller programs shouldered additional burdens of assisting with everything from advertising to distribution, and media advisers at more independent outlets at times seemed more like professional consultants. Further, the effect that the media advisers have both inside and outside the community of practice is often dictated by these structures. For example, if media advisers are involved in the selection of the editor in chief, they are directly shaping the formation of the community of practice, whereas in a larger, independent newsroom the editor in chief may be selected by a board or through a voting process, thus reducing the media advisers’ shaping of that community.

Ultimately, it appears that for many media advisers, much of their responsibility comes down to teaching the student journalists about the chain of command within their community of practice, helping them understand this shift to peer-to-peer accountability, and facilitating the formation of the community of practice by managing structural aspects and dealing with external constituencies.

Discussion

In addressing first research question, “What is the role of a media adviser in a student newsroom Community of Practice?” the findings indicate that the role of media adviser within a community of practice is one of a participant-observer that is heavily influenced by issues of curriculum and structure. Regarding the second research question, “How do media advisers connect the four pillars of a Community of Practice to increase learning and improve the journalism products on their campus?” it was found that in this insider/outsider role, media advisers foster communities of practice through the four pillars of the Communities of Practice theory. Though it varies newsroom to newsroom, media advisers facilitate community and practice while also guiding students through the formation of their identities and drawing meaning from their experience within the student newsroom as Palmer (1998) described in his subject-centered classroom.

Just as every newsroom follows a unique model based on funding, curricular support, resources, and tradition, the role of a media adviser varies widely. Through the lens of Communities of Practice, media advisers described not only how they support and teach students through the four pillars (Practice, Community, Identity, and Meaning) (Wenger, 1998), but also how they serve as the liaison between the student newsroom and the community. In this manner, media advisers are performing the “dance” as described by Green (1999) wherein media advisers at their best are advocates of their student newsrooms, and in dire circumstances are the protectors of student journalism and the freedom for student journalists to do their jobs. In this research, media advisers described their work as a balancing the desire both to teach and help shape how student newsrooms function.

Previous scholarship on learning in Communities of Practice generally focuses on how a new member moves through a community as he or she learns about the practice, the members, the values, and the goals of a community. This research found media advisers to play a previously
undefined role of participant-observer. This participant-observer role has largely been left unexplored in CoP research and advances the theory to consider positions that do not fit squarely within the definition of a learner. The media advisers described the complicated nature of moving in and out of a community in which an adviser helps teach the practice but is not responsible for the actual work. One adviser noted, “It’s sometimes hard to separate that we’re not on staff. You know, it’s a backdoor.”

Limitations

Three of the four focus groups used in this study took place at college media conventions. These college media conventions are heavily attended by media advisers who are also a part of the College Media Association. The organization’s code of ethics states that media advisers should “remain aware of their obligation to defend and teach without censoring, editing, directing or producing” (“The adviser’s,” 2019, para. 2). However, not all media advisers are hands-off in this way. At some universities, media advisers are required to review content before it is published. The focus group participants largely represented media advisers who supported the complete editorial independence of student journalists. This editorial independence means that students solely make decisions about content and that media advisers do not review any editorial content before it is published. In these circumstances, media advisers are available for support in the reporting and writing of content but only see a completed story when the audience sees it. Inclusion of media advisers who are involved in various aspects of the reporting and writing process could add a richness to the understanding of how media advisers support learning in student newsrooms.

Additionally, the curricular component is a complicating factor in understanding how these newsrooms function. While a media adviser may not review reporting and writing of content that originates in the newsroom, work that originates from a media or journalism class may be reviewed by a faculty member or the media adviser. Additionally, courses attached to the work produced in a student newsroom may require certain types of reporting (e.g., breaking news, enterprise reporting, or investigative reporting). Finally, the nature of these courses themselves can vary a great deal—from traditional courses that produce graded work to credit/no-credit practicum courses that assess participation (but not necessarily quality) of work in the newsroom.

In comparison to focus groups of student journalists conducted in the first phase of this research, media advisers’ responses to questions regarding Meaning and Identity revealed less depth. Researchers found that this line of inquiry should be modified to accommodate the unique participant-observer experience of the media adviser. While Practice and Community demonstrated similar findings between media advisers and student journalists, findings within Meaning and Identity did not parallel each other. Rather, media advisers spoke of the Meaning and Identity for student journalists, rather than for themselves. A modified line of questioning should be developed for Meaning and Identity.

Future research to categorize both the models ascribed to newsrooms and the job descriptions of media advisers will lend significant understanding to the learning that results for student journalists. Additionally, future research can bridge the understanding of student journalists and media advisers.
within Communities of Practice. This research has the potential to elevate the understandings of other high-impact practices at the collegiate level.

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References


Appendix A

Question Guide for Adviser Focus Groups

Goal: To understand the learning process in your newsroom

- In a sentence or two, what types of students do you have in your newsroom? (ICEBREAKER)
- What are some of the reasons that students join your news organization? (IDENTITY)

○ How do you recruit people? What are the most persuasive ways of recruiting?

○ Describe the process your newsroom uses to teach newcomers about journalism skills. (PRACTICE, MEANING)

○ Is your newsroom associated with a class?

○ How does that affect learning?

- Describe the process your newsroom uses to teach newcomers about how your news operation works. (PRACTICE)
- Can you describe an example of your students teaching their peers? (COMMUNITY)
- Whom do your students seek information from when they have a question or don’t know how to do something? (COMMUNITY)
- What transferable skills do your students obtain from this experience? (PRACTICE/MEANING)
- Describe how decisions are made in your newsroom. Do students discuss their rights as student journalists in this process? (PRACTICE)
- Does space play a role in the teaching and practice of journalism in your newsroom?
- What resources, including technology, do you have available for non-majors who are interested in working on the student publication? (PRACTICE)
- Do you observe interdisciplinary learning between students in your newsroom? How does it influence the content of your publication? (COMMUNITY) (questions in blue are optional if there is time)

- What kind of discussions regarding the First Amendment and other press freedoms do you hear in your newsroom? (MEANING/IDENTITY)
- What do you think students get out of being part of the student news organization? (IDENTITY/MEANING)
- When student journalists and student journalism come under criticism on campus, how does your newsroom react? (MEANING/COMMUNITY)
The Changing Nature of Journalism: A Sociology of De-Professionalization

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Abstract

What is journalism, and what should journalism become in tomorrow’s world? Using historical and contemporary examples, this conceptual paper ponders the future of journalism’s function in an era of increasing distrust and non-transparency. For good or for ill, the compression of time and space that has resulted from rapidly escalating communication technology has prompted indigenous societies to question their core values. The authors of this paper argue that journalism must re-focus itself on providing the most worth to its consumer communities, re-conceptualizing its identity as a profession. Disseminating verified news and other factual information must remain the cornerstone of journalistic inquiry; however, an elitist approach toward journalism that is restricted to those who are professionally trained should yield to a de-professionalized and more democratizing model that better serves in the exchange of news and other factual information.

Introduction

An examination of the future of journalism rests on this meta-question: What are the role and function of journalism, specifically, what purpose does journalism serve within 21st Century global society that has become an era of distrust and non-transparency? Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2004) observed that, from a global perspective, we can be no more precise than to say that “journalism” is what “journalists” do—a tautology that illustrates the difficulty of defining this occupation that has achieved varying levels of professionalism and that has fulfilled multiple roles throughout the world. Historically, the practice of journalism worldwide has been grounded in indigenous ideologies and values as well as in varying levels of professional education. Hardt (1979), in his mandate for the study of mass communication in industrialized Western societies, emphasized that such examination must begin within the context of a theory of society that defines the position of that society’s individual members. Hardt (1979) noted that this examination must address freedom and control of expression, of private and public spheres of communication, and whether a democratic system of mass communication exists.

Defining journalism and identifying its societal function is, indeed, problematic when being considered on a global scale. However, such frame of reference is essential at a time in which communication is transmitted immediately throughout geo-political space, in which news consumers have multiple—oftentimes conflicting—worldviews, and in which individuals can belong to multiple virtual communities, some of which may be dysfunctional to themselves as well as to others. The trajectory of communication technology has proven disruptive, exacerbating the tensions of multiculturalism within a globalized world in which exist increasing uncertainties of social, political, economic, and cultural sustainability among individuals and within societies.
However, short of cataclysmic change, attempted regress to a de-globalized pastoral and isolationist existence can be likened to a Canutian attempt to hold back the tides. Nor is such regression desired by those who readily embrace the advantages and conveniences of contemporary communication technology. However, we are sailing in uncharted waters that likely have will unpredicted and unintended consequences, ranging from social anomie to the unknown power of artificial intelligence.

Most certainly, communication technology is changing us socially, in which electronic channels are replacing face-to-face communication; politically, in which power differentials are being flattened and sometimes juxtaposed, with unpredictable power emanating quickly from unrecognized and unseen sources; economically, in which ostensibly inexpensive communication ironically and paradoxically enslaves consumers, both financially and through addictive demands on their time; and culturally, in which consumers’ melding tastes for products and services can result in the loss of indigenous traditions. Stabilizing forces—whether they are perceived to be good or bad—have been diminished, and sometimes marginalized, through digital opportunities to challenge and to defeat traditional institutions and loci of power and influence. Control and authority are being challenged and threatened in previously unimaginable ways, including by those beyond the increasingly porous borders of nation-states. Most significant is the empowerment of private citizens worldwide. However, this perceived citizen power, which is neither fully understood nor controlled by these citizens, may be partly illusory and is ultimately dependent on unseen forces (Kruckeberg, et al., 2014).

Existing paradigms must be re-examined, both those of journalism as well as of society, itself. Kuhn (1970) said new paradigms gain prominence by being more successful than are their competitors in solving acute problems, which most certainly will occur in today’s world. Such paradigmatic re-examination should not imply that new paradigms would be normatively superior to those that exist, but must reflect positively the reality of global society, in which members’ consumer and cultural tastes may increasingly meld, but whose ideologies and worldviews may be in conflict with those in other societies, resulting, not just in polarization, but also in neo-tribal fragmentation. All of this is occurring in a world which population includes immense number of those who are quite young, who have been given little or no education, and for which there is little promise for personal sustainability, but who have technological proficiency as well as access to communication technology that they value with the highest priority. Scholars such as Sklair (2010) theorize that both the transnational aspects of globalization, of which technology is a chief driving force, and the neo-liberal economic aspect of globalization have produced a global crisis of class polarization and ecological unsustainability. This is occurring during a time of massive immigration and global instability.

Will journalism be critical, indeed even relevant, to future global society? Perhaps with over-optimism, Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2004) predicted that the role of the professional journalist will be secure and the press will not be in any appreciable jeopardy as an institution. However, the future role of journalists may be primarily to digest, that is, to condense and to grade overwhelming amounts of information that is available to consumers in raw form. The roles of journalists and of the press as an institution will change in significant ways, with accompanying ethical ramifications that will be created within a highly libertarian and egalitarian communication system that will be virtually impossible to regulate or in which can be applied historical professional standards. A printing press, a radio, or television station is no longer needed, and the role of gate-keepers has
been eliminated in an era of globally pervasive digital media that offer conflicting ideologies and worldviews as well as perceived “facts.” Pluralism will be ensured, as well as a massive diffusion of power in disseminating news and information. Journalism will be de-professionalized, and citizens can become their own journalists, both in their dissemination of “news” and as consumers of information that they can re-frame for themselves and to others as news.

A Profession of Journalism?

Journalism, both as an institution and as a professionalized occupation, has become eroded, perhaps irretrievably so. In liberal/democratic/capitalistic societies, this specialized occupation is under immense threat of becoming unsustainable in the form in which it had evolved throughout much of its history. Ironically, journalism’s traditional values and ethics are needed now more than ever before in a complex global society that is rapidly changing in its social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions.

As an institution, journalism in some form exists in societies that recognize the need for citizens to be informed about news; nevertheless, preferred ideologies and other communicator motives have significantly guided its practice and have influenced what is deemed to be newsworthy. Certainly in democracies, journalists disseminate comprehensively gathered and carefully vetted news of significance and interest that is presented fairly and objectively, that is, without bias. Nevertheless, Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2004) observe that a definition of journalism remains problematic; they proffer that such definition can be no more precise than to declare that journalism is what “journalists” do. Such tautology illustrates the difficulty of defining this practice that has achieved varying levels of professionalism worldwide and that fulfills varying roles in a range of press systems. For example, Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2004) emphasize that distinctions between what may be called strategic mass communicators and journalists are often blurred, particularly when strategic communicators in free press systems are compared to journalists who provide propaganda in authoritarian press systems. Hardt (1979) likewise observes that journalism is grounded in indigenous ideologies and values, arguing that its examination must begin within the context of a theory of society that defines the position of individual members within that society. Thus, despite considerable “professionalization” throughout the years, journalism historically has remained cultural, historical, and ideological in response to the indigenous societies in which it is practiced.

Although acceptance of the need for journalism as an institution in some form may be assumed in most societies, examining journalism as a professionalized occupation becomes more daunting. The traditional professions are law, medicine, and the clergy. Those in a profession have answered “a calling” to practice an occupation that is deemed essential to society. Thus, a member of a profession ostensibly does not respond to the marketplace, but rather practices that profession to serve humankind. In modern, complex global society, one could argue that many professions exist; however, some scholars maintain that no professions exist today, save perhaps for the clergy. This is because virtually all occupations that seek the class, status, and power of a profession respond to—and must compete in—the marketplace, despite perhaps occasional pro-bono work performed by professionals such as attorneys and physicians.

Certainly, journalists commonly feel a calling to journalism, which they regard as a service that is essential to society. However, a profession has further criteria that may be collapsed to include: 1)
a body of knowledge of some consequence (knowledge/skills/abilities, which benchmark is externally validated through licensing or other formal regulation that creates barriers-to-entry for those presumed not to be adequately educated and trained); 2) prescribed education that is agreed-upon by the professional community; and 3) a code of ethics that defines that professional community’s relationship to society.

Certainly in the United States, journalism as a specialized occupation does not satisfy these criteria. Of course, a body of knowledge of some consequence exists, and the knowledge/skills/abilities of successful journalists are indeed of some consequence. Nevertheless, although journalists must perform competitively in the marketplace to earn their livelihoods, every citizen has the right to practice journalism, needing no prescribed education and external validation that are requisite to bona fide professions. Neither is there a need to adhere to a professional code of ethics. The last-mentioned may be most helpful in examining journalism as a profession. A profession defines its relationship to society through its ethics, which, in fact, can be anything that this professional community wants them to be as long as those ethics are within the confines of a government’s laws and within the parameters of a society’s social norms. In journalism, ethics focus largely on objectivity and non-bias, truth-seeking, and other standards that help to assure the ideal of service to the public and democracy (Schudson, 2008; Zelizer, 2004). Also given considerable attention is the appropriate use of communicative tools and methods, that is, the ethics of journalism’s techniques. To varying extents, recognition and acceptance of these ethics often transcend cross-culturally, and to some degree universally, among those who considered themselves to be professional journalists. Thus, like values and ethics exist to an extent, much as in medicine in which physicians share, not only the science of that professional community’s body of knowledge and recognized best practices, but also similar professional ethics that are respected throughout diverse social systems.

Thus, despite journalism’s failure to meet the criteria of a profession in countries having First Amendment-type rights, journalists and society-at-large might reasonably consider journalism to be a “professionalized occupation” that can be practiced accordingly. Journalists come to adopt a particular way of thinking and of solving problems, as well as of sharing a common worldview of their professional community. Although the practice of journalism cannot be controlled through external validation in some countries, and while barriers-to-entry cannot protect practitioners’ class, status, and power to control the practice of their occupation, these criteria are sufficiently satisfied to provide journalists with a professional identity and to encourage a discrete professional community that has its own literature, prescribed education, and code of ethics. Furthermore, professional journalists recognize and accept an obligation to act professionally, that is, to practice journalism in an agreed-upon socially responsible way.

**Monopoly of Knowledge**

The function of journalism and the role of journalists had worked relatively well for those who had largely satisfied these professional criteria. Professional journalists have enjoyed career success, as well as others’ respect for them as professionals and for their professionalized occupation. Such role and function, however, were contingent upon and assumed a continuing monopoly of knowledge that was only shared by others within an oligarchy of like-minded professionals who had access to printing presses and radio and television stations, that is, the mass media. At least,
such was the case until the advent of new global communication technology, that is, the Internet, the World Wide Web, and, in particular, the new social media that allowed anyone with a Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube account to challenge and to effectively destroy this monopoly. Anyone and everyone—known or unknown, worthy of credibility or not—now had the power and influence to compete head-on with this pre-existing monopoly of journalists that had been uniquely empowered by printing presses and radio and television stations. Also challenged was the economic viability of these legacy news media as advertisers soon recognized the reach and influence of those using social media that were not bound by traditional market-place geography.

Those discovering their newly found voices did not possess journalists’ body of knowledge, nor did they have validating journalism education, nor were they professionally bound to follow a code of journalism ethics. In what quickly had become a global cacophony, messages—often sent anonymously—traveled unabated beyond the borders of nation-states, without restriction or effective censure by even the most authoritarian and oppressive governments. And these messages oftentimes were read and appreciated with less concern about their perceived credibility than for confirmation bias and entertainment value. Rubin (1978) correctly observed that no ethical standards are built into the mass media. This certainly holds true for the Internet, the World Wide Web, and the new social media.

Thus, in a relatively short span of time, journalism as an institution and as a professionalized occupation has become eroded, perhaps irretrievably so. The perpetrators of this erosion are lesser-qualified—hardly professional—disrupters who do not have the body of knowledge, prescribed education, or adhered-to codes of professional ethics of those professionals who previously had enjoyed a monopoly of knowledge that was restricted to those having access to expensive presses and radio and television stations. Furthermore, these disrupters effectively encroached upon advertising revenue, which in the past had represented a sustainable, indeed highly lucrative, income source that previously had seemed immune to threat.

**Journalism Disrupted by Technology**

An examination of the future of journalism rests on this meta-question: What are the role and function of journalism, specifically, what purpose does journalism serve within 21st Century global society that has become an era of distrust and, ironically, non-transparency? Defining journalism and identifying its societal function are especially problematic when considered on a global scale. However, such frame of reference is essential at a time in which communication is transmitted immediately throughout geo-political space, in which news consumers have access to multiple—oftentimes conflicting—sources of news and information, and in which individuals can belong to multiple virtual communities, some of which may be dysfunctional to themselves as well as threatening to others.

The trajectory of communication technology has proven disruptive, exacerbating the tensions of multiculturalism within a globalized world in which exist increasing uncertainties of social, political, economic, and cultural sustainability among individuals and within societies. However, short of cataclysmic change, attempted regress to a de-globalized pastoral and isolationist existence can be likened to a Canutian attempt to hold back the tides (Kruckeberg, 2000). Nor is such regression desired by those who readily embrace the advantages and conveniences of contemporary
communication technology. Nevertheless, we are sailing in uncharted waters that likely will have unpredictable and unintended consequences (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2015, July), ranging from increased social anomie and neo-tribalistic societal fragmentation to the existential threat of artificial intelligence.

Communication technology is particularly significant for journalism as an institution and as a professionalized occupation. Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2012) pondered:

... whether communication technology will a) help to assure sustainable and universally prosperous lives in an equally sustainable world, perhaps enabling indigenous peoples who are locked in traditional cultures to achieve 21st Century modernity and a greater level of prosperity, or b) whether communication technology is a beguiling opiate of bread-and-circuses for privileged self-entitled consumers playing “angry birds,” i.e., a narcotic that presages the demise of a sustainable civilization worldwide. (NO PAG.)

Today, communication technology is changing us socially, in which electronic channels are replacing face-to-face communication; politically, in which power differentials are being flattened and sometimes juxtaposed, with unpredictable power emanating quickly from unrecognized and unseen sources; economically, in which ostensibly inexpensive communication ironically and paradoxically enslaves consumers, both financially and through addictive demands on their time; and culturally, in which consumers’ melding tastes for products and services can result in the loss of indigenous traditions (Vujnovic & Kruckeberg, 2014). Stabilizing forces—whether they are perceived to be good or bad—have been diminished, and sometimes marginalized, through digital opportunities to challenge and to defeat traditional institutions and loci of power and influence. Control and authority are being challenged and threatened in previously unimaginable ways, including by those beyond the increasingly porous borders of nation-states (Kruckeberg et al., 2014). In an earlier era, the U.S. government needed not to contend with Viet Cong propaganda directed toward American draft-age youth through social media, as Western political powers must contend today with ISIS’s attempts to radicalize youth worldwide. However, most significant is the empowerment of private citizens worldwide. Nevertheless, this perceived citizen power, which is neither fully understood nor controlled by these citizens, may be partly illusory and is ultimately dependent on unseen forces.

A New Paradigm

Existing paradigms must be re-examined, both those of journalism as well as of society, itself. As primary stakeholders, journalists must focus on the former, although they can and must contribute substantively to the re-examination of the latter, of which they also are among the stakeholders.

Kuhn (1970, p. viii) defined a paradigm as “universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners.” He noted that seldom, if ever, does a new theory build on what is already known and rarely can two paradigms coexist peacefully. This is because the development of a new paradigm is a revolutionary process that reconstructs previous theory and that re-evaluates prior facts. Kuhn (1970) said new paradigms gain prominence by being more successful than are their competitors in solving acute problems,
which most certainly occur in today’s world—including in journalism as an institution and as a professionalized occupation.

Paradigmatic re-examination should not imply that these new paradigms necessarily would be normatively superior, that is, ethically and morally superior, to those that exist; rather, they must reflect positively the reality of global society, in which consumer and cultural tastes may increasingly meld, but in which ideologies and worldviews may be in conflict—resulting in polarization and societal fragmentation. The authors are among those who would agree that journalism’s traditional values and ethics are needed now more than ever before, but once again are reminded of King Canute’s attempt to hold back the tides, which aquatic power today symbolizes the global embrace of contemporary communication technology.

The Future of Journalism

In contemplating the future of journalism, it is important to distinguish between journalism as an institution and as a professionalized occupation. Indeed, the future of journalism may not be the future of those who nevertheless may want to consider themselves to be journalists and who possess journalism knowledge, skills, and abilities. Recode (2019) reports: “(N)ew data ... shows that the plight of journalists may not be that bad — if you’re willing to consider a broader definition of what constitutes “journalism” and its para-industries.” Recode (2019) observes:

... (M)any journalism and PR jobs didn’t go away so much as change their names. People who once worked in journalism or PR have commonly transitioned into job titles like “content writer” and “social media manager.... “They’re not working for newspapers or TV, but they are still applying the same skills.... These are jobs where you are fact-finding and interviewing — pretty much a journalist.”

Journalism purists, and one might suspect most self-respecting journalists, likely would eschew the inclusion of “content writer” as journalism. Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2018) elaborated on this paradox:

... (I)n the digital economy, a major aspect of journalists’ work of today is PR. This is true even for mainstream journalism. And, at the same time, public relations practitioners, perhaps more so than ever, engage with tools that are typically used by journalists. (P. 273)

Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2018) warn about the increasing de-professionalization of public relations that makes more defensible disparate and specialized education that focuses on technical and tactical knowledge, skills, and abilities because public relations’ strategic role and, that is, its professional role is becoming increasingly diffuse and amorphous. That same concern should extend to journalism and its education.

Journalism, both as an institution and as a professionalized occupation, has become eroded, perhaps irretrievably so. Its continuing sustainability as an institution and as a professionalized occupation is in jeopardy at a time in which its professional values and ethics are needed more than ever before. Journalism’s monopoly of knowledge has been destroyed by the Internet, World Wide Web, and social media, and this new communication technology has eviscerated the advertising revenue that
historically had sustained journalism. Furthermore, the trust that journalism had earned in the presentation of “news” by journalists who historically had striven to adhere to the traditional news values of fairness, objectivity, and transparency has not safeguarded journalism as an institution or as a professionalized occupation.

Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2010) have pondered the obsolescence of the “legacy” news media, while Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2004) have questioned whether the concept of news will continue to have meaning when computerized information overwhelmingly exceeds its reasonable and useful consumption. Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2004) further questioned the continuing agenda-setting role of legacy news media as a surfeit of ungraded news and information permeates myriad electronic channels. They asked whether professional journalism will continue to exist other than as a handy descriptor for a type of research about current events, even going so far as to question whether the best preparation for this de-professionalized craft would be through education in computer-based information retrieval, perhaps with limited practice in mining information from primary personal sources. Finally, would professional journalism schools and professional practices and ethical values that they espouse become passé? At least to a considerable extent, journalism as an institution and as a professional practice will be de-professionalized when citizens become their own journalists, both in their dissemination of news and as consumers of information that they can re-frame for themselves and to others as news. To some degree, this is already happening in many parts of the world. Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2004) likened this de-professionalization to the Protestant Reformation, in which everyone could become his or her own priest. Today, each person can be his or her own journalist within a global milieu of interactive multimedia.

Despite these alarming concerns, Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2004) nevertheless prophesized that the role of the professional journalist would be secure and that journalism would not be in any appreciable jeopardy as an institution. However, this role may be largely reduced to digest, that is, to condense and to grade, overwhelming amounts of information that is readily available to consumers in raw form. This, of course, suggests that journalism and the role of journalists will nevertheless change in significant ways, with accompanying ethical ramifications that will be created within a highly libertarian and egalitarian communication system that will be virtually impossible to regulate and in which can be applied historical professional ethical standards. Pluralism will be ensured through a massive diffusion of power in disseminating and consuming news and information. Thus, some might argue the benefits of de-professionalized journalism in which citizens can become their own journalists, both in their dissemination of what they perceive to be “news” and as consumers of information that they can re-frame for themselves and to others as news.

Certainly, as this de-professionalization occurs, one certainty is that journalism will remain community journalism because of people’s opportunity to join multiple communities, whether these be physical or virtual. The 21st Century global society will encourage societal fragmentation through opportunities for membership in multiple communities which membership is not restricted by time or space. Thus, to the extent that journalism will survive, it will remain community journalism. The Communitarian Etzioni (2000) uses this definition of community:
Community is a combination of two elements: a) A web of affect-laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often crisscross and reinforce one another (rather than merely one-on-one or chainlike individual relationships); and b) A measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity—in short, to a particular culture. (Pp. 222-223)

Hallahan (2005) distinguishes between a public and a community, noting that communities organize around common interests, not issues, and are apolitical. Their goal is usually to sustain the group, rather than to effect change. In this way, communities are proactive, not reactive. Communities have long and well-established histories and people within them routinely interact by sharing a common culture. By contrast, a public that is created around an issue often has a short-term life span and brings together diverse people whose only commonality is concern about a common problem. Wood (1969) explains Buber’s social principle in which people integrate horizontally in relation to a center of meaning rooted in the depth dimension. It has, as its correlate, the “political principle,” which “vertically” integrates the people through a hierarchy of functions in terms of objective tasks to be done” (p. 76).

Public opinion will arise from these communities, which will not be restricted to geographic communities within nation-states, but will be communities of those having like values and ideologies from which public opinion will arise. Cooley saw public opinion, not as a “mere aggregate of separate individual judgments, but an organization, a cooperative product of communication and reciprocal influence” (Coser, 1977, pp. 312-313). However, this community journalism will likely be de-professionalized and ideologically based, practiced by strategic communicators rather than by journalists. In some ways, journalism as a professionalized occupation already has become corrupted by endemic changes brought about by new global communication technology, for example, the inauthentic journalism of native advertising and sponsored content, raising questions of media transparency (Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2017).

Both philosophically and for its economic sustainability, journalism must re-focus itself on providing the most worth to its consumer communities, re-conceptualizing its identity as a profession. Importantly, disseminating verified news and other factual information must remain the cornerstone of journalistic inquiry; however, an elitist approach toward journalism that is restricted to those who are professionally trained should yield to a de-professionalized and more democratizing model that better serves in the exchange of news and other factual information. Such paradigmatic re-examination should not imply that new paradigms would be normatively superior to those that exist, but must reflect positively the reality of global society.

If such reality of de-professionalized journalism by strategic communicators is deemed unacceptable, it is up to the scholarly and practitioner communities of journalism to discover alternative paradigms to assure the continued existence journalism as an institution and as a professionalized occupation that preserves journalism’s traditional values and ethics in a complex global society that is rapidly changing in its social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions.
About the Authors

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References


The State of Journalism and Public Relations Education in ACEJMC-Accredited Programs

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Abstract

This article focuses on faculty perspectives regarding the future of journalism and public relations education. A survey of 2,114 journalism and public relations professors at 116 programs fully or provisionally accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) showed journalism instructors are far more concerned about program closure than their PR counterparts. However, the majority of both journalism and public relations instructors agree that their degrees are essential for student success in these fields. Such research can provide insight that might change the way communication professionals are trained and alter the trajectory of the disciplines.

Keywords: Journalism, Public Relations, education, professors, accreditation, future

Introduction

With the reputation of journalism in the United States and other developed countries on the decline it is important, now more than ever, for the practice and discipline to undergo systematic analysis. In addition to reputational damage, news organizations have been consistent losers on the stock market and a journalism degree offers a very low return on investment as entry level pay for reporters’ rank among the measliest of all college graduates (Marschall, 2016). Public Relations graduates, on the other hand, are entering a healthier job market, but have found themselves portrayed by the media in a consistently negative manner over several decades. Even so, a 2010 study by White and Park posits that public relations is viewed as an important activity that benefits society (Public Relations Review). The correlational and interdependent relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners is unmistakable. The success of each field is underpinned by the notion of public trust. While journalism in the developed world is stumbling through a difficult period, the rest of the world is crying out for credible information from trusted sources delivered without disruption (Marschall, 2016). Additionally, while the number of journalism jobs continue to decline new ones are being created via a call for journalists to join the public relations ranks (Robinson, Gibbon, Speed & Beckett, 2018). This call led researchers to utilize survey methodology to investigate the health and well-being of journalism and public relations education, where many, though not all, practitioners learn their craft.
Literature Review

State of journalism

Industry insiders and media academics often voice unease about the transformations taking place in the global news industry. Technology and its uses are reshaping relations between journalists and their audiences, and between the production and consumption of news (Meikle and Redden, 2011). “Citizen journalism” and “user-generated content” (UGC) are two terms used sometimes interchangeably to signal wider shifts in the “audience participation options” provided by the news media that have developed from the late 1990s onwards (Hermida, 2011). Journalists now work frequently with news content produced by non-traditional news sources – amateurs, who as active participants/co-producers, can no longer be labelled “passive” audiences for news (Heinonen, 2011).

As a result, legacy news outlets have been on a downward spiral for over a decade. Although journalism has always been vulnerable to technology (Pavlik, 2001), it is currently in a state of flux, as it is undergoing rapid and dramatic structural changes, affecting it as a practice, as a product and as a profession (Spyridou, Matsiola, Veglis, Kalliris & Dimoulas, 2013). Almost 1,800 newspapers closed between 2004 and 2018, leaving 200 counties with no newspaper and roughly half the counties in the country with only one (Abernathy, 2018). The Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that as a result, newspaper jobs declined by 60 percent from 465,000 employees to 183,000 employees between 1990 and 2016, and that since January, more than 1,000 newspaper jobs have disappeared through layoffs and buyouts. Jobs in the Bureau of Labor Statistic’s internet publishing and broadcasting category, the best measure of online news employment available, rose from 29,000 to 197,800 during the same period (Abernathy, 2018). About 400 online-only local news sites have sprung up to fill the void, but they are clustered in big cities and affluent areas such as New York and California, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data (Hagey, Alpert, Serkez, 2019).

While the slow downfall of legacy journalism is troubling in and of itself, the fact that the promise of new media and a more open environment has not materialized, further exacerbates the problem (Fenton, 2010). Dickinson, Matthews and Saltzis believe the interplay of new media and journalistic practice has not lead to more engagement between journalists’ publics and news sources; instead it has created online news content that is rather homogeneous and has constrained journalists and news organizations from covering a wide range of issues and from realizing the democratic potential of the internet (2013).

State of public relations

The high growth patterns of public relations education in the United States reflects growth in the field. Both nationally and internationally, public relations education is increasingly being called on to provide strategic, international, ethical, and research methods training and leadership. One of the most important forces generating this change is the increasing role of public relations, which is driven largely by the influence of new information technologies and globalization (Distaso, Stacks & Boton, 2009). Much like journalism, new media has transformed the practice of public relations as well as the way in which practitioners operate. New media has allowed public relations
professionals to excel by providing a mechanism for stories to go viral, allowing practitioners to engage with audiences in real time via their preferred communication medium, and shifting the view of audiences from an end goal to co-creators of meaning and communication. In the cocreational perspective publics are not just an end, meaning audiences are partners in the meaning-making process (Boton & Taylor, 2006).

New technology has indeed changed the way PR practitioners operate. So much so, that in today’s world traditional PR strategies and models no longer gain the traction they once did. The news/press release once a mainstay in a practitioner’s toolkit has given way to the social media release (SMR). The SMR is a powerful public relations tool in a world of social network media, particularly when targeted at influential bloggers (Steyn, Salehi-Sangari, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2010). The reach, scope and speed of social media means news often reaches the public at the same time or sooner than it reaches mainstream media. Long gone are the days when media were able to control what went out on the wire. Today, PR professionals engage their target audience in real time (with the help of bloggers) and can begin assessing opinions in a matter of seconds after a relevant event takes place (via twitter queries). There’s no denying the impact of social media on both journalism and PR. Additionally, there’s no denying that social/new media impacted each industry in very different ways. While it turned the traditional economic model of journalism on its ear, it made practicing PR more affordable and attainable for small and medium size businesses.

**Intermingling of journalism and public relations and implications**

When analyzing the state and interplay of journalism and public relations one cannot overlook the influence of social media. In addition to impacting the daily lives of individuals, social media have impacted global storytelling, mass movements, elections, referendums and business practices. Social media sometimes are referred to as “emerging media” or “new media” to capture the association of social media with the advanced integration, strategy and application of new communication technologies (Duhé, 2015).

The consequences of these changes have been numerous and varied but of particular note in relation to the nature of journalistic practice and the quality of news output are the increased use of news agency and PR material and the rise of “churnalism” (Davies, 2008; and, responding to the pressure to keep readers interested enough to make the repeat daily purchase (or its electronic equivalent), journalists working under these conditions are more likely to be drawn to sensationalism, to pursue safe news topics that are cheap, quick and easy to cover and that are more likely to attract large audiences (Fenton, 2010a).

More students enter universities as digital natives, or learners who have grown up in a world with social media (Freberg & Kim, 2018). This includes journalism and PR students. While it may be hard for them to envision a future free from the preeminence and power of new/social, researchers also wanted to get a sense of what *educators* believe to be the future of both disciplines. An acute need exists for communications professionals to possess core competencies necessary to thrive in a dynamic global landscape. Journalism and PR professionals must be prepared to develop an expertise within a particular sector, and be influencers and entrepreneurial, while creating original work within an ethical framework. Time spent learning the discipline with professors that possess expertise in the industry provide the underpinnings necessary for a successful career. Consequently, the authors of this study sent a survey (via email) to 2,114 journalism and public relations
professors teaching in 116 programs around the world that are either fully or provisionally accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) with the goal of addressing two hypotheses:

**H1:** Journalism professors be more likely to expect the shuttering of journalism programs/schools in the future.

**H2:** Public relations professors will be less likely to expect the shuttering of public relations programs/schools in the future.

**Methodology**

After obtaining IRB approval, the names of the 116 schools that were fully or provisionally accredited for 2017-18 were obtained from the ACEJMC website, and a student worker hired by the researchers went to each school’s website to gather email addresses for full-time journalism and public relations professors. The schools with provisional accreditation were Auburn, Florida A&M, Southern University and A&M College, New York University and Virginia Commonwealth University. The International schools with accreditation were American University in Dubai, Anahuac University in Mexico, Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, Mexico, Massey University in New Zealand, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Qatar University, University of Sharjah in United Arab Emirates and Zayed University in the UAE. The survey was emailed in to 2,114 instructors in April 2018. Several surveys bounced back, and an untold number likely ended up in spam folders, but 492 were completed for an overall response rate of 23.27 percent. Respondents also were given the option to enter a raffle for two $50 Amazon gift cards in exchange for their participation in the survey. Survey responses were further sorted by discipline (journalism and public relations), gender, race and ethnicity.

In addition to emails going directly to spam, three other glitches may have hindered responses to the survey. First, the survey was inadvertently sent before it was ready, and had to be recalled with an apologetic email, to the understandable annoyance of busy professors. Second, many school websites list all professors who teach, whether full-time or adjunct, without distinguishing between the two. Respondents were given an opportunity to check a box in the survey to indicate whether they were full- or part-time, but it still may have caused some confusion. Third and most problematic, some professors teach across at least two or more programs, some of which are accredited by the ACEJMC and some that are not (i.e., strategic communications or advertising or integrated marketing). In the future, if the database is used again, it may be necessary to call each accredited school or program to a) make sure the correct email is obtained for each instructor and b) make sure each instructor listed teaches in the accredited school or program full-time.

**Results**

The overall demographic results were not surprising, save for the low percentage of instructors with terminal degrees: Almost 34 percent of all respondents had doctorates, and almost 5 percent had another type of terminal degree, such as a J.D. or Ed.D. This may have to do with the fact that many instructors are hired from the professions and “experience” is counted equally as a terminal degree. In addition, almost 55 percent of respondents were female, 43 percent were male, and 1.41 percent preferred not to answer. More than 74 percent of respondents were white, more than 8
percent black, more than 5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, more than 4 percent Latino/Hispanic, 1.86 were multiethnic/multiracial, 2.27 percent were “other” and 2.68 percent preferred not to answer. Eighty percent taught at public schools vs. private schools.

Results for the journalism-specific survey question were as expected.

**H1:** Journalism professors be *more likely* to expect the shuttering of journalism programs/schools in the future.

Of the 275 respondents who were full-time journalism faculty members, 64 percent said they “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” that some journalism programs will shut down in the future. However, 65 percent “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” that a journalism degree is essential today to enter the profession.

Journalism instructors also said they “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” that industry turmoil/the changing business model (84.18 percent), the cost of degree (79.45 percent), the return on investment for degree (78.79 percent), negative images of the press (71.3 percent) and job prospects for graduates (69.74) were the biggest challenges facing journalism education.

Journalism instructors said they “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” that other challenges facing journalism education include not enough paid student internships (68.22 percent), higher education financial shortages (66.89 percent), public perception of the profession (65.92 percent) and not enough faculty diversity (60.47 percent).

Journalism instructors had wide-ranging open-ended responses:

*Attacks on the press by the president of the United States are a very serious problem. Lack of news literacy by the public is also a serious problem.*

*We're being asked to teach more students with less time and less funding. Over the past two years, there's been a focus on the bottom line and less attention to academic substance. There's a lack of understanding of our journalism programs from within our institution, which I think is the bigger threat right now to progress and innovation than a lot of the changes to the industry. We'll be able to adapt to changes as most journalists have done over the years but there will be a cost to the quality of education that we are able to provide students.*

*Balancing core writing and reporting courses with courses that focus on the latest technology. Technology will change, delivery platforms will change, but writing and reporting will never change.*

*Journalism schools have real problem by recruiting legions of students while knowing they won't get jobs. At my place, we hire ousted and fired news professionals, people who used to be big names, right and left. They are teaching students the very profession they abandoned or
abandoned them. Big disconnect between journalism education and the real world.

We as a faculty are currently discussing dropping our AEJ accreditation because it's harming our students' growth and limiting the type and number of classes they can take.

At issue is how do we sustain the professionalism needed for journalism, not focus so much on techniques, technology, and focus more on content knowledge, democracy, society/community, what's journalism for?

The negative images of the press, exacerbated by the "fake news" phenomenon and changing business models in the profession, are leading to declining student enrollments. If I had to rank the above statements, this would rank as the No. 1 greatest challenge, in my mind.

Audiences, and incoming students, often have no idea what news is, or what journalism is all about.

Defining our mission in the midst of a chaotic upheaval in the industries we serve is a major disruptive element. We must redefine what it is we do and align our programs with current needs and future needs.

Big issue: Non-academics being hired as deans to run our schools and programs. Presidents and provosts perceive them as good, but they're coming in so inexperienced as to how academia operates that it sets many programs behind, or at a disadvantage.

We continue to focus on journalism that used to be -- that is, newspaper and television news done by white people from a very narrow slice of our country's demographic. We need to follow the lead, and lead ourselves, in the way that the most innovative news organizations are, by finding new voices to tell news stories in new ways, from new perspectives, all while holding on to the most valuable pieces of traditional news. It's hard, but it is our charge in these times. We also have to realize that the model that puts written news at the core of news reporting, with other media (photo, video, film, audio, graphics) used only as supplements, does not match the way middle-aged and younger audiences engage with the news. IF we want a future, we need to be ahead, not behind, the way our audience wants to receive our reporting. In other words, we need to acknowledge that visual and audio
news are going to be much, much bigger parts of the news we report.

Results for the public relations-specific survey question also were as expected.

**H2**: Public relations professors will be less likely to expect the shuttering of public relations programs/schools in the future.

Of the 109 respondents who taught full-time in a StratComm/PR/IMC/Advertising program, 26.6 percent said they “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” that some programs will shut down in the future. In addition, 73 percent “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” that their degree is essential today to enter the profession.

Public relations professors also “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” that higher education financial shortages (69.34 percent), changing technologies (68.47 percent), the cost of the degree (64.73 percent), the poor academic preparation of students (63.84 percent) and the educator training/professional development (56.4 percent) were the biggest challenges facing StratComm/PR/IMC/Advertising education.

Public relations instructors said they “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” that other challenges facing StratComm/PR/IMC/Advertising education include not enough paid student internships (56.37 percent), not enough faculty diversity (56.15 percent), industry turmoil (55.47 percent), lack of professional experience of faculty (55.01 percent) and public perception of the profession (50.91 percent).

Public relations instructors had wide-ranging open-ended responses as well:

*Costs at private universities are too high. Hard to find faculty that can teach digital—people who are good at it come from industry and academia cannot compete with salary—industry pays much better than academia*

*The whole model, and AEJMC/ACEJMC approach to field is further and further out of touch. University admin does not recognize the fact, and of course those of us teaching the same stuff as 20 years ago are not going to bring it to their attention. Students may eventually figure it out, though.*

*Our industry's traditional disdain/dislike for math, and our client's voracious appetite for multiple things that require a facility with numbers.*

*With many such programs housed in Journalism schools, student recruitment is an issue. Potential students seeking an education in these disciplines do not expect to find them in "Journalism" schools. This challenge is made more difficult by the nature of leadership in many Journalism schools. Much of this leadership comes from a traditional*
news background and either consciously or with unconscious bias prefer the news side of the organization. The bright light for these disciplines is the growing job opportunities. Organizations of all types from governments to nonprofits to businesses are realizing professional communicators are more and more vital to their success. A quick comment about faculty - I can't stress enough the importance of having faculty with significant and current professional experience in these disciplines. Not just prestigious names, but faculty engaged in the day-to-day teaching of our students. (This is also true of news faculty, but you didn't ask about them.)

Lack of professional development and poor leadership, both of which are most likely financial in nature are the biggest threats in my opinion. We hire chairs and deans based on who can raise money lately. These things are not helpful to programs. We need professional development, but travel budgets are disappearing.

Demand for young professionals with practical skills and training is as strong as ever. We are seeing high demand for our interns (nearly all paid positions), and high demand for our graduates (an 87% placement rate). We're optimistic, but accrediting bodies seem out of step with the field and are slow to respond to changes.

Although the numbers of African American, Latina and Asian American women teaching in journalism or StratComm/PR/IMC/Advertising who responded to the survey were small (18, 9 and 12 individuals, respectively), they rated other concerns much higher than their white male and female counterparts.

For example, African American women “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” (83.25 percent) that there is not enough faculty diversity and 61.03 percent said there is not enough student diversity. For Latinas, 77.77 percent “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” (83.25 percent) that there is not enough faculty diversity, and 55.55 percent said there is not enough student diversity. Asian American women “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” (83.27 percent) that there is not enough faculty diversity and 49.93 percent say there is not enough faculty diversity.

Similarly, the numbers of African American, Latino and Asian American men teaching in journalism or StratComm/PR/IMC/Advertising who responded to the survey were small (18, 9 and 12 individuals, respectively), but they rated other concerns much higher than their white male and female counterparts.

For example, African American men “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” (44.44 percent) that there is not enough faculty diversity, and 33.33 percent said there is not enough student diversity. The Latino sample of four men did not have an overwhelming preference for any one concern, but not enough faculty or student diversity were listed, along with lack of student scholarships and paid internships. Asian American men “somewhat agree,” “agree” or “strongly
agree” (66.67 percent) that industry turmoil/changing business model was a concern, and 33.33 percent expressed dismay about the lack of faculty and student diversity.

Discussion

Future research could include a survey of instructors at the hundreds of journalism and public relations programs that are not accredited by the ACEJMC, and well as a survey of instructors of more journalism and public relations programs outside of the United States. A survey of part-time adjunct and full-time non-tenured journalism and public relations faculty also would provide valuable perspectives. Such research could impact the future of journalistic and public relations practices, including what programs to keep, what programs to drop, what types of technologies programs should focus on, whether to consolidate with other programs, and whether to close certain programs that may no longer be financially viable. A separate study of minority professors may be worthwhile to gauge their distinct experiences in the academy and what they perceive to the top issues facing their schools and programs. Such research is vital because the opinion of journalism and public relations professors on the status and future of both disciplines can provide insight that might change the way we train communication professionals as well as alter the trajectory of the disciplines.

Conclusion

This article examines the opinions of university professors who are charged with training the next generation of journalists and PR professionals. Educators are critical change agents in the quest to repair journalism’s tattered reputation, find ways to sustain and make the news profitable, and train ethically-sound journalism and public relations practitioners. Journalism instructors are especially concerned about the long-term viability of many of their programs and lament the industry’s changing business model, the cost and low return on investment of a journalism degree, negative images of the press, and lackluster job prospects for graduates. PR educators are far less concerned that their programs will shut down, but are worried about higher education financial shortages, changing technologies, the cost of their degrees, the poor academic preparation of students, and educator training/professional development. Journalism and PR educators believe their degrees are essential for success in both fields. Minority professors, however, expressed far more concern about the lack of diversity among faculty and student ranks.

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References


“Trump Bump”: U.S. Students Define Journalism Education in the Age of Trump

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Abstract

This study uses an online survey (N = 109) to examine journalism students’ ideas about journalism and journalism education within this era of disruption. In light of news stories claiming journalism education is receiving a “Trump Bump,” this study examined conceptualizations of journalistic values, educational skills necessary, and career ambitions. Findings indicate that students are interested in traditional roles and skills, though their thoughts of prospective jobs were not necessarily traditional. Those who were studying journalism but did not want to be journalists said the classes would sharpen their writing and communication skills in order to benefit their future careers.

Introduction

Political upheaval, a fast news cycle, and the anti-media rhetoric from the president and other politicians has led to a so-called “Trump Bump” (Harris, 2018, August 9; Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2017) in U.S. journalism engagement, which has sparked increased subscribers at news outlets (Newman et al., 2017) and increases in journalism majors at universities (LaMagna, 2018). These stories come at a time when journalism is being disrupted — job opportunities have declined and the nature of the profession is in flux due, in part, to technological and audience shifts. Journalism education has been working to understand and keep up with the new media landscape as it examines how to best educate students.

Through a survey with current U.S. journalism students, this study examines the reasons for the increased interest in journalism education and the expectations students have for their education. This project seeks to uncover what students see as the tenets and values of journalism and their understandings of the technical and technological skills needed to be successful in the journalism they are envisioning — if they are envisioning a career in journalism at all. Our current study seeks to build on this research because of the implications of the so-called “Trump Bump”—the increase in journalism students in response to the anti-media rhetoric of U.S. President Donald Trump—
and the post-election journalism landscape. Understanding journalism students’ conceptualizations of the profession can help journalism schools better address student misconceptions and provide a stronger learning environment.

**Literature Review**

A flurry of news reports in the last year documented anecdotal evidence of a surge of interest in journalism education among high school and college students. (Anderson, 2018; Harris, 2018; Jones, 2019; LaMagna, 2018). In these reports, educators, journalists and students speculated that the increased interest might be the result of a Trump effect and made comparisons to the spike in journalism enrollment following the *Washington Post*’s Watergate investigative reporting on the Nixon White House in the 1970s.

A *Washington Post* story quoted Lucy A. Dalglish, dean of the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, as saying that President Trump’s descriptions of journalists as the “enemy of the people,” comments about “fake news” and calls for rally crowds to jeer reporters were driving students to journalism majors (Anderson, 2018). In addition, Anderson’s (2018) report said educators had noticed increased interest in investigative and political reporting classes, with the implication that today’s journalism majors hoped to pursue Watergate-style exposés into government corruption.

Other articles offered similar theories. As early as 2017, a *Columbia Journalism Review* article raised the idea that watchdog coverage by news organizations in the Trump era could inspire future journalists (Sullivan, 2017). Writing in *The Atlantic*, Harris (2018) discussed the “so-called Woodstein phenomenon,” a reference to the two Watergate reporters (Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein), and quoted sources speculating that Trump’s rhetoric could be fueling young people’s interest in the profession.

On the high school level, Jones (2019) cited a December 2018 study of 500 journalism and media educators in 45 states that found 44 percent of teachers had seen an increase in journalism class enrollment and more than 30 percent noted increasing student interest in pursuing a journalism major. In that survey, 39 percent of the 200 respondents who discussed the reasons for the interest attributed the spike to Trump and the national political climate (Jones, 2019).

Although most of the educators quoted in the news reports focused on Trump, some also credited student interest in journalism to technological innovations and the new types of storytelling options they provide for journalists as influencing a journalism revival (Anderson, 2018; Jones, 2019).

**A professional and educational crossroads**

Historically, the ever-changing nature of journalism creates difficult decisions for journalism faculty, who find themselves working to keep up with the trends and technology in the field while still trying to teach and adhere to traditional norms and values of journalism. Lynch (2015) argues that educators are often at a disadvantage because there is often a lack of faculty expertise in new media, and structural bodies—like accreditation standards and university-level bureaucracy—lead to slowly-evolving curriculum that may not be current enough for new journalists. This inability to evolve can impact students’ employment prospects, particularly in areas of technology — Wenger,
Owens, and Cain (2018) found that journalism job postings most often included web/multimedia skills as a top attribute needed for jobs, with social networking skills also mentioned in a majority of job ads.

At the same time, not only are educators working to keep up with a rapidly changing media environment, but journalism educators also face the problems of helping students engage in career planning in a difficult business where a job is uncertain — with declining numbers of journalists (Grieco, 2018) as well as low job satisfaction amongst those who are working (Willnat & Weaver, 2014). With these barriers, journalism educators and others may question the ways journalists are educated, or if they require college education at all (Folkerts, 2014). Amongst these questions, educators examine who a journalism education is for and how the educational process should work. For example, Anderson (2014) indicated that journalism education must move away from educating only professionals and focus on recentering in a liberal arts tradition, stating, “All of these steps, in other words, involve reframing the study of journalism as a form of critical education that can help both ordinary citizens as well as prospective journalists navigate the world of the 21st century” (p. 67). These questions have led to varied models of journalism education.

With an increase in interest in journalism comes the opportunity to understand what students envision as journalism education. One previous study indicated that journalism students viewed the role of the news media differently than professionals (Coleman, Lee, Yaschur, Meader, & McElroy, 2018). In this study, students saw journalism focused mostly on the roles of interpreters and disseminators, and considered the adversarial function of journalism as outdated (Coleman, et al., 2018). The researchers suggested that colleges could learn from these new conceptions of journalism among their students, saying,

> The take-away for college administrators and educators is to appeal to students' sense of self-realization, altruism, and desire to leave a lasting impression. Classes should emphasize the good that journalism can do in the world. The potential for being on TV to confer some type of celebrity status is likely to motivate some to major in broadcasting; however, we caution that a healthy dose of reality tempered with fostering altruism and an understanding of the proper function of the press in a democracy is warranted” (Coleman, et al., 2018, p. 814).

Furthermore, Coleman, et al. (2018) suggested that outreach to K-12 schools as well as updating curricula for these updated role conceptions was necessary for journalism schools. They stated, “Finally, schools should acknowledge the updated role conceptions of these up-and-coming journalists, incorporating blogging and social media into all classes, and providing ethical guidance for navigating the new territory of becoming an equal partner in conversations about issues” (p. 814).

Not only do students and professionals see things differently, but so do the public and professionals. As early as 2005, Heider, McCombs, and Poindexter (2005) found that the public was seeing journalism in a non-traditional way. In their study, 600 Southwestern adults said accuracy and unbiased reporting was extremely important while being a watchdog of powerful people and the government was much lower ranked. Furthermore, their analysis of a previous study of journalists’ rankings of important roles indicated that the public and journalists were at odds, in which there was significantly more journalists who believed being a watchdog and rapid reporting were
important roles for journalists, while significantly more of the public believed that being a community forum was important (Heider, McCombs, & Poindexter, 2005).

Because this political moment is directly engaging with journalism and the purpose of journalism, and because experts are arguing that such a moment is increasing enrollment in journalism programs, this study provides an opportunity to understand students’ conceptualizations of journalism within this changing political and journalistic moment. To help understand these conceptualizations, we ask the following research questions:

RQ1: What do U.S. students want to do with their journalism majors?
RQ2: How do U.S. students conceptualize journalism?
RQ3: What skills do U.S. students think journalism education should provide?

Method

This project uses an online survey (N = 109) to examine journalism students’ ideas about journalism and journalism education within this era of disruption. In April and May 2019, students were recruited to the online survey through convenience sampling. Researchers contacted professors and other professional and educational contacts to ask that they pass the survey along to students and colleagues, and the survey was posted through various social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, and regional and national email lists involving journalism and journalism education. Participants were given the opportunity to win one of four $20 Amazon gift cards for completing the survey. In addition to the following, participants answered basic demographics questions.

Students completed the Qualtrics survey at their convenience. Seventy-five percent completed the survey in less than 10 minutes, and 86.2 percent completed the survey in less than 15 minutes. They were asked about their education: whether they have or are studying to have a journalism major; a journalism minor; a major or minor that involves journalism but is not called “journalism”; or a journalism/related concentration. Participants also indicated whether they were involved with journalism at the high school level and whether they work for a college or university student media outlet.

To aid in understanding their professional ambitions, participants were asked to select whether they planned, were leaning toward, unsure about, or did not want to work in media. In open-ended responses, participants were asked what positions they would be most interested in if they were to work in media, as well as what they would like to do if they did not want to work in media. Participants were asked to select what platform they would be most interested in working for: television news, radio news, news print, magazines, podcasting, online news, and other (with an open response), as well as what topics they would be most interested in covering: political, sports, science/health, entertainment, human interest, local government, business, investigative reporting, and other (with an open response). Participants were able to select more than one topic and more than one platform.

Finally, participants indicated their perceptions regarding journalistic education through two sets of questions. In both cases, the list items were randomized to reduce order effects. The first involved a list of journalistic goals or values. Participants were prompted, “The next question...”
involves certain goals that some people feel are important for journalism to obtain, or roles they think journalism should fulfill. For each, indicate how important you feel it is within the type of journalism you yourself would do.” The roles listed were taken from Heider, McCombs, and Poindexter (2005). The participants ranked each role on the list (of 13) in a Likert scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). The individual goals are listed with responses in Table 1. Furthermore, participants were asked to respond in an open-ended question to any goal or role that was not mentioned.

The second list involved skills participants believed that journalism students should learn in their college course. “The next question involves certain things that some people feel are important for journalism students to learn. Please indicate how important you feel it is for journalism students to learn each of the following skills in their college journalism classes.” These skills were derived from the Poynter Core Skills for the Future of Journalism study (Finberg, 2014), with additional skills added by the researchers. The skills (26 in all) are listed with responses in Table 2. Participants were also allowed to name skills not on the list that they believed students should develop as part of their journalism education.

Results

In all, 109 participants completed the study. Thirty-five participants listed their gender as male, and 73 listed their gender as female (one declined to answer). The majority of the participants (n = 94) were between the ages of 18 and 22, with two participants in their 50s, one in their 30s, and the rest between 23 and 30. Two declined to list their age. All of the participants attended schools in the United States. Participants were mainly in Indiana (n = 62) and Kentucky (n = 28), with others in Alaska, California, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Utah (one declined to answer). Most listed their political beliefs as liberal (n = 44) or very liberal (n = 12), with 42 self-reporting as moderate, seven as conservative, and one as very conservative (three declined to answer).

Of those 109 survey takers, 45 (41.3%) had a journalism major, 16 (14.7%) had a journalism minor, 31 (28.4%) had a major or minor that involves journalism but isn’t called journalism, and 16 (14.7%) had a journalism or related concentration. (One participant declined to provide educational information). Thirty-seven (33.9%) took a journalism class in high school, 18 (16.5%) worked on a student newspaper in high school, 23 (21.1%) worked on a student yearbook in high school, 9 (8.3%) worked on a student broadcast or radio station in high school, and 11 (10.1%) worked on an online student publication. Twenty-four students (22%) checked “other” and said explicitly that they were not involved in high school media, while 15 (13.8%) did not check any of the boxes for high school media activities.

RQ1 asked what students wanted to do with their journalism majors. A majority of the 109 participants—61 (56%)—said they planned on working in media. An additional 21 (19.3%) said they were leaning toward working in media, while 15 (13.8%) were unsure about working in media and 12 (11%) did not want to work in media. Participants were asked what type of media they would be interested in working for. Students were allowed to select more than one. Magazines was the most popular selection (64 participants selected it), followed by online news (n = 58), news print (n = 54), podcasting (n = 49), TV news (n = 43), and radio news. Eleven participants selected
“other,” and their responses included: social, video, audio books ($n = 2$), documentary media, sports news ($n = 3$), radio, and freelance video work, filmmaking, or audio production.

Participants were given an open response question about what positions they would be most interested in. Generally, the students wrote relatively traditional media jobs. For example, 22 participants mentioned various editor positions, with five specifically mentioning video or digital editing. Twenty-seven used the word “reporter,” “writer,” or “journalism” in their description, although some were specific as to what type of reporter, writer, or journalism (such as sports reporting or multimedia journalism). Three mentioned blogging, three mentioned podcasting, and eight mentioned something to do with social media. Five mentioned public relations.

Participants were also asked what topics they would be most interested in covering. Again, survey takers were able to select more than one topic. The students are feature-oriented, with 74 selecting Entertainment as their interest, followed by Human interest ($n = 67$), Investigative reporting ($n = 49$), Political ($n = 32$), Sports ($n = 29$), Science/health ($n = 26$), Local government ($n = 21$), Business ($n = 19$), and other ($n = 13$). Those who selected “other” also leaned toward feature-type news, citing environmental ($n = 2$), fashion ($n = 3$), beauty, context stories, gender and sexuality, education, food, activism, and technology as topics they would like to cover.

This study recognized that not everyone studying journalism or a related field wants to work as a journalist. It asked participants what they would want to do if they did not want to work in media. Participants’ responses included “bartender” and “youth pastor,” but many of the responses mirrored some of the interest they had already discussed above. Several mentioned working with sports or in public relations. Several mentioned teaching or coaching at a variety of levels. The entertainment industry was also mentioned in several responses — participants discussed acting, fiction editing/publishing, filmmaking, modeling, screenwriting, and fashion. Still more discussed law or government or even business opportunities.

Finally, understanding that not everyone who studies journalism will want to be a journalist also begs the question of why, then, do they study journalism? This survey asked how participants thought their journalism studies would help them achieve those other goals. The most common responses to this open-ended question had to do with communication skills. Participants believed that their journalism education would help them hone effective communication skills as well as writing skills. Among those who said they did not want to go into media-related careers, this trend held steady. These participants said their journalism studies would develop their writing, reading, research, and communication skills and provide additional people skills such as an added perspective or a developed sense of empathy.

After getting an idea of what types of journalism the students were interested in, this survey turned to questions about journalism itself and the education of journalism. $RQ2$ asked how students conceptualized journalism. Participants were asked to rank how important these values/goals were within the type of journalism they themselves would do. Participants ranked each on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). Table 1 lists the means for each value/goal participants evaluated in descending order.
Table 1
Students’ perceptions of the importance of journalistic roles and goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role/Goal</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure accuracy</td>
<td>4.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the public</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be inclusive of different points of view</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide unbiased reporting</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care about the public</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide explanation of issues and trends</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight interesting people and groups among the public</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a forum for public views</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a watchdog of powerful people and the government</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide rapid reporting</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report the widest range of news</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer solutions to public problems</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrate on certain topics</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participants (N = 109) ranked roles and goals from 1 = not at all important to 5 = extremely important.

RQ3 concerned the skills journalism students believed were important to learn. Participants were asked to assess a list of things that some people feel are important for journalism students to learn. Participants were asked to indicate how important they felt it is for journalism students to learn each skill. Participants ranked each on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). Table 2 lists the mean for each value/goal participants evaluated in descending order.

Table 2
Students’ perceptions of the importance of skills for journalism students to learn in college journalism classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fact checking/verification skills</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing skills</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism ethics</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing techniques</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research skills</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media literacy</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story idea planning and development</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media law</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Press (AP) style</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student media experience</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media engagement</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open records requests</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media analytics</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beat reporting 3.77
Data visualization 3.77
Video production skills 3.63
Statistics 3.61
Business skills 3.59
Data mining 3.47
Entrepreneurship 3.36
Drone journalism 2.86
Computer coding 2.79
3D animation 2.38

Note. Participants (N = 109) ranked importance of skills from 1 = not at all important to 5 = extremely important.

Discussion

This study sought to examine the students who were in college journalism classes during the reported “Trump Bump” to learn more about their reasons for choosing to study journalism and how they compared with the anecdotes and speculation in news reports of the phenomenon. It also sought to better understand the expectations students have for their educations, including how students see the values of journalism and their understandings of the technological skills needed to be successful in the journalism careers they desire. Overall, it provides a glimpse into the interests of some students in journalism classes today, many questions for educators to consider, and plenty of fodder for further research.

What do students want to do with their journalism majors? The students in this survey expressed the greatest interest in entertainment reporting (n = 74) and human interest storytelling (n = 67). Participants were able to select more than one reporting topic and the survey did not ask for a ranking, but the high interest in entertainment topics seems to align with findings of a 2018 study by Coleman, et al. In that study, many students in focus groups emphasized the importance of entertainment and lifestyle news. Many students told the researchers that “journalism was moving away from hard news and more toward entertainment” (Coleman, et al., 2018, p. 813). The students defended the trend and described hard news reporting as “outdated.” The students’ shift to entertainment news might have occurred because the distinction between journalism and self-promotion (at least on social media) has greatly eroded, leading to the “celebrified journalist” (Olausson, 2018).

The topics that would seem most likely to support a Trump effect on journalism pursuits — investigative reporting (n = 49) and political reporting (n = 32) — emerged as the third and fourth most popular among students in this survey. They were followed by sports, science/health, local government, business and other. The significance of that ranking is unclear. Could it support speculation that a new generation of students sees investigative and political reporting as a way to improve democracy? It’s possible. But it also raises questions for future research on how students define the categories of entertainment, human interest, investigative and political reporting and what types of story frames they will pursue based on these interests.

In the study by Coleman, et al. (2018), both students and professionals ranked the investigative roles of journalism as most important. But that study combined the investigative role with the
interpretive role. In follow-up focus groups, the students seemed to prioritize the journalistic role of weeding through the overwhelming amount of information available today to determine what’s most important over investigations into corruption. Educators quoted in the news reports on the growth of journalism talked about student interest in amplifying the voices of communities that are underrepresented in the media (Anderson, 2018). That might explain the popularity of human interest topics. Though some may think of entertainment and human interest journalism as fluff, placing the results in the larger context of research suggests the topics these students want to cover are some of the most substantial issues facing society.

Other aspects of this study’s findings support the students’ emphasis on entertainment and human interest reporting. For instance, most participants (n = 64) identified magazines, a platform known for features and lifestyle content, as their most preferred workplace. Participants could select more than one work preference and the survey did not ask them to rank their preferences, so we don’t know how many would name magazines as their top choice. Magazines, a traditionally print-oriented medium, seemed like a surprising choice given the industry’s emphasis on digital media and college students’ widely documented use of mobile devices and social media (Jiang, J. 2018). But the survey tool did not define magazines as print publications, so students may be referring to online publications such as Vox.com. Further research should delve more deeply into how journalism students define news platforms given the flux and overlap in media platforms today. The popularity of magazines also could be related to characteristics of the survey sample. We do not know of any particular connections to magazines among the survey participants, but certainly a broader sample might produce different results.

The students’ choices of media workplaces covered a wide range, perhaps reflecting the murky lines separating media platforms today and the frequent crossover between journalism and more promotional roles (Molla, 2019, February 25). In an open-response question about desired career positions, we noted a frequent mention of the word “editor” in a variety of contexts. The types of editing ranged from video editing to magazine editing to digital editing to news editor to editor-in-chief for a publication. We also noted frequent mentions of the term “reporter,” but those references weren’t necessarily linked to traditional news reporting. Some responses combined reporting with digital producing, photography, and radio. We also saw frequent mentions of public relations and social media positions.

In the open response question, no one specified newspaper journalism as their preferred role, but news print was the third most popular choice to the multiple choice question on media workplace preferences. This also seems surprising given the dire predictions on the future of print newspapers. Further research could explore students’ conceptions of the future of print and television. Educators also must consider if they’re fully conveying the media landscape as part of the journalism curriculum. Do students have realistic expectations of their future careers? And how can journalism programs meet students’ expectations while also providing the best preparation for an uncertain future?

The study results also touched on the long-debated question of the purpose of a journalism education, especially at a time when traditional news media jobs are declining. About a fourth of the survey participants did not plan to pursue careers in the media, though we assume they were in a journalism class since they were taking the survey, which was primarily distributed through journalism faculty. These students’ responses to an open question on how journalism studies would
help them achieve their goals suggest a recognition that journalistic skills such as writing and analytical reading skills, experience talking with people, and other aspects of communication provide useful training beyond news media careers. Is this an untapped opportunity for journalism programs? How closely should the curriculum align with the growing demands of the traditional news industry (Wenger, Owens & Cain, 2018)?

Students’ responses to questions about journalistic values and skill expectations in the curriculum seemed to reflect respect for traditional ethical principles. In “The Elements of Journalism,” Kovach & Rosenstiel (2014) stated that journalists’ foremost principle is its “obligation to the truth” (p. 49). Students echoed that philosophy by ranking ensuring accuracy as the most important journalistic value or goal and citing fact checking/verification as the most important skill for students to learn in college journalism classes. As Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) noted, however, applying this value and teaching these skills can be complicated. “Everyone agrees journalists must tell the truth, yet people are befuddled about what ‘the truth’ means” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 49). Regardless of changes in technology, the journalism students in classrooms today face great challenges in determining how to be faithful to the ideal of ensuring accuracy.

Responses to journalistic values also aligned with the Heider, McCombs, and Poindexter (2005) study of the public views of media, from which the journalistic values measures were taken. As in that study, participants here gave their highest assessment of importance to “ensuring accuracy”; the top five values on their list were the top five values here, as well, though in a different order. In both studies, the “watchdog role” was rated the fifth from the bottom, while “concentrating on certain topics” was the lowest-rated value. It seems that the public views of journalism from the Heider, McCombs, and Poindexter (2005) study have taken hold in the assessment of journalistic values by journalism students, even as the media landscape has changed. Taking into account the divide between public views of journalism and professional views of journalism in that study, the question remains whether these assessment of journalistic roles are similarly changing once students become professional journalists.

Other possible insights from the rankings on journalistic values and goals seem to relate to previously mentioned comments about students’ desires to share the perspectives of underrepresented communities (Harris, 2018). Values such as “understand the public,” “be inclusive of different points of views” and “care about the public” were all in the top five values. Students seemed least interested in specialization by ranking “concentrating on certain topics” the lowest on the value choices. This echoed the public’s ranking of news roles in the Heider, McCombs, and Poindexter (2005) study. The students in this study also might reject the immediacy demands of current newsrooms based on their ranking of “providing rapid reporting” as 10th of the 13 options. This rapid reporting value was also ranked low by the public in the Heider, McCombs, and Poindexter (2005) study, significantly lower than the way professional journalists ranked this value. This begs the question about whether the demands of immediate coverage are self-imposed by professional journalists or journalism organizations.

In the skills responses, the students emphasized traditional journalism and academic skills – from “interviewing” and “ethics” to “grammar,” “critical thinking,” “writing techniques” and “research.” The first mention of technology in the ranking of skills for journalism students was “social media engagement,” which placed 13th behind “AP style” and “student media experience.” In general, technology, business and data skills—the ones that many journalism programs and
experts have pushed as the areas where innovation is most needed (Finberg & Klinger, 2014)—fell at the bottom of students’ lists of important skills.

So, what does this mean for educators? Are students rating those skills on the low end because they feel they are unnecessary? The job ads for journalism jobs are increasingly demanding skills in social media, audience engagement, web/multimedia skills, and the ability to work under tight deadlines (Wenger, Owens & Cain, 2018). Coleman, et al. (2018) also suggested schools broaden their offerings on social media. Also, many of the students in this study said they were seeking careers in online news, social media, and digital technology. So, do they believe they could learn technology by other means than an expensive college education? Should educators push for innovation in areas like drone journalism, computer coding and 3D animation in their curriculums— even if students don’t see the value? This study suggests a disconnect between what students want to learn and what educators think they should learn; future studies could further examine this tension.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Despite these findings and implications, the study was not able to provide clear evidence of a “Trump Bump” — the increase in journalism students in response to the anti-media rhetoric of U.S. President Donald Trump. The relatively small sample size and regional concentration made the results difficult to generalize across the country. Initially, an additional research question was included regarding the role of individual differences—such as political affiliation, region, and media experience—on perceptions of journalism and its role. However, these tests were not possible given the nature of the final sample. Additionally, this study was not longitudinal, so it is unclear whether these students would have provided the same responses prior to the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Future studies could use this as a template for further analysis.

Additionally, this study only considered journalism students studying in the U.S. It could be that journalism students in other countries are being similarly affected by their respective political climates. It also could be that the findings reflect the current technological or business climates, rather than the political one. Additional studies could address such possibilities.

**Conclusion**

This study sought to examine journalism students’ ideas about journalism and journalism education within this era of disruption. Findings suggest that the reason students are choosing to study journalism, their conceptions of journalistic values, and their expectations of their education are actually quite messy and murky. However, findings indicate that, overall, students are interested in traditional roles and skills, though their thoughts of prospective jobs are not necessarily traditional. Future research can continue to reflect on the ongoing impact of political climates on the perceptions of potential journalists and the role of journalism education.
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References


TECHNOLOGICAL MUTATIONS AND THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES
Defining and Teaching Data Journalism: A Typology

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Abstract

A thematic evaluation of about 240 data journalism courses resulted in a progressive, tripartite typology that defines and demarcates the field. At the center is pattern detection, preceded by data acquisition and standardization, and followed by data representation. The typology advances academic understanding of data journalism by offering a more compact conceptualization, distinguishing the field from technologies best reserved for digital journalism, and providing a fresh definition of data journalism as reliance on numerical evidence to detect patterns. The typology offers educators directed application of three social science principles and creates an evaluation tool to assess data programs.

Keywords: computational journalism, data journalism, education, pedagogy, social science

Introduction:

Data journalism has become integrated into mainstream professional practice in some regions so rapidly that many university journalism education programs have scrambled to keep pace. A 2016 study of all 113 accredited U.S. journalism programs found 48% offered no data journalism classes. Universities that taught data provided a median of 2 courses the authors deemed largely introductory (Berret & Phillips, 2016). For programs trying to catch up, a lack of qualified faculty or access to adjuncts is a common barrier. Even if the expertise can be found and a new course could be created, bureaucratic approval can take two years (Kebeb & Peña, 2013). Struggles to integrate data into journalism curricula invoke earlier disruptions precipitated by convergence and multimedia, such as how much emphasis to give skill acquisition when tools are perishable (i.e., Dreamweaver) and whether the new should be integrated into existing required courses or reserved for electives.

Yet data journalism offers a curricular challenge distinctive from its technological-induced forebears. First, data journalism is a polysemic term without a consensus definition, which intensifies debates over how and what to teach. Second, data journalism is more than a set of tools or practices. It relies on an epistemology that questions reliance on the interview and observation, and thus challenges not just traditional methods but also their implicit journalistic values. Third, employing data as an empirical tool is different from previous disruptions because it draws journalism closer to social science as a practice and philosophy. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine globally the teaching of data journalism both descriptively and prescriptively. The study will develop a typology of data journalism and then apply social science principles to teaching.
Literature Review

Journalism education as a field signifier

Journalism educators have long struggled to adapt to technological changes affecting the profession while still teaching foundational skills and approaches (Blom & Davenport, 2012), a challenge that some professionals believe faculty have been too slow to embrace (Finberg, 2013). A 2006 survey revealed U.S. newspaper editors preferred traditional skills (Pierce & Miller, 2007). A decade later, veteran U.S. journalists blamed universities for teaching students too much technology and not enough basics (Ferrucci, 2017). They might have been heartened by a Hong Kong survey showing students said writing and news judgment were more important than online or multimedia skills (Roselyn Du, 2014). Indeed, the teaching of timeless journalism skills, in particular the pursuit of accurate information and a balanced presentation of varying perspectives, should be seen as a signifier of journalism education and of journalism studies (Josephi, 2019).

Debates over whether journalism educators are tasked first with keeping pace or instilling timeless approaches – or whether their primary curricular objectives should be vocational or conceptual – can obscure a more fundamental role of balancing change and stasis. By its very existence, higher education helps define journalism as a field even as cellphone-toting citizen-documentarians blur its boundaries (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). Journalism education “plays a key part in maintaining the institutional identity for the whole apparatus of journalism” (Carlson & Lewis, 2019, p. 647). Therefore, an examination of how data journalism is taught can offer insight into not just pedagogy but also how journalism is practiced and defined. This study is less an appraisal of higher education teaching and curriculum, although it addresses both, than it is an examination of what data instruction can reveal about the practice of journalism.

Definitions elusive

Data journalism is a multifaceted field marked by a multiplicity of definitions. The field vacillates between “reporting and programming, storytelling and coding, hypothesis-driven inquiry and data-driven inquiry,” to cite a few examples (Borges-Rey, 2017, p. 2). Some have called the field computational journalism and defined it as the journalistic use of algorithms and data, a field that can include automated or “robot” reporting (C. Anderson, 2012; Berret & Phillips, 2016; Carlson, 2015). One author defined data journalism as “a form of storytelling where traditional journalistic working methods are mixed with data analysis, programming, and visualization techniques” (Splendore, 2016, p. 345) without explicating traditional or explaining why data or visuals would be exogenous to journalism. One careful elucidation defined data journalism as “informational, graphical accounts of current public affairs for which data sets offering quantitative comparison are central to the information provided” (Lowrey & Hou, 2018, p. 7). Yet the field also includes subjects other than public affairs and presentations that are not graphical. A study of data curricula in six European nations described the field as employing “big amounts of information using computer technology” (Splendore et al., 2015, p. 139). Yet big holds little absolute meaning when a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet has been able, since 2007, to handle more than 16 million cells (“Excel specifications and limits,” n.d.).

However, the same study offers an important definitional distinction between general data analysis and data journalism, for the latter is intertwined with the values and purposes of journalism as a
profession. That difference influences how the subject should be taught, as “newsmaking made by
data” and shaped by national journalism cultures (Splendore et al., 2015, p. 141). The importance
of seeing data not as an end in itself but as a means to effective journalism was reinforced when
data journalism was introduced in two New Zealand universities (Treadwell, Ross, Lee, &
Lowenstein, 2016). Thus, while data journalism may be difficult to define, distinguishing it from
more generic approaches to data is critical. Data journalism is journalism, an approach to
knowledge creation, verification, and communication rooted in normative values such as honest
inquiry and fairness.

*How data journalism is taught*

Perhaps the most thorough examination of data journalism courses was undertaken by Bahareh R.
Heravi of Ireland. The 219 courses found were assigned to 17 themes: computer assisted reporting,
coding, computational journalism, data analysis, data journalism, data science, data visualization,
digital journalism, digital media, investigative journalism, journalism, online journalism, precision
journalism, research, web programming, other, and unknown. Based on the course title, or if
ambiguous a reading of the content, 65% of the courses were assigned to the data journalism theme.
Two-thirds of the courses, or 146, were taught by U.S. universities. The second-largest country
was the United Kingdom, with 12 (Heravi, 2019).

Data journalism has been incorporated into a majority of journalism programs in Australia,
although most wished more could be done, and at the time of the study, only three taught coding
(Davies & Cullen, 2016). An Australian university with just three faculty members used
collaboration with a sister department to offer data journalism courses (Green, 2018). Introducing
a data journalism module into a master’s program in the United Kingdom raised questions not just
of pedagogy but also of students’ willingness to embrace the unfamiliar and uncomfortable
(Hewett, 2015). A snowball sample of selected programs in the United States and Europe in 2005
showed that 22% of journalism programs taught at least four of six data-related courses the study
deemed met its standards for comprehensiveness (Yarnall, Johnson, Rinne, & Ranney, 2008).

Journalism educators who want curricula to reflect changes in professional practice struggle with
how and what to teach, and how to upgrade instructors’ skills. A New Zealand university faced
with those challenges in incorporating social media into the curriculum found students were far
more likely to be consumers than producers and needed instruction in creating material (Hirst &
Treadwell, 2011). An examination of Dutch job postings for journalists in 2013 found all sought
technical skills, a category that included data journalism, which supported a conclusion that
universities should incorporate some technology into basic courses and teach data as an advanced
course (Bakker, 2014). A case study of teaching a one-credit coding class to communication majors
revealed that some students valued personal instructor support while others preferred online course
content, yet none of the support strategies offered a positive correlation with student learning
(Sturgill, Hannam, & Walsh, 2017).

A primary impediment to teaching data journalism is that some students see the phrase as an
unwelcome contradiction: They chose journalism because they did not like math and hoped
storytelling would offer an academic refuge (Maier, 2002). Journalism educators acknowledge that
numerical literacy and even statistical literacy are useful skills but also know they are unpopular
with students and few teach them (Dunwoody & Griffin, 2013). An effective way to overcome
math-aversion is to begin with the end result – to create a visual rooted in storytelling and then work backwards to acquire the skills to evaluate the data (Bradshaw, 2018). At least two how-to textbooks by practitioners now in academia teach numerical reasoning along with step-by-step guides to using tools to evaluate and analyze numbers: Data Literacy (Herzog, 2015) and The Data Journalist: Getting the Story (Vallance-Jones & McKie, 2017). Coding books are typically written for broader audiences; an exception is Practical R for Mass Communication and Journalism (Machlis, 2019). A Data Journalism Handbook has been written (Gray, Chambers, & Bounegru, 2012) with a second in the works (Gray & Bounegru, 2019), although each is a collection of essays about the field and neither is a pedagogical guidebook.

Equally challenging is teaching statistics. A statistics course was required in just 19% of the 369 four-year undergraduate journalism programs in the United States, and all of those were taught in other departments (Martin, 2016). Understanding statistics by gaining literacy in subjects such as correlation measures or absolute vs. relative risk is essential for data journalists to understand what they are visualizing, yet such reasoning is rarely taught in universities (Nguyen & Lugo-Ocando, 2016).

In their report on Teaching Data and Computational Journalism, Berret and Phillips offered three layers for a model curriculum. The first was to create a required introductory course in data journalism stuffed with instruction in databases and spreadsheets, data cleaning, pattern recognition, data visualization, basic numeracy, and descriptive statistics. The second was to infuse data principles and skills into required classes such as multimedia, media law and ethics, journalism history, and narrative reporting. The third layer offered a concentration of up to 11 course titles in data and computation (Berret & Phillips, 2016).

RQ1: How do course descriptions conceptualize data journalism?

**Typologies**

A typology is a systematic classification scheme to “simplify complex phenomena for didactic, organization, and communicative purposes” (Guest, 2012, p. 141). Classification can promote parsimony and conceptual clarity (Hambrick, 1984). Typologies often incorporate categorical variables (Collier, LaPorte, & Seawright, 2012). For example, an examination of journalism and communication education in five Arab countries resulted in four types of programs that both classified education philosophies and illuminated distinctions in regional culture (Al Nashmi, Alkazemi, & Wanta, 2017).

Three data journalism typologies were found. One identified three types of what it termed quantitative journalism: (a) computer-assisted reporting, conceived at the dawn of the computer era as the analysis of data for investigative work, (b) data journalism as the successor to computer-assisted reporting that encompasses any activity dealing with data, and (c) computational journalism as distinct from data journalism, the application of technologies to information-gathering (Coddington, 2015). A second typology also identified (a) data journalism and (b) computational journalism as two of three types, but distinguished computational from the third form, (c) automated journalism as software generating news content (Splendore, 2016). The study of 113 U.S. journalism programs identified four types: (a) data reporting, or the analysis of numbers in journalism, (b) data visualization and interactives, which includes the use of web markup
languages, (c) emerging journalistic technologies, or drones, sensors, and virtual reality, and (d) computational journalism, or algorithms and machine learning to generate news content as well as the use of coding languages (Berret & Phillips, 2016).

All three advance conceptual clarity. Yet a comparison reveals the challenge of parsing an amorphous term into orthogonal categories. First, though attempting to avoid a tautology by terming the field *quantitative journalism*, two essentially see data journalism as a subset of itself. Second, computer-assisted reporting is a term that data journalists stopped using years ago. Third, computation journalism is itself an umbrella term that can include the interrogation of algorithms, automated reporting, and virtual reality – three distinct types. Fourth, coding and web markup languages are often lumped into a single category when they are discrete.

RQ2: What typology best fits data journalism as a field of instruction?

**Social science and journalism**

In data journalism circles, embrace of social science is often seen as originating with Philip Meyer and his groundbreaking *Precision Journalism*, which described how he used survey research and statistical analysis to evaluate subjects such as the 1967 Detroit riots (Coddington, 2015; Meyer, 1973). Although Meyer initially struggled to find a publisher and early reaction to his work was skeptical, successive editions amplified a relationship between journalism and social science (C. W. Anderson, 2018). Appropriately, annual awards given by the National Institute for Computer Assisted Reporting for journalism using social science research carry his name (“Philip Meyer awards,” n.d.).

However, the connections between journalism and social science go back much further. In Europe, France began teaching journalism in 1899 in a college of social science (Hermann, 2017). In the United States, Willard “Daddy” Bleyer created the first doctoral program in journalism in the 1930s by drawing from social science programs in political science, psychology, and sociology, and his model was widely replicated in the Midwest and elsewhere (Rogers, 1994). To a lesser degree, social science principles were incorporated into undergraduate and master’s degrees in the United States, according to a study of syllabi in the 1975-76 school year (Dervin & Banister, 1976). By 1980, journalism and social science were seen as overlapping, at least by U.S. educators (Weaver & McCombs, 1980).

Correspondence does not mean harmony; U.S. journalism education has roots in both craft and social science, and tensions between those two approaches continue today in conflicts between qualitative and quantitative approaches to news (Zelizer, 2009). Some U.K. and U.S. journalists who misunderstood polling responded to electoral surprises in 2015 and 2016 by declaring data-driven reporting as inferior to “shoe-leather” methods (Lewis & Waters, 2018). Thus, journalism and social science have had a long if awkward relationship.

Given that history, the connection can be best understood through a more explicit alliance between science and practice. For example, ethnography sufficiently resembles – though does not mimic (Singer, 2009) – the journalism interview to introduce media students to the research method (Hermann, 2017). Implicitly, journalism skills courses are akin to a graduate survey class in research methods. Reporting classes teach qualitative information-gathering through observation,
interviews, and documents, techniques that approximate ethnography, interviews, and historical analysis. The quantitative approaches that characterize data journalism draw from social science surveys and rely on principles of data analysis and probabilities from statistics courses. Although data journalists may not create a survey or use a t-test, their work requires knowledge of some social science principles.

Applying those social science principles to data journalism also requires understanding of science generally and what distinguishes social science. The scientific method is far from homogenous, and most safely can be described as a reliance on empiricism (Godfrey-Smith, 2009). In turn, empiricism requires skepticism about causality (Okasha, 2016). Empiricism also raises questions about whether reality is independent of observation (Godfrey-Smith, 2009). Further, that view of reality shapes truth theories: whether truth is determined by correspondence (mirroring reality), coherence (internal consistency), or pragmatism (practical value) – or whether truth and reality are socially constructed (Haig & Borsboom, 2012). Definitions of reality and truth are of particular consequence for social sciences, which unlike the physical sciences are non-linear and non-ergodic, involving a unit of analysis, a person, that is irreducible and inseparable from its multifaceted social contexts (Fay & Moon, 1977; Machlup, 1961; Scriven, 1994).

RQ3: How could course materials in data journalism instruction be enhanced by applying social science principles?

Method

The RQs established two primary inquiries: a descriptive examination of existing data journalism courses to develop a typology and a prescriptive approach for applying social science to teaching data. The first entailed a holistic, qualitative examination of course descriptions. The starting point was a spreadsheet of 219 courses created by Assistant Professor Bahareh R. Heravi of University College Dublin (Heravi, 2019) and made public on her Google account. That list was supplemented by website searches of leading universities in April and May 2019 for updates to curriculum. In addition, repeated web queries were undertaken with variations of data terms (data journalism, data-driven journalism, computational journalism, and automated journalism) along with university/college and various geographies. Finally, the list was augmented with the author’s knowledge of data journalism instruction and participation in the field’s pre-eminent annual conference for professionals, the Computer-Assisted Reporting Conference through Investigative Reporters & Editors. Combined, those searches resulted in an examination of about 240 course descriptions at 40 universities.

Although typologies can be seen as quantitative instruments “to predict variance in dependent variables” (Doty & Glick, 1994, p. 243), they are fundamentally a qualitative approach to categorization and organization (Collier et al., 2012). Development of a typology can involve a process akin to thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis is a form of qualitative inquiry that seeks patterns derived from either quantitative evaluation such as prevalence or a more general assessment of importance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It can be used either inductively, as in this study, or deductively “to capture both manifest (explicit) and latent (underlying) meaning” (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 298). Approaches differ according to the purpose, whether confirmatory and driven by hypotheses or exploratory and driven by the content (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey,
Once themes have been identified, typologies can be conceptual, descriptive, or explanatory (Collier et al., 2012).

**Results**

**Thematic analysis**

RQ1 asked how course descriptions conceptualized data journalism. A thematic reading revealed that data journalism courses are shaped as much by the subject as by the teacher. Unlike, say, courses in photography or beginning reporting, data journalism courses exhibit little standardization. Even within specific subjects such as data acquisition and analysis, courses vary widely in content and approach. This variance appears to be primarily due to the skills of the instructor, and in particular, the teacher’s familiarity with and embrace of coding.

A related and second theme that emerged is that coding-inclusive courses will vary according to whether the teacher employs a general language like Python or one more specific to data analysis and visualization such as R. Courses that employ Python are likely to promote web scraping as a means of gathering information for analysis in a spreadsheet. Courses that employ R are likely to promote statistical analysis and visualizations through R libraries such as ggplot2.

Instructor preference for the Swiss-Army-knife utility of coding shapes data journalism course design more than any consensus on terminology or course outcomes. The dominance of coding is not a manifestation of the old saw that everything looks like a nail to a person with a hammer. Rather, it is a reflection of the value of coding in a digital world as well as its symbiosis with spreadsheets and databases. In that regard, the transition from computer-assisted reporting to data journalism (Coddington, 2015; Splendore, 2016) can be best explained by the acceptance of coding. Versatile coding languages like Python and Ruby that allow journalists to acquire and evaluate large quantities of digital information has changed how data journalism is practiced, and thus taught.

Before further consideration of the influence of coding, it is important to define terms. Programming and coding are often used interchangeably to some objection, as coding may entail less proficiency or less origination than programming (Ohanesian, 2018; Prottsman, 2015). For data journalists, however, the terms coding and programming have little practical distinction, especially when authors make their work available for reuse through GitHub and libraries are commonly shared. However, coding should be distinguished from the use of web markup languages HTML (hypertext markup language) and CSS (cascading style sheets). HTML and CSS conform to Internet-standard commands to display websites consistently across browsers and operating systems, often animated by JavaScript and accelerated by PHP (hypertext preprocessor). These markup languages make websites function but are not coding or programming languages. Although they can be taught together, markup languages and coding languages are discrete and serve different purposes.

Further, not every use of markup languages or coding is data journalism. For example, a chapter in *Data Journalism Handbook 2* identifies a visually groundbreaking *New York Times* story on an avalanche called Snow Fall (Branch, 2012) as a data journalism exemplar. The author playfully notes that data journalists exclude Snow Fall from such categorization because its arresting
presentation lacked data, then replies, “What is data journalism for if it is not to tell stories in new ways with new skills that take advantage of the best of the web?” (Usher, 2019, para. 12). Yet terming innovative presentation as data journalism unwittingly impedes definitional clarity.

A third theme that emerged from analyzing the courses is the role that tools play in determining topics and approaches. For example, Tableau has become a popular tool to analyze data visually. Tableau is used in an array of businesses, governments, and nonprofits. Tableau has solicited journalists who are attracted to the interface and the company’s promise to continue offering a robust version of its product at no cost. It also provides teaching materials for instructors, including a data journalism package written by Cheryl Phillips, formerly at the Seattle Times and now at Stanford University (Jones, 2017). In turn, some data journalism syllabi incorporate Tableau as not just a tool but as an approach to data analysis rooted in visualization rather than statistics. Another visual tool that has shaped the definition and teaching of data journalism is Datawrapper. Unlike Tableau, Datawrapper was built by journalists for journalists. Its mobile-first approach eschews interactivity and emphasizes simplicity and clarity. Its blog posts, especially since Lisa Charlotte Rost joined in November 2017, offer practical instruction in best practices. Thus, for different reasons, Tableau and Datawrapper are shaping the conceptualization and teaching of some elements of data journalism.

**Typology**

RQ2 asked what typology would best fit data journalism as a field of instruction. The thematic analysis led to the development of a data journalism typology that is not just a description of instruction but also of a profession. It offers three types that form clusters and can be seen as sequential: (a) data acquisition and standardization, (b) pattern detection, and (c) data representation. In Figure 1, the three types are parsed into discrete forms that can be grouped according to whether they are primarily software-dependent (on the top) or coding-dependent (on the bottom).

![Figure 1: A typology of data journalism as a field for instruction](image)
Data acquisition and data standardization, more commonly known as data cleaning, are two fundamental elements of data journalism, and each can be developed primarily through software or coding. Software-dependent data acquisition is ready-for-spreadsheet data such as CSV (comma-separated values) files and data tables inside PDFs (portable document files) that can be converted to a CSV with programs such as Tabula or Cometdocs. Examples of coding-dependent data acquisition are website scraping, API (application programming interface), JSON (JavaScript object notation), or records inside SQL (structured query language) databases. Software-dependent data standardization includes spreadsheet or database functions as well as specialized software programs such as Open Refine. Coding-dependent data standardization may use Python or Ruby to repair spelling variants. A fifth type of data acquisition and standardization involves sensors and inexpensive Raspberry Pi computer boards, but was excluded from this typology because only one course made it a prominent feature.

Once the data has been acquired and standardized, the next step is pattern detection. Much of journalism entails uncovering patterns, such as politicians following donor expectations or gender-based differences in treatment of employees, or in identifying outliers from those established frameworks. Often described broadly as analysis, pattern detection has five distinct forms. Numerical analysis can be either descriptive, such as percentages, ratios, and measures of central tendency, or probabilistic, requiring statistics to measure differences or similarities against a null hypothesis and an alpha usually set at 5%. Geospatial analysis often involves overlaying two or more sets of geographic data such as median education and election results, using an open-source software tool such as QGIS or a proprietary vendor like ArcGIS or Carto. Visual analysis has become more common with Tableau or Power BI, and even with a spreadsheet tool such as Open Explore in Google Sheets. Finally, pattern detection in text can be done through coding by using sentiment analysis or natural-language processing libraries.

Although some data journalism projects can end after a pattern has been detected and results can be reported using words, others rely on a visual representation of the data. A common form of representation is the chart/graph. A second form is a map as either the product of geospatial analysis or a visual representation of a variable, such as color-coding European nations according to portion of immigrants. A third form is a story, or a compilation of text and data graphics (charts, graphs, and/or maps) as a storytelling device. Such a presentation usually requires customized coding.

Implicit in the typology is data literacy, or understanding numerical concepts such as averages, risk and probability, and polls and surveys. A few courses explicitly taught data literacy while others relied on students acquiring that knowledge from other courses. Yet consideration of definitions in data acquisition and standardization, proper numerical evaluation in pattern detection, and correct representation of numbers all depend on data literacy. Judging from the courses studied, the pedagogy of data literacy deserves greater attention.

The typology presents coding as a means to an end rather than as a discrete element of data journalism. As the typology shows, all three clusters in data journalism can incorporate either software solutions or customized coding. In some cases, only coding can acquire the data desired or present it in digital formats. Further, presenting coding as integrated into the data journalism types does not require that it is taught that way. Some programs teach coding as discrete courses while others incorporate it into other numerical or visual classes. Further, whether it is taught separately or embedded into other courses, coding specific to journalism enables universities to
create more hirable graduates. However, defining coding as a separate type would misstate its role as a tool to enable the three identified.

The primary contribution of the typology is to define and demarcate the field. Excluded from the typology are web markup languages such as HTML and CSS. These are essential to digital journalism. They deserve their own emphasis, and at Arizona State University, form a 1-credit course required for all journalism majors. Further, data journalists who wish to code must know web markup languages to either acquire data or represent it. Yet web markup languages are not the same as coding, and data journalism is not defined by their use. Also excluded are technologies sometimes grafted onto data journalism such as automated reporting, drone journalism, or virtual reality. Data journalism depends on technology, but not all technologies are data journalism.

By organizing data journalism into three sequential types, and by further defining the role of coding, the typology enables a fresh definition of data journalism: Data journalism is the primary reliance on numerical evidence as a journalistic tool in detecting patterns, or the visual representation of numerical evidence to enable audiences to discern patterns.

Applying social science

RQ3 asked how data journalism courses could be enhanced by applying social science principles. Because pattern recognition is central to data journalism, social science is central to its instruction. In particular, social science offers three perspectives that can advance data journalism instruction, based on an evaluation of the course descriptions.

First is hypothesis testing. Several course descriptions refer to finding stories in data. It is true that journalistic stories can be found inductively by repeatedly querying the data. However, a more scientific approach is to start with a question or a hypothesis, and then find data that can test that question or hypothesis, as international data journalist trainer Eva Constantaras has urged (Peszkowska, 2019).

Second is explication. Explication in the social sciences, and especially communication, is the hard work of defining terms (Chaffee, 1991). For data journalism, explication is at the heart of data definition work – understanding the human processes implanted in collecting and classifying data, in knowing what was omitted, and in determining the limits and meaning of any particular number. Several course descriptions evoked data definitions as necessary. Explication suggests it may be the single most important task of a data journalist.

Third is understanding probability. Unlike the physical sciences that can rely on certainties such as the speed of light or the temperature at which liquid water becomes gaseous, social science examines unpredictable people living in interconnected societies, and thus it can deal only in probabilities. For data journalism, probability is crucial to correctly reporting election polls and using statistics, which in the courses and programs evaluated was either not required or outsourced. Moreover, understanding probability forces humility in interpretation. For example, data may offer persuasive evidence of racial disparities in police practices but the causes and degrees of those disparities may be beyond what the data can deliver.
Discussion and Conclusion

A thematic evaluation of data journalism course materials enabled the creation of a progressive, tripartite typology that defines and demarcates the field. The first type is data acquisition and standardization. It enables the second type, pattern recognition, which is central to journalism. The third type is data representation involving three forms of visuals. The typology sees coding not as a discrete form but as intermingled with and enabling the three types. Conversely, it excludes peripheral topics that are sometimes affixed to data journalism such as web markup languages, automated reporting, and evolving technologies such as virtual reality. Finally, the typology facilitates a fresh definition of data journalism as the primary reliance on numerical evidence as a journalistic tool in detecting patterns, or the visual representation of numerical evidence to enable audiences to discern patterns.

For educators, the typology implicitly calls for application of three social science principles: hypothesis testing, explication, and probability. It also allows administrators an evaluation tool to assess if their programs adequately cover the three types, whether contained in an all-in-one class or spread among two or more courses.

The results of this study come with two limitations. First, the results are built on an online reading of course descriptions that may not always reflect the subjects being taught or their approaches. Second, the typology and definition it produced are rooted in time and may require revisions as technologies and practices change. In addition, like any study, this one raises new questions that merit further research. One study could consider whether the levels of presumed data literacy are sufficient to enable the courses being taught. A second could test best practices in the teaching of data to determine if courses or course sequences that align with the typology are effective. A third could compare the educational benefits of embedding coding into related data classes or teaching coding as a separate skill.

The distinct contribution of this study is to inductively create a typology of data journalism through a thematic examination of course materials. That data set enabled a typology that improved upon previous efforts by avoiding tautologies, delimiting the field by distinguishing between digital technologies and clusters that are distinctive to data journalism, and offering a conceptual organization scheme that treats coding as interwoven with data. Data journalism is fundamentally about pattern detection, and the typology affords it centrality to avoid the technological determinism prevalent in other approaches.

About the Author

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Projected Futures: A Qualitative Metasummary of Visions for the Educational Future of Science Journalism

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Abstract:

Drawing inspiration from the research synthesis literature, this report provides a metasummary of the visions of over 150 journalists and experts as related to the educational future of science journalism. We examine four metathemes from six science journalism events that occurred between 2014 and 2018, including: (a) expressed definitional issues in science journalism; (b) the value of collaboration; (c) the impacts of varied informational environments; and (d) issues of verification and transparency. These results speak to how some science journalists are currently seeking to better define and distinguish themselves amid a growing array of technological mutations. The presented report goes directly to the heart of how (and whether) highly specialized forms of journalism are taught in Universities and the futures they project to students.

Introduction

Many science journalism educators have a similar vision for the future of their students: A robust career producing good science stories that matter. But the history that informs this path is littered with debate over journalistic practices, differing expectations, proper science and society connections, technological change, and widely varying pedagogical approaches (see, for example, Amend & Secko, 2012; Hartz & Chappell, 1997; Liskauskas, Ribeiro, & Vasconcelos, 2019; Logan, 2001; McKinnon, Howes, Leach & Prokop, 2018; Nelkin, 1995; Schäfer, 2017; Smith & McGreavy, 2018). Added to this history are emergent discussions over (for example) the decline of regional journalism, science journalism layoffs, social media effects, the determined and calculated spread of misinformation online, how conflicting truth claims link to audience beliefs, and the growth of anti-science movements (see Dunwoody, 2019, for a review of some of these issues). Importantly, there is also evidence that scant attention is being been paid to the development of conceptual frameworks to guide the training of new science journalists and other interested communicators, with instead, surface-level operational skills being prioritized (Besley, Dudo, Yuan, Abi Ghannam, 2016). We are therefore left with a challenging question: What is the educational future of science journalism?

In this report, we draw on the deliberations of more than 150 people to showcase how we might deepen our answers to this question. The examination of science journalism futures is seen as one question among many that could be put to journalists, educators and other stakeholders for their judgment in a deliberative setting. (Student and citizen views are equally important to this task but are dealt with in other work). For journalism educators, this is a prefatory question that can help crystallize common approaches from diverse underlying opinions, thereby helping to build
interest in how highly specialized forms of journalism are taught in Universities and the futures they project to students.

This report examines the above question, and its surrounding debates, through the lens of four Kavli Symposia on the Future of Science Journalism and two Science Journalism Educator (SJE) Summits. The Kavli Symposia brought together over 150 journalists and experts from numerous countries to discuss the future of science journalism. The SJE Summits assembled university educators in Canada to consider similar issues. All the events were held between 2014 and 2018. Using methods of thematic qualitative metasummary (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003), and supported by participant observation of the six events, we assess the “projected futures” of science journalism as they relate to journalism education and notions of what to keep and what to drop. We thereby present one approach to illustrating how reasoned input can be built on, as opposed to quickly forgotten in the face of so many past and future conferences on these topics.

**Science Journalism Futures: Perilous and Exciting**

While some see future-oriented questions as endlessly repetitive and unanswerable, over the past decade, a renewed urgency has developed regarding the need to more fully and openly discuss the future of science journalism (Allan, 2011; Dunwoody, 2014; Dunwoody, 2019; Hayden & Hayden, 2018). For journalism students, this urgency noticeably impacts their desire to study science journalism and their expectations for what constitutes a valuable education in this area.

Within this context, science journalism is *traditionally* argued as an important source of information for non-specialists (Nelkin, 1995), with students often interested in reporting on science/society connections and journalism programs often interested in promoting the use of evidence, expertise, and numeracy. This tradition, however, can be implicated in the heavy criticism of science journalism as unable to connect with citizens in ways that allow meaningful engagement with science (Secko, Amend & Friday, 2013). This criticism has grown as diverse informational environments have appeared online (Brossard, 2013) and questions have arisen over how disruptive technological change has reorganized the previously dominant narrative authority of science journalists and audience-user roles (see, for example, Secko, Tlalka, Dunlop, Kingdon & Amend, 2011; Schäfer, 2017; Tatalovic, 2018). These changes have been accompanied by the increasing strategic orientation of science to today’s media (Rödder, 2011) and major structural changes in public communication (cf. Jarreau & Porter, 2018). Student and publics now reside in an information-saturated world that is networked, global, interdisciplinary, and subject to a wide variety of “news-like” scientific information.

Educators are therefore in the middle of a debate where the future of science journalism is argued to be both perilous and exciting. Some see science journalism in a state of crisis, with Dunwoody (2014, p. 43) writing: “science journalism is an increasingly imperiled occupation that, perversely, is needed now more than ever. In a world where both citizens and advertisers increasingly control their delivery of information via online channels, the kind of legacy mass media that have long served as the principal employers of science journalists—newspapers and magazines—are faltering in many countries. Journalists cut loose from these media organizations are scrambling to find their footing elsewhere.” Others see a new golden age. Hayden and Hayden (2018) suggest “there has never been more, better quality science and environmental journalism produced than there is today,” while acknowledging that “the careers of individual science and environmental journalists...
have never been more precarious.” Despite this precarious setting, Hayden and Hayden (2018) point to science journalists banding together like never before to “assert the value of rigorous, factual, independent coverage and scrutiny”.

In our mind, this tension and the urgency it generates can in part be read as a desire for actionable knowledge, however provisional and modest, that meaningfully speaks to long standing debates over journalistic practice (Nisbet & Fahy, 2015) and its connection to teaching science journalism (Polman, Newman, Saul, & Farrar, 2014; Sanza, Borowiec, Secko, Qaiser, de Araujo Ferreira, et al., 2019). It is increasingly clear that science journalism needs to better define and distinguish itself amid a growing array of online challenges, so that it can innovate to support publicly engaged science and support the careers for veterans and newcomers alike. Journalism educators cannot risk being left behind.

So what themes do science journalists and interested others gravitate towards when faced with the need to (re)weigh and (re)shape its future? And what does this imply for the educational future of science journalism?

A Metasummary Approach to the Fleeting Nature of Symposiums

Here we approach the unresolved debate facing science journalism educators and communicators alike by drawing inspiration from approaches to research synthesis (Thorne, Jensen, Kearney, Noblit & Sandelowski, 2004). As Bondas & Hall (2007) explain, these approaches aim to improve the ability of studies to make an impact on its field of study, lest it fall victim to the fleeting nature of some research, and certainly, some past symposium content.

Our past work in this area has sought to build more generalizable knowledge from a set of qualitative literature (see, Amend & Secko, 2012), while being careful to distinguish its approach from a narrative or critical review of the literature or the secondary analysis of qualitative data sets (Paterson, Thorne, Canam & Jillings, 2001). Following the methods of Sandelowski and Barroso (2003), this approach seeks to generate an interpretative product from three basic steps: (i) the systematic collection of research documents or studies; (ii) the extraction of the results of the collected materials; and (iii) the use of qualitative methods to synthesize the identified results. In this report, we focus on a synthesis of the projected futures of science journalism through the development of a thematic qualitative metasummary. We follow Sandelowski and Barroso (2003) in referring to a metasummary as a “form of systematic review or integration of qualitative findings in a target domain that are themselves topical or thematic summaries or surveys of data.” The data set included the reports from four Kavli Symposiums on the Future of Science Journalism and two Science Journalism Educator (SJE) summits. The six events were held between 2014 and 2018. One author (Secko) participated in all the Kavli Symposiums and both authors helped organize the SJE summits.

Collectively, the Kavli Symposiums assembled a diverse group of more than 150 participants from over 16 countries, the list of which is available upon request. The goal was to assemble groups to think collaboratively about what the future of science journalism requires and what actions can be proposed to shape it. Each Kavli symposium was held with a different focus in mind: 1) The future of science journalism; 2) Data mining and innovative data tools; 3) Facilitating coverage of science through international collaboration; and 4) Technology and truths. These symposiums featured
sessions lead by a guest speaker and break out groups more deeply discuss items. The SJE Summits sought to assemble university-level educators from across Canada to also consider what the future of science journalism should look like. The first edition was held in person in Montreal, taking on a group discussion format among those with a clear interest and knowledge of science journalism education. SJE 2, in comparison, was held online as a Zoom webinar, open to anyone with an interest in science journalism education. It involved two keynote addresses, a panel discussion, and a short debrief among viewers. Collectively, approximately 40 people attended these later two events, the list of which is also available upon request.

Following Sandelowski and Barrosso’s (2003), we began by extracting relevant statements or findings from each event’s summative report, which came in the form of either an electronic PDF or a Microsoft Word document. Essentially, this process involves comparative analysis of processed data from each summative report and therefore involved synthesizing constructions of constructions (Paterson et al., 2001). Processed data here refers to text, from one word to full paragraphs, contained in a summative report. The extraction of processed data at this stage was descriptive and not evaluative, but subsequently allowed the reconstruction and synthesis of metadata (abstracted findings) according to the themes identified within it (see Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003, and references therein for a fuller description of this method). In total, 72 abstracted findings were generated from this process which could be traced back to a direct quote from its associated report. The 72 abstracted findings were then further categorized by what the statement was describing: 1) a problem in the profession of science journalism or science journalism education; 2) a potential solution to solving a problem; 3) a concrete tool for journalists and educators; or 4) a theoretical educational concept or model. This thematic analysis was subjected to an investigation of theme frequency to examine effect sizes (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003) and the creation of a taxonomy of findings to provide a conceptual organization of the identified themes (Paterson et al., 2001). As the resulting metasummary is an interpretative product, it is important to note the caveat that this process of data extraction is based on unique researcher constructions (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003), which nevertheless draws strength from the ability to deliberately probe deeply into the extracted data.

Metasummary Results as Actionable Knowledge

The Kavli Symposia and SJE summits can be thought of as having two types of outcome: i) analytical outputs that are based on the conveners’ analysis of the event with reference to their interests, and ii) deliberative outputs that are a representation of the collective views of the participants (O’Doherty & Burgess, 2009). With this in mind, the product for each Kavli Symposium was the publication of a report, which included summaries of each speaker presentation, summaries of each work group discussion, and a breakdown of suggestions for advancement based on the work group’s deliberations (Note that the fourth symposium report has not been published yet). The reports were generated based on notes taken by a designated rapporteur. The SJE Summits saw a similar output. For the first edition, an assigned rapporteur took notes on the discussion had by participants, outlining the major themes from the conversation. In comparison, for SJE 2, the speaker presentations and questions from participants were video and audio recorded, as well as transcribed into a written document. As previously stated, the goal of both event series was to establish what measures should be taken to shape and improve the future of science journalism.
During both events, several problems in the field were brought to light, and participants made numerous recommendations aimed to mitigate them. What follows is a metasummary of major four metathemes (Table 1) that uniquely cut across all six events: (a) defining science journalism; (b) the value of collaboration; (c) the impacts of informational environments; and (d) issues of verification and transparency. The effect size (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003) of these metathemes is displayed in Figure 1.

It should be noted that while these four themes were chosen based on being a common thread throughout the majority, or all events, there were additional minor reoccurring themes. These included: how scholarly critique is not a driving force for the discussion of emergent educational needs; various novel projects that could be undertaken; and business models for science journalism. These items can be read in greater detail in the reports from each event (available upon request).

**Table 1. Summary of metathemes from six science journalism events.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metatheme</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Main points</th>
<th>Main Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defining science journalism</td>
<td>KS1, KS4, SJE1, SJE2</td>
<td>- There is no widely agreed upon definition of science journalism</td>
<td>- Creating a collaborative working document or handbook that states the core values and skill competencies of science journalists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Value of collaboration      | KS1, KS2, KS3, KS4, SJE1, SJE2 | - A need for an international network among science journalists  
- A data sharing climate for analyzing big data to be developed  
- Collaboration among educators, universities, researchers  
- A centralized space for science journalism information for training and education purposes | - Produce a handbook on the best practices in collaborative journalism  
- Create database or interactive map with science journalist profiles  
- Create a reusable, open-source data contribution platform accessible worldwide  
- Create an SJE network with numerous resources |
| Impact of informational environments | KS1, KS2, KS4, SJE1, SJE2 | - Establish the role of science journalism in the digital world and how AI may play a role (for journalists and for the business)  
- The need for journalists to develop new skill sets in areas such as data, coding  
- The concept of flexible curriculum in journalism schools as a means to adapt to ever-changing environments | - Develop a data journalism toolkit and a data journalism bootcamp to train science journalists  
- SJE cohort to collaborate on a curriculum adapted to the field of today |
A. Defining science journalism

At the first Kavli Symposium, participants saw a need to develop a widely-agreed upon definition of what science journalism is. Such a definition would aim to describe what is meant when we say “this is good science journalism.” Through work group discussions, participants established that science journalism should encompass four fairly broad components: the finding and using of experts; use of scientific explanation and argumentation; use of weight-of-evidence reporting; and connecting science to everyday experience and important cultural, economic, political and social contexts. As a recommendation, the work group discussed the creation of a collaborative working document or handbook that states the core values and skill competencies of science journalists.
Similarly, educators at SJE 1 deliberated what science journalism should encompass. It was noted that science journalists should be viewed as “public intellectuals,” with science journalism looking to “inform and moderate debates.” Out of 72 abstracted findings, 7 were categorized as pertaining to this theme. When looking to what the future of science journalism should be, participants highlighted the need for a more multidisciplinary, collaborative environment. As collaboration was discussed in many contexts, this idea will be explored further in the next section.

B. The value of collaboration

Collaboration among science journalists and educators was outlined as one of the key needs for the future of the profession. Participants outlined some of the bigger needs within this topic: an international trust or network among science journalists for increased and better reporting of international stories; a collaborative data sharing climate for working with big data; and pedagogical collaborations among educators, universities, and researchers. Out of 72 abstracted findings, 19 were categorized under this theme.

International collaboration among journalists would enable more thorough investigations with fewer funding issues, as explained during KS1 by Mar Cabra of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. This would also enable science journalism to be less western-centric. During a work group session, participants further elaborated on this point, citing that an international network will lead to better journalism and higher standards; provide more varied, accurate and sophisticated source use that reflect global realities; better accountability and sharing; and more overall appreciation for science journalism. Symposium participants discussed writing a handbook on the best practices in collaborative journalism, and a database or interactive map with science journalist profiles outlining their specific expertise or niche. Such a tool could include a search engine where by keyword (example, GMO or Ebola), to search for a journalist.

In a similar fashion, data sharing was described as a necessity for science journalism to thrive. Data is often hard to obtain and hard to sort. As Cabra also stated, in creating a climate where science journalists can work together, large data sets can be analyzed more effectively (also keeping in mind potential for artificial intelligence and/or bots in this area). The work group from KS2 discussed the idea of a reusable, open-source data contribution platform where data can be contributed by anyone worldwide, which could then be searched by geographical region.

When looking at pedagogy more specifically through the lens of the SJE summits, collaboration among educators was described by participants as necessary going forward. This could entail curriculum collaboration among universities, interuniversity collaboration (for example, a journalism department and a research lab), and the creation of an official SJE network with educational tools and collective resources. A course or curriculum developed by a cohort of science journalism educators may also be of use. The Kavli symposiums also touched on the importance of training newly-graduated journalists, pointing to the need for a centralized space where they can access writing resources, fact-checking guides, scientific paper reading guides or ask seasoned journalists questions. Overall, participants recognized the need for stronger bonds among journalists, steering away from the “lone-wolf” news hunter approach that once dominated the field.
C. The impact of informational environments on science journalism education

As new informational environments continue to appear, they impose disruption and the need for reorganization of the roles of science journalists, the audience and user. Participants sought to define science journalism’s role in the ever-changing media landscape, as well as how technological tools using artificial intelligence can be developed and utilized to aid science journalists and the field as a whole (from a business standpoint, for example). This metatheme was by far the most dominant in the data set, where 30 of 72 abstracted findings, or 41 per cent total, were related to the impacts of informational environments.

The role of science journalism in the digital age was described as seeking to “increase knowledge and buffer people from information overload.” New tools, as explained by Volker Stollorz, Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, should aim to: 1) change how we explore science and technology 2) change the way we work and organize information, and 3) change the way we interact with people. With this in mind, participants put emphasis on the need for journalists to develop new skill sets in areas such as data journalism and mining and coding. Recommendations for advancement included the development of a data journalism toolkit to help train science journalists and a data journalism bootcamp. One of the major challenges brought to light was finding new ways to attract and retain audiences in a digital landscape. Artificial intelligence was proposed as a potential tool to aid in helping news outlets innovate and grow their audience, in analyzing which stories are popular and why.

From a pedagogical standpoint, at the SJE Summit events, the need for flexibility in the digital age was a recurring theme expressed by educators. From the importance of a flexible curriculum, to teaching students to experiment with alternative storytelling modes, to approaching science journalism entrepreneurially, participants, particularly the presenters at SJE 2, stressed that science journalism educators are now taking on the primary teaching role, compared to newsroom professionals who would in the past. No concrete recommendations were established on this point at the SJE events, however, the teaching models presented by the educators who spoke during SJE 2 can be used as inspiration going forward.

D. Issues of verification and transparency

Fundamentals of journalism, verification and transparency become even more crucial as new informational environments arise and journalists work with data more regularly, and as the science journalism network expands and moves towards a more collaborative, international future. In a domain where it is routine to find articles ripe with inaccurate information, depicting science as conclusive or paradigm-shifting, improved appraisal of information is essential for better science reporting. Transparency and verification were particularly highlighted as important in the context of health-related outbreaks. As Debra Bloom, MIT Knight Science Journalism described during KS4, “when the facts are correct, public trust in science increases.” To minimize polarization between the audience and journalists, some symposium speakers noted the public needs to better understand how scientists know their information, and language use should shift towards the process of science instead of the product. Out of 72 abstracted findings, 16 were tied to this theme.

In reflection of this, some of the major concerns or needs expressed by participants included: 1) To improve verification/fact-checking methods, which may include involving the sources and experts
directly; 2) A better ability to track down and accurately communicate the spread of disease; and 3) To address the security needs for the protection, storage and publication of sensitive data, and that of journalists. Some key recommendations made under this theme included developing a best practices primer document to protect journalists and sources/data, to take inspiration from ProMED, a moderated source surveillance model to improve the international flow of information, and to create a database with an accessible list of independent experts for journalists to access. It was also touched upon that within an international science journalism landscape, and given many science journalists are freelancers, information on privacy, security and protection laws need to be properly established and communicated. From an educational standpoint, fact-checking methods, language usage and law and ethics in science journalism should therefore be essential in course development.

Conclusion

This report sought to add to a growing literature that aims to find productive ways forward in rethinking science journalism’s role within a changing online landscape, while also illustrating how reasoned input can be built on as opposed to quickly forgotten in the face of so many conferences, symposia, workshops, and panels on these topics. Indeed, the above metathemes, a result of deliberations from more than 150 people, can provide a unique base for further research.

For journalism educators who are reflecting on what to include and what to drop from science journalism programs at universities, the results are particularly relevant when viewed against a lack of current attention being paid to conceptual frameworks that could guide the training of new science journalists. Metatheme A (Defining science journalism) and metatheme B (The value of collaboration) point to the potential value of designing new experiments to embed emergent models of science journalism (e.g., Brossard & Lewenstein, 2010; Leach, Yates & Scanlon, 2009; Secko, Amend & Friday, 2013) into university curriculums. It is these ideas for new experiments that deliberative style events such as the Kavli Symposiums and the SJE Summit, through their inclusion of diverse range of views and experiences, can bring to the table. Moving forward, additional recommendations that could be built on include:

- establishing a cohort of science journalism educators to collaborate on a science journalism course reflective of the themes—for example, through building a truly international, multi-university summer school on science journalism (see Sanza et al., 2019);

- paying attention to the fact that metatheme C (The impact of informational environments) had been the largest effect size, which suggests the frontier of science journalism (cf. Hayden & Hayden, 2018), whether packed with peril or excitement, may be an arena for the most digitally flexible student;

- recognizing that longstanding traditions of verification and transparency (Logan, 2001) may now need better measures to not only improve the quality of science journalism, but also, for the protection of journalists, their sources and data.

To conclude, any answers to the question of “what is the educational future of science journalism?” is complex and deserves a healthy dose of humility. We recognize that one metasummary is only
a limited signpost for the underlying issue related to where we might be going. However, in analyzing the deliberations of relevant stakeholders in the field, we can bring their common approaches to light, and hopefully stimulate collective movement forward.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the hard work of the those involved in organizing the six events covered in this report. The Kavli Symposiums were the brainchild of discussion between the World Federation of Science Journalists and The Kavli Foundation, which funded the events. The SJE events were funded by a SSHRC grant to D. Secko. We would like to acknowledge the work of Jean-Marc Fleury is developing the first Kavli Symposium.

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Artificial Intelligence and the Introductory Mass Communication Class

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Abstract

As artificial intelligence (AI) transforms social life, journalists of today and future journalists – our students – need understanding and familiarity with its promise and peril. How can journalism educators – often without experience in computer science – prepare students not only to report on the coming transformation of AI but also equip them to help shape that transformation for society and journalism? The strategy discussed here is not intuitive. It involves inserting AI into a perhaps unlikely venue – the introductory, freshman-level, media and society class. The objectives are to identify how AI might be incorporated early into the journalism curriculum and the benefits and drawbacks of such instruction.

Introduction:

This study investigates the curriculum strategy of a small U.S. journalism program to introduce Artificial Intelligence (AI) in a freshman-level university class in mass communication and society. Our motivations, in these times, may be apparent.

AI is poised to transform many fields of endeavors and aspects of human life (JAIR, 2018; Delgado, 2018). A December 2018 Pew Research Center survey of close to one thousand developers, business leaders, researchers and activists finds that many see networked artificial intelligence quickly shaping education, health care, transportation, farming, commerce and more (Anderson, Rainie and Luchsinger, 2018). Too, the survey finds deep concerns that AI will lead to loss of human control and agency, abuse of data and surveillance, increased unemployment and economic divide, cybercrime, and the possibility of autonomous military weapons causing global warfare.

Journalists of today and future journalists – our students – surely need an understanding of and familiarity with “Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humans” – the title of the Pew Research Center report.

Yet, there are other, discipline-specific reasons to introduce AI into the journalism curriculum. AI is already transforming journalism in fundamental ways, from the writing of small stories on sports, elections and business earnings to rapid fact checking to carrying out investigations of huge data sets (Fillion, 2017; Hall, 2018; Marconi, 2018; Schmidt, 2018). The World Economic Forum has identified seven challenges that AI presents to newsrooms, including AI’s lack of self-awareness and inability to verify authenticity and understand unstructured data (Hall, 2018).
How can journalism and mass communication educators – often without background or experience in computer science – not only prepare their students to report on the coming transformation of AI but also equip them to help shape that transformation for society and journalism?

The strategy discussed here is not intuitive. It involves inserting AI into a perhaps unlikely venue – the introductory, freshman-level, media and society class, rather than an upper-level or even graduate class. Specifically, this paper presents the thinking, theory, teaching and preliminary outcomes of that class module devoted to the initial introduction of AI in journalism education.

The objectives are to identify the ways in which AI might be incorporated early into the journalism curriculum, the benefits and drawbacks of such instruction and, more broadly, the contributions that journalism educators might make to AI itself. Evaluations, surveys and interviews are employed to gauge preliminary student understanding and acceptance of the approach.

**Introduction of AI**

The traditional introductory class in journalism and mass communication is offered under varying titles, such as Mass Communication and Society, Media and Society, Introduction to Mass Communication and others. The class most often offers students a survey of the field of mass communication but also provides space and time for reflection on the future direction of the field. It is that component of the class this paper hopes to upend. Our program devotes the reflection on the future to reporting on, and analysis of, AI.

The class, with its usual chronological survey of media technology, can provide a fairly natural segue into a discussion of AI. The late 20th Century progression of media from television to cable to the Internet to digital and social media flows easily into a module on the creation of AI.

However, we find we first must make a case to students for why study of AI is important to them. Students understand the importance of television and the role of digital and social media in their lives. They need to be shown, however, the increasing role of AI. We provide examples not only in digital and social media, from Google to Facebook to Amazon to Netflix, but to other media platforms as well, such as voice assistants, Pandora and Spotify music services, and others.

We then situate AI historically. We begin with Socrates, Aristotle and Greek rational thought. It is vital to locate AI in the liberal arts because AI, at its heart, is as much a humanistic endeavor as an engineering endeavor. It engages knowledge and learning. Mathematical principles too are acknowledged, from Bayes theory of probability to Boolean logic. We touch upon the work of Alan Turing and the “Turing Test.” The 1956 Dartmouth AI conference is also an important touchstone. Organized by Marvin Minsky, John McCarthy, Claude Shannon and Nathan Rochester, the Dartmouth conference is where AI received its name.

It is here that we pause to consider the consequential decision to name the field “artificial intelligence.” As journalists, as humanists, we are free to consider and critique the implications and absurdity of the words. And we stress that the words are flexible, malleable and subject to interpretation and critique. Artificial intelligence meant something very different to Herbert Simon than it does to Jeff Bezos.
We continue our historicizing of AI and introduce another intriguing term for students – AI “winters”, periods in which the field does not live up to enthusiasm, optimism and hype, and research funding is cut off, eventually to be followed by more periods of innovation and optimism.

**What is Intelligence?**

Following this introduction, we then feel students are prepared for a study of AI today. Referring to our discussion of AI as an interpretive concept, we provide our own definition of AI today: We suggest that “intelligence” is usually a term reserved for humans and thus “artificial” intelligence is human-made and simulated, an imitation. But what is this intelligence that is being simulated? Again, we remind students of the humanistic heart of the AI enterprise. A typical definition of intelligence is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills. Yet students immediately see that machines can do that. What is human intelligence perhaps is the better question.

Human intelligence, for us, is most often evidenced by memory, thinking, learning and consciousness. We pursue those four terms. Students rapidly begin drawing comparisons between man and machines. For example, they immediately recognize that machines are superior to humans in memory. In any area of measurement, from capacity to speed of recall, machines surpass humans in terms of memory.

Thinking, however, leads to its own linguistic issues. What does “thinking” mean? Computers take in data and information and, most often using algorithms, suggest the next logical steps. Is this thinking? The issue gets more clouded with the numerous examples of incorrect answers provided by machine thinking, from the scouting of baseball players to errant drones. We note the high stakes that can be involved with thinking. The decision to drop atomic bombs was once made by a human. Would a machine have concurred? We leave the students to ponder whether machines can think.

Students, of course, have spent most of their lives learning. Though many students have heard of machine learning and believe that machines can learn, few understand what it means or how it works. We discuss how new processes of deep learning and neural networks are much more advanced than the machine learning of just a few years ago. We note the urgency around this advance and that figures such as Stephen Hawking and Elon Musk have feared that AI is developing too quickly and can pose a danger to humanity. Here, we plant the idea with our students that people from different fields, such as philosophy, psychology, law, ethics – and journalism – can help shape and direct AI to lessen its threat. AI professionals, whose training is in software and hardware, are not often equipped to comprehend the social, psychological and cultural implications of AI.

We then take up the fourth element: consciousness. We suggest that this dimension of human intelligence in particular may assure that machine intelligence will always be artificial intelligence. How would one teach a machine about love, faith, fear, forgiveness and other aspects of consciousness that do not seem able to captured by an algorithm?
Types of Intelligence

With a definition of intelligence established, we spend time describing the three types of artificial intelligence pursued by scientists.

Narrow intelligence is a natural starting point. According to figures such as Peter Thiel and Mark Cuban, narrow artificial intelligence is poised to make an immediate impact on social life. As its name suggests, narrow AI has limited, well-defined goals. Two models are emerging from the dominant tech companies. The Apple model attempts to ease and streamline encounters initiated by humans. For example, it seeks to offer a seamless way to make a restaurant reservation. The Google model, based on deep learning or deep mind, attempts to do tasks for humans, such as to call and make the restaurant reservation itself.

General AI (or Super or Strong AI) describes robots and androids that can interact with humans in different spheres. Some scientists say that we are on the cusp of such development. We introduce students to the author, futurist and inventor Ray Kurzweil and his thinking on “singularity,” the merger of human intelligence and artificial intelligence, biology with technology. And we remind students that figures such as Hawking and Musk fear that this iteration of AI could end the human race.

There are other ways to conceive of intelligence, we tell students. Computer scientists also understand AI in terms of function (Christopher, 2019), sometimes numbered Types I, II, III and IV:

I. Reactive Machines: A basic form of AI, with little memory or historic data, whose function is to work on a present task, such as the chess-playing IBM program that beat Garry Kasparov and voice assistants, such as Amazon’s Alexa.

II. Limited Memory: AI systems that use data and past experiences to make decisions and act. This is the AI found in self-driving cars.

III. Theory of Mind: AI whose function will be to think and react like a human. Still under development and perceived by some as hypothetical, this type of AI will exhibit human emotions, thoughts and will be able to interact socially.

IV. Self-Aware AI: In this type of artificial intelligence, also still hypothetical, machines – robots – are self-aware and function like humans and alongside humans.

The goal of this important section is to problematize for students the very concept of intelligence embedded in artificial intelligence.

“How Do You Make Artificial Intelligence?”

The final section of our introduction to AI, before exploring its particular relationship to journalism, is to address a question we have received more than once from students: “How Do You Make
Artificial Intelligence?” In its simplicity, the question offers a path to make AI accessible and understandable for those without background in computer science and programming.

We first point students to introductory work on AI, such as Russell and Norvig’s, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach* (Russell and Norvig, 2009) as well as Stanford’s “One Hundred Year Study on Artificial Intelligence,” (AI100, 2014) and even the work of Kurzweil, called “The Smartest (or Nuttiest) Futurist on Earth,” by *Fortune* (O’Keefe, 2007). We suggest that students follow the work of Google’s Deep Mind, which is seeking leadership in AI.

We then attempt to humanize the process of AI by bringing in a computer science professor and his students. Students are immediately intrigued by the realization that young people their age are “making” artificial intelligence. We take students through some of the steps that might form an AI project. We explore the initial ideation and impulse behind an AI project: What problem is the project trying to solve or what task is to be accomplished, such as recognizing a doctored image? The computer scientist and students then can create or choose an appropriate algorithm and install it on a dedicated processing system.

We spend time on what we see as a crucial stage: the “training corpus” or training data – the information with which the processing system will be “taught.” The algorithm must be given data (doctored and un-doctored photos, for example) and repeated thousands of times in order to be trained to identify a correct result – recognition of a doctored photo. The students can see that this step is, quite literally, machine learning. (We stress: It is in this early stage that bias and error can be introduced. Later in the module, we emphasize that this stage allows for – needs – the participation of critical observers, such as journalists.)

Another stage of the AI process open to critique is the creation of a Generative Adversarial Network (GAN), putting two networks in conflict so that they “learn” from each other. For example, one network is designed to produce “fakes” to test another network and help it learn to recognize fakes. Through the process, both networks get better at their tasks – better and better fakes lead to better and better recognition. At this stage, machines are indeed learning. Students understand that it is imperative for these earlier stages to be driven by appropriate and critiqued data.

**AI Shaping Journalism**

After this admittedly simple, rapid introduction to AI, we turn to how AI is beginning to transform journalism. New developments seem to come weekly: “Artificial intelligence and machine learning are already transforming news operations in ways unimaginable even several months ago, much of it transformative and positive” (Flink, 2019). We provide a sampling for students to consider:

Writing Stories: One development that immediately raises the interest (and fear) of students: AI is being used to write small stories, from sports to business. We peruse some sample stories: “Did a Robot Write This?” from *Forbes* (2019) and “The Rise of the Robot Reporter,” from *The New York Times* (2019). The stories detail how AI is used to write hundreds of company earnings reports for Bloomberg; articles on minor league baseball for the Associated Press; stories on high school football and the Olympics for *The Washington Post*, and reports on earthquakes for *The Los Angeles Times*. The news organizations argue AI “is not a threat to human employees. Rather, the
idea is to allow journalists to spend more time on substantive work” (The New York Times, 2019). Students spend time considering the argument.

Writing Individualized Stories. The Washington Post’s director of strategic initiatives, Jeremy Gilbert, sees even greater potential in the paper’s AI program, Heliograf. Gilbert suggests that AI will write and present stories to individual readers based on their interests. “Can we make a story more personally relevant to a user, to the reader, watcher or listener?” he asks. “If we can do that, that’s what makes people establish trust. Not just that the information is believable, but the information is believable AND it matters to ME” (Flink, 2019). Elsewhere, Gilbert says, “Automated storytelling has the potential to transform the Post’s coverage. More stories, powered by data and machine learning, will lead to a dramatically more personal and customized news experience” (WPost PR, 2019). In a similar fashion, The New York Times uses AI to personalize newsletters for readers.

Analyzing Data. This use of AI is unsurprising. Machines can analyze huge amounts of data with more speed and precision than any human mind. The Washington Post states, “This technology will also be able to process a combination of different data sources, like crime and real estate numbers, customize stories depending on individual user actions, and help look for anomalies in data to alert journalists to a potential story” (WPost PR, 2019).

Some see an evident partnership between humans and machines in this use of AI. “I hope we’ll see AI tools become a productivity tool in the practice of reporting and finding clues,” says Hilary Mason, general manager for machine learning at Cloudera, a data management software company. “When you do data analysis, you can see anomalies and patterns using AI. And a human journalist is the right person to understand and figure out” (The New York Times, 2019). Graphika disinformation analyst Nick Monaco, who uses AI to find “deep fakes” on social media, says AI can allow journalists to do better reporting. “This is actually a problem journalists have been dealing with ever since they’ve been practicing the trade,” Monaco says. “There’s always been more data than (journalists) can sift through. You just have to know how to ask the right questions (of) the data, the records, to get (to the) relevant story” (Flink, 2019).

Advertising Placement

Journalism is still dependent upon advertising and AI can be used to make advertising more effective, steering advertisers to readers based on past usage. WIRED’s head of content operations, Jahna Berry, says AI “has allowed Conde Nast publications to better place ad spends, based upon a deep understanding of its users, leveraging AI technology. ‘It’s a really good way to look at the signals within the data,’ she says. ‘It allows us to take that machine learning technology and hopefully form a deeper relationship with our readers.’” (Flink, 2019)

Comment Moderation and Queries. An early use of AI was to relieve news organization staffs of the task of continually monitoring and moderating comment sections. These sections, while regarded as a tool of customer engagement, could sometimes be forums for sexist, racist and obscene comments – hosted by the newspaper. AI, such as Modbot at The Washington Post, was trained to look for and flag inappropriate language and then either forward it to a human or remove
the post. AI has also been used by news organizations, and many others, in addressing simple questions on the phone or online.

Image Identification and Archiving. AI’s ability to identify and locate images is apparent in the Photos app of Google, Apple and others, in which facial and image recognition is employed. The New York Times is using similar software to identify images, faces, locations, landmarks and more as it digitizes it archives (The New York Times, 2019). Broadcast companies too are using AI to organize archives of videotaped material (Media Distillery, 2019).

Improving Content Accessibility. Some media companies are using AI’s speech recognition capabilities to take on the time-consuming task of adding captions, subtitles and other accessibility features to videos. The future may see AI also providing translations of films and videos.

We attempt to end this section on a positive note. AI, at this point, does not seem to be taking jobs from journalists but is freeing journalists from mundane tasks and allowing them to do more and accomplish more. Dogtown Media CEO and co-founder Marc Fischer says if journalists will make AI work for them, the results will allow journalists to work smarter, faster and more efficiently. “It will free up more time for knowledge workers to think creatively on solving problems and (allow them to) do what they do best” (Flink, 2019).

**Journalists Reporting on – and Shaping – AI**

Our final section offers students thoughts on how journalists, especially those with little background or experience in math or programming, can report on — and even shape — AI. The students are led to recognize the value of the first sections: A journalist’s first approach to an AI project is to understand the early stages of the process. Questions can be asked about the idea behind the project and the problem it addresses. In “A Journalist’s Guide to Demystify A.I.: Better to light a candle than curse the algorithm,” computer scientist Alan Kotok (2019) addresses how can journalists “find out what’s in these machine learning algorithms? By asking the right questions: about the problem the algorithm aims to solve, the process used to write the algorithm, and its track record in practice. If you think about it, reporters routinely ask the same kinds of questions of politicians, business executives, entertainers, and sports stars. We now need to ask them as well of A.I. systems developers.”

We then return students to the crucial stage of “training” the algorithm. Journalists can ask: What were the data used? What possible biases could be in the data? And how was the algorithm “learning” the data? This next step, Kotok points out, will lead most journalists into unfamiliar territory: the quality and reliability of the algorithm. But is this really so different from journalists asking scientists to explain black holes, historians to explain ancient rites or other reporting on complex topics? Journalists have always taken on the task of explaining and analyzing what is hard to explain.

Kotok suggests asking: “Was the algorithm reviewed independently, or are the code and databases used to train the algorithm available for independent reviewers? Was the algorithm run against data sets other than those used for training, to validate the initial findings? What’s the algorithm’s track record with real-world data?” (Kotok, 2019).
The Wall Street Journal’s enterprise technology editor, Steve Rosenbush, says, “We can ask the same questions of an algorithm (that) we can in a more conventional reporting environment. Hold the algorithm accountable...we can talk about what the technology is going to do or what it’s going to bring, but did it work?” (Flink, 2019).

And once journalists become at ease with understanding and reporting on AI, we suggest to our students, journalists might become useful partners in the AI enterprise, bringing the questioning nature of the profession to the construction of AI. Journalists can help computer scientists with the task of questioning their training data as well as their algorithms. Journalists are expert at asking the right questions and pursuing knowledge through inquiry and they should be emboldened to partner with engineers in the development of AI.

Our institution is fortunate enough to have a long history of interdisciplinary work and it is not uncommon for professors from four distinct colleges – Arts and Sciences, Business, Education and Engineering – to work together on projects. We ask our colleagues from Engineering to interact with students and show them ways to participate. Eric Baumer, an assistant professor of computer science and engineering, recently received support from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to develop participatory methods for human-centered design of algorithmic systems. Baumer has close ties to the Journalism department at Lehigh.

“I want technology be more humane,” Baumer says. “And for that to happen, a more diverse set of people need to be incorporated into the design of algorithmically-based interactive systems – human beings who are not technologists integrated throughout the design process” (Resolve, 2019).

Student Reaction: Preliminary Results

We have introduced AI in this way for three semesters of our introductory mass communication class and have conducted surveys and interviews with students after each semester. It is too early to draw conclusions but 95 percent agree strongly or agree that learning about AI has been valuable; 95 percent agree strongly that journalists should learn about AI; 85 percent agree strongly or agree that they will attempt to learn more about AI in their college years.

For us, real results will be observing the work and interests of these students – most finishing sophomore year – while still at the university and after graduation. We are hopeful that some students will pursue projects related to AI and, upon graduation, engage either in reporting on AI or in graduate work that will allow them to continue their studies.

Conclusion

Important ethical guidelines for AI were perhaps developed in work by Isaac Asimov – written in 1942. In his science fiction story, “Robots,” three laws are followed:

The first law: A robot may not injure a human being, or through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

The second law: A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the first law.
The third law: A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the first or second law.

Our desire is to prepare students to report on the coming transformation of AI and to equip them to help shape that transformation for society and journalism. The goals are in keeping with international movements that seek to assure AI systems are ethical, accountable, explainable, and unbiased.

For example, a German organization, AlgorithmWatch, attempts to chronicle AI guidelines worldwide in the “AI Ethics Guidelines Global Inventory.” Its mission is to “evaluate and shed light on algorithmic decision making processes that have a social relevance, meaning they are used either to predict or prescribe human action or to make decisions automatically.”

The European Union has been a leader in this area. In early 2019, the EU published new guidelines on developing “ethical AI” (Vincent, 2019). Three of those guidelines correspond well with the trajectory of our class:

Human agency and oversight. Humans should be able to oversee and intervene in any decision that the software makes. We would add that such human agency should be drawn from number of fields and disciplines, such as journalism.

Transparency. The algorithms and data used to train those algorithms should be accessible to oversight and the decisions made by the software should be understood and available to human beings.

Accountability. AI systems could be conceived as akin to accounting systems that should be auditable and these systems should be covered existing protections extended to corporate whistleblowers.

However, we ask students, what entity is going to hold algorithms and their creators responsible? Our answer: The same group that holds other powerful people and institutions responsible: journalists.

We believe it is our responsibility as educators to prepare future journalists for that role. Journalism education should continue to take on the responsibility of training students to analyze, confront and shape AI and journalism students should feel empowered to question and shape the creation and implementation of AI tools for news organizations as well as society.

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Newsroom Ownership of Employee Social Media Accounts: Implications for Journalists and Educators

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Abstract

It’s the policy of an increasing number of news outlets to retain ownership of the professional social media accounts of their reporters. In the first case of its kind in the United States, one outlet took a former employee to court over the question of ownership. The Roanoke Times in Virginia filed a suit in 2018 against a former sports reporter, alleging a breach of its social media policy. The reporter, who left his position at the Times for a competing news outlet, took with him the Twitter account he had used as part of his work with the outlet. This paper will explore a host of uncharted practical and legal implications this type of case raises for the industry, with the potential of journalists finding themselves in the middle of a legal battle. The authors first synthesize the current scholarly literature, industry best practices, and related case law, albeit dearth. The authors argue that utilizing trade secret laws to assert ownership of an employee’s account(s), a strategy used in the Times case and other related lawsuits, is an ill-fitted approach. Social media accounts and their associated followers are not “secret.” A comprehensive policy could prevent legal action in the first place by providing employees with guidelines that address a myriad of issues discussed in this paper. The authors offer provisions of a policy that would protect news outlets while also acknowledging the importance of social media accounts to the livelihood of journalists and to the free flow of information from journalists to the public.

Introduction

Andy Bitter posted to Twitter almost daily when he was a sports reporter at The Roanoke Times in Virginia. Bitter’s tweets kept his thousands of social media followers up-to-date about Virginia Tech sports and gave them an inside look at his reporting. When Bitter left The Times in 2018 to work for another outlet, he took with him the Twitter account (@AndyBitterVT). The Times, through its parent company BH Media, sued Bitter over what the news outlet called a breach of its social media policy, misappropriation of trade secrets, and other claims. The Times claimed the policy states that the outlet retains ownership of reporters’ social media accounts, and therefore Bitter should have turned over the account before leaving for his new job.

At first glance, the premise of the case may appear straightforward: an employee breached an employer’s policy. The suit, though, was centered not on a breach of contract but rather intellectual property laws. In fact, The Times asserted in the lawsuit that Twitter followers are equivalent to a customer list with significant economic value. Competing factual details about who actually retained control of the Twitter account, via access to log-in credentials, was also a key element of this case. Adding to the complexity, there is, as this article will outline, ambiguous legal precedent regarding ownership of social media accounts used by employees in a work capacity.
What also makes this case novel is that it’s the first known lawsuit in the United States involving a dispute over ownership of a journalist’s social media account. Journalists’ role is to serve the public, and social media provides a conduit to do so. Journalists are often considered public figures in their communities. They are “followed” on social media because of the value assigned to their personal brands and personas as journalists. Given the dearth of legal and academic scholarship on the topic, the authors know of no other article that analyzes this area of the issue.

Section I of this article will discuss journalists’ use of social media as part of their daily job responsibilities and how it’s fundamentally different from the social media practices of employees in other industries that have been the focus of previous cases. The role of social media from a business perspective and newsrooms’ social media policies will also be discussed. Section II outlines cases relevant to the issue of ownership of employees’ social media accounts, with particular attention to the role of trade secret law. Section III will provide an analysis of relevant legal issues and proposes how employers and employees in the journalism industry can best protect their own interests.

**Social Media in the Journalism Industry**

The use of social media by journalists is no longer a novelty. All one has to do is look through the latest journalism job postings and they’ll notice how frequently social media skills are mentioned (Wenger, Owens & Cain, 2018). For journalists, social media savviness is now just as important as maintaining fundamental journalistic standards such as verification, objectivity, and concise writing (Stencel & Perry, 2016). Newsroom managers expect their journalists to use social media on a daily basis in three main ways: newsgathering, distribution of news, and interacting with the public (Adornato, 2014).

The journalism industry has always been shaped by technology. From the printing press to computers to social media, new technological innovations impact where the public turns for news and how journalists perform their craft (Adornato, 2014). The public’s shifting news consumption habits fueled by the emergence of social media has led to the commonplace use of these tools in journalism. Social networking sites have disrupted the journalism industry unlike other new technologies. Since the late 2000s, the public has increasingly turned online for news instead of relying on print newspapers. In 2018, social media outpaced print newspapers in the U.S. as a news source for adults, those 18 years and older (Shearer, 2018). The combined loss of print subscriptions and advertising dollars has had a seismic impact on newspapers. For example, between 2007 and 2010 alone, print newspaper advertising revenue was cut nearly in half, plunging from $42 billion to $22 billion (Barthel, 2015). Broadcast news has also been impacted. From 2006 to 2012, according to the Pew Research Center, the number of adults under 30 who regularly watched local TV news dropped from 42 percent to 28 percent (Pew, 2012).

In order to remain viable, newsrooms have to meet the audience in spaces where they are now active: social media (Smith, 2017). Journalists can no longer expect the audience will come directly to their reporting on a news website, television newscast or radio broadcast. Instead, a news consumer’s first point of contact with journalists’ reporting is increasingly via social media posts. A social media user may then decide to click a link to a story they saw on social media, share a
journalist’s social media post about a news event or ask a question directly to a journalist on social media. The hope is that the public will find value in the work of newsrooms and their reporters, no matter the platform. All that engagement with a news outlet’s journalists and content is financially valuable. It has the potential to attract digital advertisers and subscribers. Armed with data about its social media followers, website traffic, mobile app downloads and subscribers, among other metrics, sales teams at news outlets approach companies focused on digital advertising (Adornato, 2017). Considering print ad revenue is less than half of what it was a decade ago, newspapers are attempting to make inroads with marketers advertising on digital platforms (Mitchell, 2015; Pew, 2018).

Newsrooms rely on their employees to execute their social media strategy, most notably the individual journalists’ activities on social media accounts that have their own names attached to them. The two-way interaction between the public and journalists on social media is a distinguishing element of contemporary journalism. Other industries rely almost exclusively on “branded” social media accounts to disseminate their messages. A branded account is typically affiliated with a company rather than a person or individual employee. For example, @roanoketimes and @CocaCola on Twitter are considered branded accounts. News outlets employ social media editors to manage branded accounts.

Individual journalists, though, are both responsible for and invested in sharing content on their social media accounts that they use as part of their work with a news organization. The fact that individual employees’ activities on their own accounts is such an integral part of the journalism industry sets the BH Media v. Bitter case apart from those involving other fields. The “social” nature of social networking platforms affords journalists the opportunity to create direct connections with the public. It’s not uncommon for a journalist to amass a social media following because of their work related to a particular story or reporting beat. This was the case for Andy Bitter. When Bitter worked for The Roanoke Times, he covered Virginia Tech athletics. His Twitter feed was the go-to-source for news about the university’s sports teams.

A journalist’s brand with its associated followers—a tribe—is highly valuable to current and potential employers. A journalist who builds such a brand is an asset to a newsroom: she not only has a solid journalistic reputation, but also a built-in audience that will follow her under the umbrella of a newsroom. Among the questions this scenario raises is whether a reporter who is hired by a news outlet and brings with her a previous account retains ownership of it. After all, she built the following. So, should all that hard work fall under the legal ownership of an employer?

Many newsrooms claim ownership of social media accounts used by journalists as part of their job responsibilities. In a 2017 study, two-thirds of local television news managers in the United States indicated that it’s the policy of their outlets to “own” the social media accounts of their reporters (Adornato & Lysak, 2017). The policies are typically reviewed and signed by employees during the onboarding process. In some instances, journalists are allowed to create the accounts on their own but required to submit their passwords to newsroom management (McNealy, 2013). In others, the outlet creates the accounts on behalf of the journalist and provides them the login credentials.

We encounter the question of whether an employee is allowed to keep the account and its followers when employment with an outlet ends (Adornato, 2017). Some policies directly state that the journalist will no longer have access to the account—similar to what happens with a company
The E.W. Scripps Company makes this clear in its social media policy: “Your professional account is the company’s property and the name and contents remain company property if you leave Scripps. Scripps reserves the right to edit, monitor, promote or cancel a professional account” (Romenesko, 2011).

Other news outlets offer flexibility surrounding the issue. Gray Television, owner of stations in nearly 100 local U.S. television markets, allows its station managers to determine on a case-by-case basis whether employees can take social media accounts with them. Managers can transfer ownership of accounts to a journalist, as long as their new employer does not compete against a Gray Television station. This approach is directed at preventing a competitor from reaping the benefits of an employee who has amassed a social media following. The policy of TEGNA, another U.S. media company, states that the company “has the right to claim and maintain any social media username” that includes the TEGNA corporate brand or that of one of its television stations (TEGNA, 2017). If an employee leaves the company, he or she is allowed to take the account(s) with them as long as they remove all branding related to TEGNA and its outlets.

The definition of “professional” can be ambiguous. The E.W. Scripps Company’s policy states “your professional account,” but does not define “professional account.” One might argue that if a journalist created an account prior to working at the outlet, the outlet could retain ownership of that account if the journalist uses it for professional purposes (Gray Television, 2014). In other words, any account on which you’re sharing information as part of your position with the outlet or representing yourself as a staff member of the outlet could be deemed professional. Rachel Barnhart learned this lesson when she was a reporter for WHAM-TV in Rochester, New York (Adornato, 2017). Barnhart attracted tens of thousands of Facebook and Twitter followers combined (Marszalek, 2013). When Sinclair Broadcasting purchased WHAM-TV, she was faced with a choice: use new company-issued accounts, or continue to use the accounts she had created and risk losing them if her employment with the station ended (Adornato, 2017). According to Sinclair’s policy, the company owns the social media accounts of its on-air personalities. Barnhart decided to use new social media accounts for work purposes only. In a statement to her followers, she wrote: “At this juncture, I am retaining ownership of my existing Facebook and Twitter pages. Therefore, the company has started new social media accounts in my name for me to use during work hours when I am covering stories. The company has administrative control over these accounts” (Barnhart, 2013).

Cases and Relevant Issues Involving Social Media Ownership and Workers

Legal disputes over ownership of one’s social media account had not involved the journalism industry until the 2018 lawsuit of BH Media v. Bitter. Discussed in detail below, this case unleashes the question of ownership on an industry whose principal activity is not the sale of goods or services but instead the gathering and dissemination of news for the purposes of educating a public audience through traditional media and new media.

Before discussing the relevant legal issues on the topic, this article looks at three cases whose facts and analysis are helpful to advance this inquiry. Case law addressing novel questions of ownership of social media accounts is still in the nascent stages of development. Most judicial opinions are the result of motions to dismiss or focus only on whether there are triable issues of fact, but not the
A. BH Media v. Bitter

In 2011, Andy Bitter was hired to fill a role previously held by a sports journalist who departed The Roanoke Times. Bitter’s main responsibility was reporting on Virginia Tech athletics, and he used the Twitter account in question to carry out this function. It was alleged that the sports journalist who previously held this position at The Times created the Twitter account. Shortly after being hired by The Times, Bitter was given access to the account. He updated the account profile to include his own name. In July 2018, Bitter left The Times to work for The Athletic Media Group. BH Media contends that The Athletic, a sports news outlet, is a direct competitor and that Bitter is working for the outlet in a similar if not identical capacity. Despite being asked by The Times to relinquish the login information of the Twitter account, Bitter refused to do so and continued to use the account (BH Media v. Bitter, 2018). BH Media Group, which owns The Times, filed a complaint against Bitter.

BH Media’s suit alleged seven causes of action, including misappropriation of trade secrets under the Defend Trade Secrets Act and misappropriation under Virginia Uniform Trade Secrets Act. It also filed a temporary restraining order and sought that Bitter relinquish control of the account to BH Media (BH Media v. Bitter civil action, 2018).

BH Media’s perceived competitive advantage of owning and maintaining the Twitter account is a key factor in the lawsuit. It highlighted what it considered the value of the account’s list of approximately 27,100 followers. The company claimed that attracting website visitors depends heavily on BH Media’s ability to communicate with current and potential readers, such as Twitter followers, and that advertising revenue is partially dependent on those page views. The loss of advertising revenue because of the alleged misappropriation is difficult if not impossible to calculate, according to the suit. BH Media estimated it would have to dedicate a full-time employee to build a similar account and re-engage with the followers, with no guarantee that they would be able to recreate the previous configuration. This, BH Media alleged, would take seven years and a cost of at least $150,000 to recreate the account.

BH Media argues that the account constitutes a trade secret under the federal Defend Trade Secrets Act (DTSA) and the Virginia Uniform Trade Secrets Act (VUTSA) because it derives “independent economic value from not being generally known by and not being readily ascertainable by BH Media’s competitors...” (BH Media v. Bitter civil action, 2018). BH Media asserted that the list of followers is equivalent to a “secret” client list and subsequently alleged that Bitter is utilizing it for marketing on behalf of a direct competitor.

BH Media claims it took precautions to protect these trade secrets, which is a requirement under DTSA and VUTSA. One such way, according to the lawsuit, was by limiting individuals with access to the Twitter account in question. BH Media also has written policies in its company handbook that include confidentiality obligations for its employees of intellectual property (BH Media v. Bitter civil action, 2018). Social media accounts provided by BH Media to employees are property of the company, according to BH Media v. Bitter. However, in a counterclaim, Bitter alleged that BH Media was inconsistent in its application of its social media policy, noting that
“numerous other reporters and sportswriters have left jobs at BH Media and have continued to maintain the same Twitter accounts they used while employed by BH Media at their new employers” (BH Media v. Bitter counterclaim, 2018). In addition, the counterclaim asserts that the former employee who set up the Twitter account, not The Times’ management, provided him the login information to the account. Bitter maintains that the account was never in possession of The Times because no manager had ever requested login information to the Twitter account and that the former employee who created the account never transferred account ownership to The Times (BH Media v. Bitter counterclaim, 2018). Even if only some of the aforementioned counterclaims are true, it could indicate that BH Media did not take sufficient action to maintain control and oversight of the account (for example, through knowledge of the account’s password), thus failing to protect trade secrets. Additionally, it would be difficult for BH Media to demonstrate how it took measures to protect the list of followers, given that it’s visible to the public.

As a result of an out-of-court settlement, both sides agreed to drop their claims and no legal precedent based on substantive law was established. The settlement allowed Bitter to retain control of the Twitter account. Shortly after the hearing, he shared this message with his followers: “The Roanoke Times and I have agreed to drop our claims against each other and get on with our lives. I’ll continue to tweet from my account as I always have since I started covering Virginia Tech. If you’re inclined, consider following my successor at the Roanoke Times, Mike Niziol, at @VTSportsRT. I look forward to continuing to report Virginia Tech football for The Athletic” (Phillips, 2018).

B. PhoneDog v. Kravitz

BH Media v. Bitter uses a strategy similar to that pursued by the employer in the 2011 case of PhoneDog v. Kravitz, who also alleged misappropriation of trade secrets over a disputed social media account. A Twitter account used by a former employee of PhoneDog, an online cell phone news and reviews website, became the subject of a dispute centered on who owns the account, its login credentials, and its followers. During the course of his employment as a product reviewer and video blogger for PhoneDog, Noah Kravitz built and cultivated a following of approximately 17,000 Twitter followers using the @PhoneDog_Kravitz handle (PhoneDog v. Kravitz, 2011). Kravitz used the account to promote PhoneDog’s services on behalf of PhoneDog until he voluntarily ended his employment in 2010 Kravitz refused PhoneDog’s request to relinquish control over the account and instead changed the handle to @noahkravitz.

PhoneDog’s federal lawsuit alleged misappropriation of trade secrets under California’s Uniform Trade Secrets Act (“UTSA”), among several other claims. In an early motion to dismiss various legal claims, the Court found that PhoneDog plead with sufficient particularity misappropriation in violation of UTSA despite Kravitz’s attempt to argue (i) that he, not PhoneDog, initially created the password, (ii) that PhoneDog did not make any reasonable efforts to maintain the secrecy of the password, (iii) that the followers of the account are not secrets because they are publicly available, and (iv) that the password to the account did not derive any actual or potential economic value (PhoneDog v. Kravitz, 2011).

Similar to BH Media’s counterclaims in the Bitter case, PhoneDog alleged that Kravitz’s Twitter account generated traffic to its website and that a decrease in traffic would cause a drop in the number of visitors, discouraging advertisers from paying for space. Although PhoneDog settled
out of court during discovery, it is cited in later cases and commentary as an early, albeit 2011, case that sought to refine the contours of ownership of social media accounts in an employment setting.

**C. Eagle v. Morgan**

The plaintiff, Dr. Linda Eagle, co-founded Edcomm, Inc., a banking education company that provides services online and in person to the banking community. In May of 2009, Eagle created her own LinkedIn account using her Edcomm email address (*Eagle v. Morgan*, 2012). Eagle, like other LinkedIn users, displayed and promoted her professional experience, achievements, skills, and other details to “connect” and communicate directly with others. Edcomm established a policy that encouraged employees to use LinkedIn and provided guidelines regarding online content. However, Edcomm’s policy was silent on ownership. During the course of her employment, Eagle shared her LinkedIn password with other Edcomm employees so they could respond to invitations to connect and post account updates.

On June 20, 2011, Eagle was involuntarily terminated from Edcomm after the October 2010 sale and re-launch of the company which named defendant, Sandy Morgan, as interim CEO (*Eagle v. Morgan*, 2012). Upon Eagle’s termination, Edcomm employees accessed her LinkedIn account, changed its password, and held exclusive control of the account until July 7, 2011, at which time LinkedIn intervened and returned exclusive access to Eagle on July 14, 2011.

Eagle sued Morgan, Edcomm, and other defendants alleging 11 causes of action. Early in the case’s pre-trial motion phase, the Court disposed of the notion that Eagle’s LinkedIn account connections could form the basis of a misappropriation claim by defendants, stating “to the extent [Edcomm] alleges misappropriation of a trade secret, its claim must necessarily fail [because] . . . the LinkedIn account connections [do not] qualify as trade secrets, as [they] are . . . generally known in the wider business community or capable of being easily derived from public information (*Eagle v. Morgan*, 2012).

Relative to Eagle’s claim alleging tortious interference with a contract, the court inferred that Eagle “had in fact entered into a contractual relationship with LinkedIn” vis-a-vis the terms of the User Agreement (*Eagle v. Morgan*, 2012). Edcomm’s position on the ownership of an employee’s LinkedIn account does not acknowledge the LinkedIn User Agreement, which states that “[i]f you are using LinkedIn on behalf of a company or other legal entity, you are nevertheless individually bound by this Agreement even if your company has a separate agreement with us” (*Eagle v. Morgan*, 2012). As of February 16, 2019, LinkedIn’s User Agreement more succinctly stated “As between you and others (including your employer) your account belongs to you” (LinkedIn, 2018).

The fact that Eagle may have created her LinkedIn profile using her Edcomm email address, on an Edcomm computer, on Edcomm’s time, and at Edcomm’s direction, did not persuade the court, which stated “the LinkedIn User Agreement clearly indicated that the individual user owned the account.” However, detrimental to Eagle’s claim of tortious interference with a contract was her inability to prove actual damage or monetary loss resulting from Edcomm’s interference.
Analysis

A. Trade secrets on shaky ground

Utilizing theories of trade secret protection to assert ownership of a social media account is a risky strategy and would likely not favor the employer asserting the claim. To prevail on a claim alleging misappropriation of trade secrets, a party must show: (i) the existence of a trade secret, (ii) the acquisition of a trade secret as a result of a confidential relationship, and (iii) the unauthorized use of a trade secret.

Under the Uniform Trade Secrets Act, in order for information to qualify as a trade secret:

- it must derive independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to or readily ascertainable through proper means by people who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use,
- and it must be the subject of efforts to maintain its secrecy (Uniform Trade Secrets Act).

None of the features of a journalist’s social media followers or social media accounts conform to these basic elements.

i. Social media followers are not “trade secrets” because they are “generally known” to the public.

It is difficult to establish that a list of social media followers is a secret, given that lists of followers are in the public domain online and that in the digital marketplace a business has many tools at its disposal to identify competitors’ lists of followers and target those followers.

In Veronica Foods Co. v. Ecklin, “the Court held that a customer list was not a trade secret under the federal Defend Trade Secrets Act because the company had announced the names of many of its customers and suppliers on its website and social media accounts, meaning that its full customer list was not ‘secret’” (Veronica Foods Co. v. Ecklin, 2017). The Court in Eagle squarely recognized early in that case that LinkedIn account followers are “generally known in the wider business community or capable of being easily derived from public information” (Eagle v. Morgan, 2012). The same would be true of the lists of Twitter followers at issue in the Bitter and PhoneDog cases. When the list is public, even a customer list which is traditionally considered a protectable trade secret, the information can no longer form the basis of a misappropriation claim (Veronica Food Co. v. Ecklin, 2017).

Furthermore, in the Bitter case, BH Media would also have had to show that it took steps to protect Andy Bitter’s list of Twitter followers in order to minimize the risk of that list being acquired by competitors. Implementing such protections is nearly impossible and counterintuitive in the open sphere of social media.
ii. The “value” paradox: social media followers do not derive “independent economic value.”

Relative to “value,” a paradox exists. There is a clear social value of attracting and accumulating followers on social media platforms. More followers means greater visibility of one’s social profile, the content he or she creates, the products he or she promotes, and the general influence and expertise one generates in a specific field. Social value can lead to economic value, and it is undeniable that the drive for visibility, engagement, and conversion from social follower to customer has transformed the digital marketing and consumer industries, among others.

The value generated through social media is enjoyed by both employer and employee alike. The court in Maremont v. Susan Fredman Design Group, Ltd. (SFDG), a case involving an employee of an interior design company, referenced this value as an employee’s “commercial interest” in his or her social media persona and affirmed an individual’s right to protect it (Maremont v. SFDG, 2014; Hidy, 2018). “A social network account not only serves the worker’s interest by facilitating contact with her network, but also helps the worker to build her reputation and market herself to potential employers,” wrote the judge who issued a decision, using this direct quote from a law review article written by Argento (2013). Social media allows journalists to build their own brand that can attract not only followers, but also future employers. In short, job prospects. A reporter’s brand -- with its built-in audience of followers -- is “capital” to some hiring managers. Therefore, journalists have a social and commercial interest in their own social media identity.

Information possesses independent economic value when secrecy of the information provides a “substantial business advantage” (BH Media v. Bitter, 2018; Morlife, Inc. v Perry, 1997). Both the news outlet in Bitter and the employer in PhoneDog alleged that a “curated follower list” on Twitter was information that fell into the definition of a trade secret and that the ancillary information available to the account-holder -- such as followers’ traits and the ability to direct message them -- would have value in the hands of a competitor.

Litigants are going to debate over whether a list of followers and any ancillary information provides a “substantial business advantage,” and the decision will likely focus on the specific facts and circumstances of each case. Is the list of followers, alone, generating economic value to the news outlet or the journalist? Does the mere existence of a list of followers provide companies with a business advantage over competitors? Or does the value lie in the knowledge and data collected from the followers’ activity?

Not to be ignored, especially in the context of the journalism industry, is that a key factor in a court’s determination of independent economic value is whether the employer made substantial efforts to create the disputed list. Facts evidencing the amount of time, expense, and resources in establishing the list all inform whether the efforts to cultivate the list are “substantial.” In the news industry, lists of social media followers exist by virtue of audience members who “opt-in” to follow a journalist. The decision to “follow” is personal and largely the result of journalists’ reputation, persona, and brand he or she develops and cultivates over time. News outlets don’t create lists of social media followers; but rather, such a list is cultivated by the journalist in the opt-in/opt-out environment of social media. Courts have routinely acknowledged that lists developed by an employee do not fall into the definition of trade secret (Barney v. Burrow, 2008). In Robert S. Weiss Associates, Inc. v. Wiederlight, the Supreme Court of Connecticut addressed the issue by stating
that “a former employee will not be said to have misappropriated that secret if he or she was in charge of cultivating the information” (*Weiss v. Wiederlight*, 1988).

**B. Social media policies: balancing the interests of employers and employees**

What is striking about the *Bitter* case is that contract law is not the basis of BH Media’s lawsuit, even though it had a social media policy. As an alternative to trade secret claims, companies could turn to contract law -- both social media policies and employment agreements -- to help resolve issues related to ownership of social media accounts. Comprehensive social media policies could prevent legal action in the first place by providing clear cut guidelines that address a myriad of potential questions and that would guide disputing parties and courts through available policy terms and intentions.

A policy should protect the company while also acknowledging the importance of a social media account to the livelihood of a journalist and to the free flow of information from journalists to the public. A conflict can be avoided by addressing the following items in a policy:

- If a company requires a journalist to maintain a social media presence as part of the job responsibility tied to his or her employment, then the company owns any account used primarily for the performance of the employee’s job functions.

- Accounts that were previously created by an employee, including those that are more personal in nature, can be used as part of a journalist’s professional capacity with the company. However, in these cases, the company will become owner of the account(s). As such, the employee must give login credentials to management. In addition, they must update the email address associated with the account(s) so that the employee’s company email is linked to the account(s). An addendum, which transfers ownership from the employee to the employer, to the social policy is required for these cases.

- Alternatively, if the employee desires to keep his or her previous account then the company sets up a separate account for the employee to use in his or her professional capacity. Social media accounts used for professional purposes must be set-up with a company email address.

- There should be no ambiguity in terms of who is responsible for the creation of new accounts: either the individual employee or management. To provide consistency, select one or the other but not a mix of both. If an employee is charged with creating the accounts, the employee must immediately deliver the account log-in credentials to management.

- After the account is created, an employee must consult with management if he or she wishes to change the account name, known as a handle. Updated passwords must be given to management immediately upon the change.
Management is permitted to access employees’ social media accounts, and indeed should access the accounts from time to time, in order to establish shared access. In addition, management is allowed to edit or delete posts, but will first make a reasonable effort to communicate with the employee to discuss the changes (for example, if there is a factual error in a post).

The company will transfer ownership of a social media account(s) to a departing employee as long as that person is not going to work for a direct competitor. In the case of ownership transfer, the departing employee will remove any reference of the company from his or her account handle so that it is clear the person no longer works for the company.

In cases in which the employee goes to work for a direct competitor, the company will retain ownership of the account. The employee will no longer be able to access the account(s). This provision applies to any account that was created and/or used by the employee prior to his or her employment at the company and then transferred to the company.

“Direct competitor” must be defined.

Expanding on the notion of what happens to accounts when a reporter leaves an outlet, companies should make a good faith effort to balance the interests of employer and employee. If retained by a newsroom once employment ends, reporters’ social media accounts become virtually useless for a number of reasons. Chiefly among these is that transitioning a journalist’s account to another journalist defies the fundamentals of social media. People follow individual reporter’s social media accounts because of that person. The practical effect of followers being pivoted away from a journalist whom they have chosen to follow is unproductive. Therefore, it would be a shortsighted strategy to transfer one journalist’s account to another.

A more reasonable practice would be to allow a former employee to retain control of the account as long as he or she does not work for a competitor of the company. As noted previously in this article, Gray Television utilizes this approach. In cases in which a former journalist goes to work for a non-competing outlet, there is no clear cut economic advantage of a news outlet retaining control of that account, particularly when one considers that the account could remain dormant and that the list of followers is publicly available. Such an approach undermines an employer’s case in claims that are based on the economic imperative of retaining control of a social media account. Furthermore, a journalist who knows that his or her account will be taken from them if they leave a news outlet could feel less compelled to use the account to build a robust following and report important information on it that links back to the outlet’s website, thus, undermining a station’s stance that retaining control of the account is critical to the company’s bottom line.

Conclusion

If The Roanoke Times case had gone to trial, it would have been unlikely that BH Media could have prevailed on the basis of trade secret laws. Plaintiffs have a high burden of proof in cases of trade secrets, and particularly when they involve the question of whether a list of social media followers is equivalent to that of a “secret” curated customer list. We argue that social media
followers are not trade secrets, no matter the industry. Therefore, utilizing trade secret laws in order to gain control of a social media account is an ill-fitted legal strategy. Even if someone is the rightful owner of a social media account, the associated followers are not trade secrets. A better approach to establishing and defining ownership—and avoiding litigation in the first place—is through well-articulated policies and practices. A newsroom social media policy should (i) define the terms of ownership while also recognizing social media companies’ user agreements, and (ii) balance the interests of the employee and its employees.

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Curiosity and Experimentation with Twitterbots and Automated Journalism – a Practical Course for Teaching Journalists

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University of Bamberg, Germany

Abstract:

Teaching any subject in a disruptive age means to prepare students for a time we do not know what it will look like. Journalism is no exception. But journalism rather plays a vital role in how the future is shaped. Therefore in education we need to help journalist students to activate their core competences and concentrate on them. These are enthusiasm and curiosity, learn to experiment and investigate and the ability for self-organized learning. We need to help students to gain self-confidence to be able to create their (professional) future. In the lecture presented in this paper we mixed using new software techniques in journalism, such as building twitterbots with various methods to discuss and reflect the algorithmic turn in media. We summarize our experience and give advice for further lectures. Ethical implications were addressed in ways that are serving serving the students as well as the public.

Keywords: digital transformation, digitalization, twitterbots, NLG, automated journalism, education change, core competences

Introduction

Digitalization is a technological, cultural and sociological revolution that has already changed and is changing the world rapidly. The term ‘algorithmic media’ summarizes a development where software systems chanced the way journalism is functioning. Algorithms adopted more and more tasks that in the past were considered to be traditional journalist tasks. For example to select media content for the user’s individual needs (Heise, 2016). Or the development we call automated journalism in which algorithms write – after a special training – journalistic texts. Readers, as has been tested, cannot distinctivly say if the text was written by a actual person or by a machine (Haim & Graefe, 2018).

The relationship between human beings and algorithmic systems changed in the past ten years and it is assumed that this change will continue far into the future. In every part of life as well as in journalism. This change will be even faster with the use and development of technologies that work with Artificial Intelligence like Machine Learning or Neuronal Networks.

An important question arises: What does this technological evolution mean for journalists and for future journalist? The job specifications and tasks for journalists will change. From the business sector we learn that professionals should concentrate on their innate and core competences and use automation for all the other tasks (Burkhardt, 2018). That means future journalists need to discover what their core competences are and they need to be able to redefine and adapt their business model in the future continuously. The first and most valuable requirement for education in a disruptive age is therefore: to provide an environment for students in which they can explore,
get support with their projects, have the freedom to experiment, experience the freedom to fail and make mistakes and in which they will find the support to try again.

To adress both needs for journalists: be efficient in the use of technology but also be able to fullfill their function as a critic for society, the lecture was divided into to main parts. This is a report for the lecture ‘Bots and Automated Journalism – a practical course on mediainnovation within the Computational Journalism’ that took place at the University of Bamberg, Germany at the summer semester 2019. The course was scheduled as a two weekend seminar with accompanying e-learning units. The first of the two weekends took place in collaboration with the lecturer and the external lecturer, Marie Kilg, journalist and content manager at Amazon/Alexa. The second weekend was focusing on critical thinking skills.

**Background and Outline: Challenges for Journalists and Essential Concepts of Change in Journalism**

The essential terminology to describe the challenges for journalists are: algorithmic media, computational journalism, automated journalism and (twitter-)bots.

The two terms algorithmic media and computational journalism are often used, within the literature, interchangingly. Algorithmic media refers to every aspect of the media that is produced with an underlying algorithm. Algorithms are used to produce content, to predict users demands, to use and select of content for users and to produce and evaluate knowledge (Heise, 2016). In communication sciences, we also refer to the term computational journalism when discussing current media innovations in journalism. Computational journalism according to Hamilton and Tuner (2009) is the combination of algorithms, data and methods of the social sciences with the aim of supporting the critical and control function of journalism. Ten years ago the term computational journalism included the application of various social science methods, such as empirical surveys and statistical evaluations, as well as the computer-assisted reporting (called CAR) (Pavlik, 2009; Dörr, 2016). Hamilton and Tuner (2009) write their analysis primarily under the impression of falling media profits and associate computational journalism with the hope that the critical function of journalism can be maintained despite declining employment numbers. They consider their description to be a working definition and assume that it will continue to develop and change. In his analysis, Diakopoulos (2011) focuses mainly on the process within journalism: computational journalism is the use of computers, algorithms and computational thinking to support the process of "finding, telling, and disseminating news stories with, by or about algorithms" (Diakopoulos & Koliska, 2016, p. 2). Computational journalism is fundamentally steered by journalistic guidelines such as diligence, truthfulness, and verifiability. Like Hamilton and Tuner (2009), Diakopoulos (2011) does not believe that machines can completely replace journalists. It took only seven years after the publication of Hamilton and Tuner (2009) for the possibilities of using computer technology in the media to envolve significantly. Therefore for Dörr (2016), computational journalism is the generic term for the application of "computer-aided research, analysis, production, recommendation and distribution of content" (Dörr, 2016, p. 246). Dörr (2016) subsumes under computational journalism both CAR, data journalism and automated (or algorithmic) journalism.
Automated (or algorithmic) journalism describes the generation of journalistic content from structured data using algorithms (Haim & Graefe, 2018). In order to implement automated journalism, the technique of natural language text generation is used. Because the field of automated journalism is a practice-driven field that is undergoing rapid change, there is some overlap and no exact distinction between automated journalism and bots. For example some bots also use the technology of natural language processing, that means that they understand language and are able to answer. Natural language processing is not used in automated journalism. Therefore in the following, bots are called accounts on Twitter that generate content (partially or completely) by algorithms. Bots exist on different media platforms in different forms, e.g. so called newsbots or social bots or messenger bots (cf. e.g. Lokot & Diakopoulus, 2016). Bots on Twitter are used in this course because applications can be implemented via Application Programming Interface (called API) easily and without much effort.

The two main challenges for most journalists are: A) They need to be able to use new software systems to fulfill their journalistic tasks in a competitive way. And B) journalists need to be able to use new technology and at the same time they need to provide a critical perspective and reflect the output of software systems and automation. They need to address ethical questions that arise with digitalization. Only thereby journalists can observe society and fulfill the function that journalism has for society, being a critic.

In education we need to help journalist students to activate their innate as well as core competences and concentrate on them. These are enthusiasm and curiosity, learn to experiment and investigate and the ability for self-organized learning. We need to help students to gain self-confidence to be able to create their professional future. These core competences can be grouped into three categories: Knowledge, skills and mindset. A mix of these categories need to be addressed in the teaching and learning scenarios of the lecture.

**The Main Learning and Teaching Goals**

To prepare future journalists to deal with upcoming challenges we developed a course design that includes:

A) A balanced mix of practice and theory: Using software technology, taking action and start programming yourself as well as developing a critical and reflective approach to new technologies.

This includes a three-part division of the course content with regard to:

- **A1) Knowledge**: Students should understand the definition and contexts of computational journalism.
- **A2) Skills**: Students should experience, develop and demonstrate core competences for actively shaping their future.
- **A3) Mindset**: Students need to start thinking in the appropriate mindset.

B) Creating a working atmosphere in which students are able to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and mindset to create their journalistic future.
The essential basis for the conception of the course is the work ‘Theory of Basic Needs’ by Deci and Ryan (1993). The two pedagogues have made a connection between motivation and learning based on learners’ self-determination. According to them, autonomy, competence experience and social inclusion are the essential factors for a positive effect on the learning motivation of pupils and students. Autonomy is achieved, for example, by students looking for their own learning scenarios and tasks. Competence experience is acquired when one can present and show one's own abilities and knowledge and social inclusion means learning within a social group.

**Structure of the Course Including Objectives and Specific Teaching-Learning Situations**

The course was organized as a compact course taking place on two weekends, three weeks apart. Ten students participated. Each was a communication science major. Programming skills were not necessary. Two students, with a minor in computer science had basic experience in programming. To pass the course the students worked in groups on a practical project, their twitterbot, and also wrote an individual essay. In their final paper they discussed the impact of the algorithmic turn in media on one example (see section: examination requirement). The course was accredited with five ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) points.

To meet the two main challenges for journalists we divided the lecture into two content sessions that each took place on one weekend. On the first weekend the students learned how to use the technology and gain their first programming experiences. They should experiment, test, work with different coding software and understand possibilities and limitations of twitterbots. After different practical input into building twitterbots, the students organized themselves in groups and started to work for their student project. This weekend was accompanied by a journalist who used to work for a number of different German newspapers. She is also self-trained in software development and built various twitterbots for german media. During the two days of the first course weekend a variety of different teaching and learning scenarios were applied, which are listed in Table 1. Selected individual methods are presented in more detail.

The second weekend took place three weeks later. We started with the students’ presentation of their projects and feedback (written and oral) was provided. After the students incorporated the provided feedback into their twitterbots, the goal of the second weekend was above all to develop a critical-reflexive approach to media innovations, algorithmic media and computational journalism. The students should also be able to apply this approach to their own projects. Therefore essential concepts of computational journalism, data journalism and automated journalism were discussed. Afterwards, the course addressed different aspects of algorithmic media using different teaching and learning methods. A list of the methods used can be found in Table 1 and selected teaching methods are then explained in more detail.
## Educational Objectives

**Tab. 1: Structure of the course with the selection of main education objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational objective(s)</th>
<th>Method(s)</th>
<th>Measurement(s) of learning success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge:</strong> At the end of the course the students are able to ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ... describe the main parts and concepts of computational journalism. | • theoretical input with a wide range of different media (oral presentation, video, podcast, texts, ...)  
• reading tasks (scientific papers, websites, ...) | • Students use correct terminology.  
• Students refer to concepts in their essays.  
• Students can apply practical examples with regards to the corresponding theory. |
| ... describe some current developments in media innovation and implement a project (twitterbot) yourself. | • oral presentation  
• ‘Build your first twitterbot’  
• group project  
• contact with professional representatives  
• simulation game ‘Media Tarot’ [see appendix 3] | • Students independently describe typical examples of use. |
| ... describe some areas of current media innovation in more detail and take on different perspectives. | • build your first twitterbot  
• group project  
• group discussion  
• simulation game ‘Media Tarot’ [see appendix 3] | • Students do research on their own examples of use cases and present product descriptions. |

**Skills: Students demonstrate the ability to ...**

| ... to present content in writing (and/or orally) in a clear, legible and convincing way. | • various group presentations  
• individual essay | • The presentations show a clear structure and the arguments are conclusive and without contradiction.  
• The presentation is convincing in content and presentation. |
| ... to express creative and subject-related thinking. | • group project  
• processing unsolved problems in the | • The group projects deal with a creative problem in the media that can be solved with automation. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simulation Game</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Media Tarot’ [see appendix 3]</td>
<td>- The mission of the simulation game is solved in an original and convincing way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- group project</td>
<td>- Students identify their own project and work on their tasks independently as well as in group exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students ask for further sources of information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- group presentations and group project</td>
<td>- The behaviour of the students in the group is appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The group can solve their task together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- group project</td>
<td>- If difficulties or changes in the environment occur in group work, the group is able to react appropriately to new circumstances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- simulation game ‘Media Tarot’ [see appendix 3]</td>
<td>- The group can deal with changing patterns of thinking in the simulation game and solve various problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mindset:** Students show more and more ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Students also meet outside the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The students continue their project work even after the end of the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The students acquire further skills (e.g. programming) themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The students talk to other people about their projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The students recommend the course to others.</td>
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**Selection of Different Teaching-Learning Situations**

In the following, four selected teaching situations are presented with their objectives, implementation and initial experience. These are the essential methods and learning situations, but not a complete list of all units.
The methods and materials chosen for the course reflect the concept of the ‘Basic Needs’, for example, choosing your own project reflects the learners’ needs for autonomy. When students present their arguments, their new skills and their projects, they learn and experience their competencies growing. With the different group work and the weekend learning scenario (outside normal course hours at the university), learners experience an intense social involvement in their team and the entire group (Deci & Ryan, 1993).

In accordance with the course structure described above, the first weekend was designed in a practical fashion with a focus on experimenting, trying out and testing. Again and again enriched by opportunities for reflection and consideration. On the second weekend the mixture was exactly opposite: the focus lay on discussion and reflection and was enriched with practical exercises such as the simulation game ‘Media Tarot’ [see appendix 3].

**#1 Project: ‘Build your first Twitterbot’**

The first teaching lesson was a small group project in which students were asked to build their first twitterbot within a short period of time. They should quickly gain experience with bots, have a positive experience with basic programming and experience their first learning success within a very short time.

Therefore the external lecturer presented some examples of twitterbots as theoretical input. These included, for example, newsbots or bots that produce automated poems, recipes or rhymes like @pentametron or @deepelonmusk. Journalistic-/service-bots such as @nytimes or @taz_news [german] or @umweltbotnbg [german] were also introduced. She then showed a simple example of object-oriented programming with ‘cheap bots done quick’ [see appendix 2]. Afterwards the students developed and discussed their own drafts for ideas in groups of three to four people. The media and materials such as whiteboard, flipcharts, postits and different coloured eddings were used for this purpose. In the next step, the practical implementation, the external lecturer simply referred to the software's link and published a simple and concise manual on how to use the software in the university's e-learning portal. She clearly instructed the students to research their questions first on the Internet, for example in various forums or blog posts, and only then ask them in

The groups of students developed a concept for their bot. After twenty minutes, each small group presented theirs ideas to the entire group and Ms. Kilg added further details on the implementation as well as possible difficulties. The students then registered their twitteraccounts, familiarised themselves with the software ‘cheap bots done quick’ [see appendix 2] and published their own twitterbots within thirty minutes.

The complexity of the tweets, the possible answers and the database were gradually increased in further iteration steps from group discussion and presentation in the plenum as well as input from Ms. Kilg. As examples the students build: A) A bot who mixes cocktail recipes and answers questions about ingredients. A bot that B) generates humorous fitness tips or C) a satirical bot that quotes former and current party leaders in dialect. And D) a recipe bot that randomizes unusual cooking ideas and generates new ideas from a large database. The students immensely enjoyed the practical implementation, were amazed by the quick successes
and quickly progressed to more complex tasks. For example, by adding more complex response options to the bots or by having their own bots interact with other bots.

#2 Group discussion: ‘Bot or Not’

Several group discussions and plenary discussions were held during the seminar. For example, the students discussed whether and how to recognize automatically generated twitterbots. As input, the students received a list of various twitteraccounts. They had to determine which and how many of the accounts mentioned were not created by humans, but are so-called bots. While the students edited the list, they should also write down strategies for identifying bots on prepared cards. In addition to their own ideas, they could use the Internet at any time and search for other ideas to recognize bots.

After fifteen minutes we collected the cards with the strategies in the plenum and structured them on a whiteboard as a mind map. The group that developed the most search strategies won a small prize. Altogether many convincing search strategies were collected. In addition, the students immediately incorporated their own knowledge from the ‘Build your Twitterbot’ unit and critically reflected on various strategies for identifying bots. Common websites for the detection of bots work, for example, with the analysis of how many tweets an account posts per day or whether the accounts keep human sleep patterns. The students immediately noticed that they could implement these control mechanisms in their own bots if they wanted to disguise the fact that they automatically generate content.

Students were thus able to immediately establish links between the individual learning units ‘Build your own twitteraccount’ and the ‘Bot or Not’ discussion and argue about social bots at an advanced level. For example, individual student contributions showed that there is no certainty to distinguish that an account will be manually operated by a human being or that automation algorithms are used. In addition, students discussed whether bot labelling makes sense at all and whether the credibility of communication in general should be discussed.

#3 Poster presentation and discussion: algorithmic media

Students were asked to create and present a poster on various terms of algorithmic media. For this purpose, different content inputs were prepared and sufficient materials in the form of flipchart sheets, whiteboards and eddings were provided. In order to prepare for the course, the students read the text Algorithms by Nele Heise (2016). This work deals with the essential changes caused by algorithmized media and the change and future tasks of media ethics.

The students worked in three small groups on the terms ‘data/big data’, ‘algorithm’ and ‘artificial intelligence (called AI)’. Each of them created a flipchart with a short definition as well as questions and discussions currently discussed in the media, such as the influence of algorithms working with artificial intelligence. The definitions and concepts were then discussed together in the plenary to get an agreement on these terms.

After understanding these main terms, the students prepared more extensive posters and presentations in a second step. Together with the prepared text and other researched sources from the internet, the students groups created five posters on algorithmic authority, algorithmic bias,
algorithmic accountability, algorithmic transparency and algorithmic literacy. In the entire group, they presented the essential points and asked each other a serial of very important questions. For example: How can the functionality of AI algorithms be presented transparently? Who is liable if errors occur in machine-written texts? Who is credible when a machine generated text and a humanly written text contradict each other? What competencies do users need for a critical-reflexive handling of algorithmized media? Why are machine decisions considered credible when they are made in black boxes?

The students took notes of the discussions and the questions in order to prepare their individual essays.

#4 Simulation Game: The Futures of Media Tarot

The ‘Futures of Media Tarot’ [see appendix 3] is a simulation game developed by trend researcher and journalist Johannes Klingebiel (Sueddeutsche Zeitung, Deutschland). The simulation is an innovative method to develop different future scenarios of journalism in a structured and goal-oriented way. In addition to technological developments, the impact on society and changed business models of journalism are also addressed. This does not propagate the future of journalism, but develops several possible visions. The participants take an active, creative position rather than a passive, consuming one.

The ‘Futures of Media Tarot’ consists of cards from six different categories - internal factors, external factors, locations, dates, protagonists and mission. One group consists of three to four participants. Each group received a set of playing cards. The groups drew a card from each category and thus had a scenario of internal and external factors. The aim was to adopt the protagonist's attitude and develop an idea to complete the mission. With the provided additional materials (whitboards, flipchart, eddings, post-it) the groups developed their mission in mind-maps. Afterwards the scenario and the ideas were presented to the entire group.

As a further basis for discussion, a map from the original scenario was changed in a second step. This provided a grounds for discussion in order to become active and shape ideas through media innovations in a concrete way and with a mission. The simulation game and the subsequent discussion took three hours. After an initial transition to this unusual learning situation, the students developed numerous creative ideas and were discussing eagerly. The lecturer supported the group work by offering further advice.

Examination requirements: project report and individual essay

Journalists should be able to use new technologies in the media and at the same time develop a critical-reflexive mindset. Following this structure, the examination also consists of two parts: a practical project report and an essay on media innovation and the changes in media ethics through algorithmic media.

In the course the students created a comparatively simple algorithm for automated communication on Twitter (see ‘Build your first twitterbot’). At the same time, they developed a concept for an advanced algorithm for a twitterbot. The detailed elaboration of the concept as well as the partial implementation was an important part of the examination. They also showed more complex or
advanced algorithms, which means for example, to implement response function(s), a more complex database or extensive communication possibilities.

The project documentation included: the strategic planning for the bot, the implementation of the algorithm in the implementation phase, the identification of possible weaknesses and possible solutions as well as the evaluation of the entire project. There was little restriction regarding the collection of ideas, the bots however were supposed to operate in the media environment and contain a clever strategy for automated communication.

The students worked together in groups of two to three participants. Substantial parts of the project work were prepared during the course sessions and then further developed in independent follow-up meetings. Additional information was available via the e-learning portal. During the course the project ideas were presented several times and were further developed in (written and oral) group feedback.

In addition to group work, students had to write an essay to complete the course. The students were asked to develop their own topic out of the following themes: media innovation, algorithmic media or computational journalism. Students were asked to draw inspiration form the course content. With the essay, the students could show how to take a critical position on a current media development. They showed how to argue, reflect and present their ideas in a clear to follow form. The students produced a numer of impressive final papers which clearly indicated that students were able to reflect and dissect technology and its impact on journalism and its role in society. This is a key competence for future journalists and media makers.

**Experience and Evaluation**

The students’ feedback and the overal practical output was outstanding. The discussion on different ethical questions and the submitted essays showed strong and convincing arguments in a variety of debates regarding the algorithmic turn in media.

**Knowledge**

In the essays, poster presentations and course discussions, students have learned to consistently use the correct technological vocabulary. The main concepts of computational journalism were addressed in the papers and the students were able to integrate the examples into the theory. Students were also able to describe individual examples of algorithmized media within their individual essays. In their project work, the students quickly learned, they found their own application examples, worked out the concepts convincingly and put many of the components into practice.

**Skills**

The participants showed in several learning units that they can present convincingly in spoken as well as written language. Absolutely impressive were the ideas the students came up for the advanced twitterbots. Each group has identified an usecase in which they are able to automatically distribute journalistic content via Twitter. The accounts use different data sources, have implemented chat functions and generated automated tweets of varying complexity. In the project
documentation you can read how difficulties and hurdles have been solved and how the groups have adapted to new, unexpected situations in an appropriate and solution-oriented way. Teamwork has been very professional, solution-oriented and creative.

**Mindset**

During the course, the students showed more and more enthusiasm: they also met after the end of the course to work on their projects. They have independently acquired further programming skills in order to equip their twitterbots with more functionalities. They reported in the course that they also presented their project ideas to friends and families. They also recommended in the course evaluation that the lecture should be offered again. In the anonymous evaluation questionnaire of the university, the students also rated the course as ‘very good’. This corresponds to the teachers' impressions of the students' motivation and mood.

**Limitation and challenges**

The digitalization of teaching also changes the role of teachers: There are several situations in which students are better informed in detail than teachers. This is encouraged by explicitly required self-study on technical issues, for example how technical functionality is implemented on Twitter. The lecturer must also learn to deal with this change in his or her role.

There are also big differences between the participants: Some know how programming works others do not. Some can adjust to new situations easily and well, others find it very difficult. Some are efficient self-learners and for others self-learning presents a significant obstacle. This is a reason why a small course size is absolutely recommendable in order to be able to deal with these differences in a profitable way.

The participants struggled at first the most with the creative methods, for example with the Media Tarot. This shows that these methods have to be applied and trained several times in order to achieve the desired teaching success.

**Outlook**

For future courses one should consider three recommendations. First, the quality of the course during the first weekend depends strongly on the chosen expert from the practical field. In our example the journalist who held the workshop was a perfect match. She is a self-trained programmer of twitterbots and could give insights into her daily work and provide ideas to future requirements for journalism. The second recommendation lies in the expectation management. Some of the critical feedback from the students pointed out that they did not learn how to use programming language more in-depth and that they wished they had more time for experimentation. The third recommendation is to consider the development of computational skills within our journalistic student body. To prepare students for the challenges of digitization we need more computational courses and reevaluate the focus within the entire curriculum. The need to train creativity, improved error culture and self-learning with (and without) software applications is apparent. A single course is a great start, but not enough to prepare our students for taking on the upcoming challenges for society and for journalism.
About the Author

Theresa Körner is a doctoral candidate and research and teaching assistant at the Institute of Communication Science at the University of Bamberg, Germany. She holds a Master's degree in Communication Science and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science/Fundamentals of Economics. Her award-winning research focuses on automated journalism and the changes in journalism caused by digitalization. She teaches the basics of journalism, an overview of public relations and gives lectures on Social Media and computational journalism. She has developed the following course content, structure and overall learning experience.

Appendices

Selected helpful material used for the course:


References


Undergraduate Students Prefer Learning Text and Broadcast Skills Sequentially VS. Concurrently, But Assessments of their Final Projects are Mixed

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Abstract

This study examined two sections of “Reporting and Writing I.” One taught writing for text and broadcast concurrently, while the other taught these skills sequentially. A student survey found a strong preference for learning subjects sequentially. Outside evaluators assessing final stories rated text projects from students taught sequentially slightly higher than text stories from students taught concurrently, but rated broadcast stories from students taught concurrently slightly higher than broadcast stories from students taught sequentially.

Introduction

Journalism educators face a dilemma. They need to adapt curricula to reflect a changing industry buffeted by rapid technological changes. As the number of platforms and formats journalists use to convey information continues to grow—from Facebook to augmented reality—adjusting curricula can feel like a zero sum game. In many cases, instruction in some subjects must be reduced or eliminated to make room for skills needed in the new media environment, such as coding, web analytics and social media reporting, to name a few. Although programs across the country vary, most journalism educators and professionals agree that the basics remain important, including the ability to “tell compelling and accurate stories, to ask insightful questions, to understand the values and principles of the craft and its place in the history of democracy, and to use the tool kit of the profession, however one defines or describes that” (Knight Foundation, 2015).

This “tool kit” grows larger every day. Journalism programs that traditionally taught students to become newspaper, television, or radio reporters must now grapple with equipping the next generation of professionals to produce content for websites, podcasts, social media platforms, and mobile devices as well as traditional formats — all while many outlets struggle to find a clear path toward sustainability or profitability. “Mastering newsgathering and storytelling techniques in all media formats [multi-skilling] as well as integrating digital network technologies, and a new producer-consumer relationship have become the biggest challenges in journalism in recent years” (Rottwilm, 2014). Those challenges are unlikely to subside. A 2017 report by the New York Times laying out its strategy for the future emphasized the need for the august paper of record to use more visuals as well as “more digitally native mix of journalistic forms,” concluding “to keep our current readers and attract new ones we must more often apply Times values to the new forms of journalism now available to us” (Leonhardt et. al, 2017). In addition to basics of reporting and writing, journalists must also understand the impact of race and ethnicity, technology, entrepreneurship,
data and new storytelling techniques to be effective in the current media ecosystem. (Aspen Institute, 2017). Further, journalists must be able to adapt to emerging technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence, which will change the ways information is gathered and disseminated. (O’Sullivan, Fortunati, Taipale, & Barnhurst, 2017).

Journalism educators understand that they need to update and modernize curriculum to adapt to the many changes in the field, and most programs across the country have incorporated “converged” media skills into their departments (Kraeplin & Criado, 2005). However, among the many challenges to innovation in journalism education is that “the current system prevents curriculum development from keeping pace with the changing realities of modern journalism” (Webb, 2015). The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) currently accredits 113 schools. Four additional schools have provisional accreditation. Webb argues that this system of accreditation can “unintentionally encourage the status quo” due to the prep time needed for accreditation (three to seven years), and the lengthy time it can take for schools to approve and launch new courses and programs. In addition, accreditation rules require that students take at least 72 semester credit hours (or 104 quarter credit hours) for a bachelor’s degree outside of journalism and mass communication, even though students must learn more journalism skills than ever before. (Hundreds of journalism programs across the U.S. are not accredited).

Indeed, even as more journalism schools adopted the idea of “convergence,” the industry began to move away from the first iterations of that model. While partnerships such as the one between the Tampa Tribune and a local television station once seemed inevitable, this simple partnership model is no longer the dominant trend in the industry (Dailey, Demo, & Spillman, 2009; Hubbard, Crisp Crawford, & Filak, 2011). In 2009, both Thornton and Keith (2009) and Dailey et al (2009) found that many editors were reporting a decline in the number of partnerships with outside news outlets. Instead, they were relying on their own staff to produce copy and video for their own websites. While this doesn’t obviate the need for journalists to learn cross-platform skills, it does suggest educators would do well to approach convergence with a more sophisticated understanding. Students are unlikely to be asked to write and report a local news package for a legacy news organization; rather they would more likely need to know how to write and add photos and video for the website of the news organization in which they are employed. Yet while there seems to be a general consensus that journalism education should offer more cross-platform skills, there is little agreement -- and even less evidence-- for how to go about teaching these skills.

All of these issues deserve exploring. For this study, researchers focused on the question of how to best teach a core journalism skill class, specifically introductory writing and reporting for text/online and broadcast (video and audio). Before launching a revised undergraduate curriculum, students at a large private West Coast journalism school were required to take two separate text and broadcast courses that were supposed to work together to keep the workload manageable. For example, in the Fall, students enrolled in the 15-week “Newswriting: Print,” and “Newswriting: Broadcast” courses at the same time. Ideally, they would report the same stories for both classes, but one version would be for a text/online platform, and the other version would be for a broadcast platform. The course focused on broadcast writing for traditional platforms; students also took a different class in web and online video. Each course was taught by one instructor. The collaboration rarely worked, however, because many instructors teaching foundational skills courses are adjuncts with full-time jobs who found it difficult to meet or talk with each other. However, students did at least receive one full semester of training in writing for text/online, and one full semester of training
in writing for broadcast. The following semester, students enrolled in “Reporting: Print” and “Reporting: Broadcast,” at the same time.

The new 15-week course “Reporting and Writing I” is typically taken by sophomores or junior undergraduates transferring from another college or major. The class is capped at 20, and focuses on introducing students to basic hard news and feature reporting and writing skills for both text/online and broadcast all in one course. The course also introduced basics of social media as a tool for both reporting and publishing. Essentially, what was previously taught in two separate one-semester courses was combined into a single one semester course even as the subject matter expanded. The class time increased slightly, and it is co-taught by a text specialist and a broadcast specialist. Students produce a variety of stories in and out of class from campus or the campus neighborhood. For their finals, students are required to pitch and produce a text story and a broadcast version of that story, although students sometimes complete two different stories. This course is followed by “Reporting and Writing II,” where students spend the semester pitching and producing four text and broadcast stories from a local city or neighborhood they have been assigned to cover.

The result from restructuring and combining introductory text and broadcast reporting and writing into two courses over two semesters instead of four courses in two semesters is that students now spend about half as much time on either text or broadcast than before. Additionally, broadcast instructors must spend a significant amount of time explaining not only the skill set required for writing for broadcast--the emphasis on writing for the ear rather than the eye--but also the differences between text and broadcast writing (for example, putting attribution first in broadcast, using “today” rather than a date, etcetera). Since time with students is finite, many instructors felt these lengthy explanations were to the detriment of core journalism skills. Many instructors offered anecdotal evidence that after the implementation of the new curriculum, more students in “Reporting and Writing II” or other upper division courses had yet to master basic skills, such as writing a hard news lead, news judgment, broadcast conventions, Associated Press style, news judgment, and more. Students also complained verbally and on course evaluations about how learning text and broadcast writing at the same time was confusing, or that they spent too much or not enough time on one or the other. Some students also complained about the lack of instruction in social media skills, which were also part of each required assignment.

**Research Questions**

As a result of the anecdotal concerns expressed by instructors and student comments on course evaluations, this project was launched to try and determine whether there was any benefit to learning to write for text and broadcast sequentially as opposed to concurrently, as practiced in the new curriculum. The following two research questions were developed:

**RQ1:** Will journalism students prefer to learn writing for text and video sequentially rather or concurrently?

**RQ2:** Will Journalism students perform better on final assessments if they learn writing for text and video sequentially or concurrently?

**Literature Review**
Journalism educators have been arguing about what students should learn for decades. As far back as the mid-nineteenth century, “news professionals and university educators pondered whether journalists needed to be college-educated, whether they needed a liberal arts degree, or whether they needed professional education that combined liberal arts and practical training” (Folkerts, 2014). Folkerts writes that in the 1860s, some of the earlier journalism courses were taught at Cornell University and what is now Washington & Lee University; in 1908, the University of Missouri launched the first journalism degree; and by 1966, hundreds of programs were in operation, half of which had added broadcast specializations. Arguments about the purpose and curriculum in post-secondary institutions continued, including the debate between “theory and practice” (Castaneda, Murphy & Hether, 2005). In 1987, the first full-scale assessment on journalism education conducted by the University of Oregon with funding from the Gannett Foundation found the general state of journalism education to be “dismal,” that programs lacked academic heft, and that journalism schools “were not exactly centers of innovation” (Dennis, 1987). Further, Mensing and Ryfe (2013) argue the prevailing method of teaching journalism is ill-suited to an industry sorely in need of disruption, not a continuation of the status quo.

Since about the mid-1990s, the discussion took on new urgency as it became clear the Internet would transform traditional methods of disseminating information. The so-called “Digital Revolution,” coupled with the decline of the newspaper industry, made journalism “a target for both traditional journalists, who saw their world slipping away, and for entrepreneurs who believed they could succeed without formal training in journalism” (Folkerts, 2014). For almost two decades, journalism programs have been undergoing a wide range of curricular revisions to catch up to the technological revolution that has upended the media industry. Schools have changed their names and added terms such as “integrated communications,” as well as a range of digital competencies that in some cases have replaced long-standing required courses such as copy editing.

Kraeplin and Criado (2005) found in a survey from the mid-2000s that most journalism schools had adopted a “converged” curriculum that reflected the need for students to understand the difference between, and be able to practice, writing and reporting for traditional formats (newspapers and tv and radio stations) and new ones, based on the web. At that time, most programs focused on the eventuality that websites would combine broadcast and print elements, and that journalists would need to produce content for both and post them on the website, an idea bolstered by changes in F.C.C. ownership regulations (Castaneda, Murphy & Hether, 2005) as well as corporate mergers and cooperation among legacy newspaper and television news outlets (Huang et al., 2003). Yet even among those programs that reported incorporating “convergence” into their curriculum, fewer than one-quarter described those changes as “major.”

Further, the research evaluating learning outcomes and best practices among “converged” schools remains relatively scarce (Filak, 2006). Bor (2014), in a qualitative study of three broadcast journalism classes incorporating social media reporting, found students struggled to understand and master the use of social media as a reporting tool as opposed to one for personal use. That study recommended instructors explicitly teach ethics, technical instruction, and the professional use of social media platforms. It also noted that while there is a need to include social media and digital reporting skills into journalism classes, there is “a noticeable absence of literature that evaluates instructional approaches and related learning outcomes” in these fields (Bor, 2014).

Even as the demands to teach increasing numbers of skills increase, research shows many students enter colleges with inadequate preparation in one of the basic -- writing. The most recent National
Assessment of Educational Progress reports shows only about twenty-seven percent of 12th and 8th graders scored “proficient” or higher on writing tests (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011.). Lingwell (2010) conducted a survey of a thousand educators in journalism and mass communication programs to assess several questions on how faculty teach writing and how effective they find their instruction. The survey found that most educators report they must teach many students whose writing skills are only moderately proficient, but that there is no clear standard or approach adopted across most institutions. Educators themselves disagree as to the best approach to teaching writing skills.

In addition, there is little research on the challenges of teaching traditional broadcast writing in an increasingly digitally-based world. Writing for broadcast requires students to focus on writing for the “ear” as opposed to writing for a reader, or “the eye”. Students learning broadcast writing must learn a new set of rules and “grammar” and master specific skills including short sentences and using the active voice (Hewitt, 2011). Traditional broadcast pedagogy in the United States follows a model in which students first learn to write for radio/audio followed by writing short scripts for broadcast (VO/SOTS and the like), building up to a longer reporter package incorporating sound from interviews and reporter’s spoken explanation. In this conceptualization, images follow the written word (Davie & Auter, 2003). As Silcock (2007) points out, this progression is not true worldwide. European newsroom follow a tradition in which stories are built primarily using images first, followed by a written script that conforms to the story told by the pictures, as opposed to vice-versa. Students enter the classroom with more experience manipulating images and text due to the rapid proliferation of mobile phones with camera and editing capabilities as well as social media platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram that allow novices to acquire and annotate images far more rapidly and easily than even a decade ago. Yet the research on pedagogy should relate to these changes is virtually nonexistent. Filak (2006) examined the impact of two different teaching styles for an introductory converged class. Some students took a class with one instructor while others experienced “mini-classes” with different specialists. The primary focus of this study was on students’ attitudes toward the various medium--i.e. whether they viewed the topic of convergence more positively as a result of different teaching styles--but it also incorporated a tests of basic knowledge in the field. That test did not find statistical differences in performance between the different groups.

In a review of team-teaching in a converged journalism school curriculum, Auman and Lillie (2007), looked at a case study of different models of team-teaching in four undergraduate core classes in a university with a newly-adopted converged curriculum. In the first year of a new converged curriculum, students learned web, print and broadcast at once from multiple instructors teaching together. The students reported feeling frustrated and anxious about having to file multiple assignments in different formats, and instructors complained about the workload. The school them moved to a “master instructor” model with one teacher focused on print skills, with some “modules” for other media. Students reported greater satisfaction and outcomes improved. In upper-level courses, students tackled more complex skills using a modular approach. In a second iteration of the course, they also selected a medium for a more advanced project, allowing them to focus on skills they wanted to acquire. Upper-level students also took courses that created cross-disciplinary projects. The authors conclude their research suggests journalism schools follow a “middle way,” as beginning students do better with highly structured, more focused courses before they tackle more complex courses where they can choose specialties.
The convergence movement spawned a bit of a backlash as well. Some schools—such as Brigham Young University—adopted a model of “convergence” that tried to teach students to excel in print and broadcast skills only to drop it after concluding students’ learning outcomes had suffered (Wenger, 2005). Meanwhile, since the convergence discussion first began, more and more skills have become necessary for graduates. In a study of job skills required by broadcast news companies, Wenger and Owens (2013) noted that employers were looking for skills beyond just combining print and broadcast into the same stories. Instead, they were also looking for journalists adept at using new forms of communication, including social media and mobile. The authors concluded that although the percentage of these jobs was small, it was growing rapidly and likely to continue to increase. Even when journalism educators make a good faith effort to predict the skills needed to succeed in emerging industries, they can misjudge those needs of industry. Du and Thornberg (2011), in a review of surveys from online media professionals and journalism educators found some areas of agreement. Both agreed basic journalism skills such as news judgment, grammar and style remain foundational to training journalists. However, they also found “today’s online journalists have duties that are more likely to be conceptual -- such as project management and staff organization/ administration - than their academic counterparts might believe,” (Du & Thornberg, 2011). A recent case study of thousands of job listings, employment postings, and company profiles for news media companies in the New York City metropolitan area found a significant growth in jobs for workers in digital, analytic and platforms such as social media in newsrooms (Weber & Kosterich, 2018).

As Kolodzy, Grant, DeMars and Wilkinson wrote in 2014, the challenges facing journalism educators are both familiar and profound. The industry has already faced a century in which it moved from a print product to one that included radio, television and film. The current changes, however, went beyond simply adding new formats and involved a different kind of delivery, in which consumers expected a constant stream of news and journalism organizations needed to provide it across platforms and in a largely on-demand manner. In many ways, the educational community has been slow to respond. The ACEJMC accrediting council, for example, didn’t add digital competencies to its requirements until 2013 (Folkerts, 2014).

**Methodology**

Two sections of the same course, titled “Reporting and Writing I,” were selected for an evaluation. One section was named “Blue” and the other “Red.” The Blue section had 17 students, the Red section had 19 students. Each section was co-taught by two instructors, a text specialist and a video specialist, who also are the two researchers for this paper. In addition, the same video instructor/researcher taught both the Blue and Red sections. The same syllabus, learning objectives and assessments also were used for both courses.

IRB approval was granted for this study, which provided students with the same learning objectives and assessments, but in a different order. For example, the Blue class was taught taught text and video writing concurrently. The class met twice a week. The first class of the week focused on text writing while the second class focused on video writing. This continued throughout the 15-week semester. The Red class taught text and video writing sequentially. The class also met twice a week. But the first half of the semester focused on text only, while the second half of the semester focused on video only.
Students choose which sections to enroll in, so instructors had no control over the type of students they taught. However, the mean GPAs for each section were virtually identical -- 3.585 for Blue and 3.592 for Red. The median GPA for the Blue section was 3.72, and the mode was 3.57, 3.8, 3.76, 3.86 and 3.72. The median GPA for the Red section was lower at 3.525, and the mode was 3.74.

At the end of the semester, students in each section were asked to complete a brief survey via Qualtrics to gauge their satisfaction with how the course was organized. (Appendix 1). In addition, two outside evaluators, both professional journalists who did not know the students, were hired to review final text and broadcast projects from both classes. One outside evaluator a text specialist, reviewed all the text stories from both classes without knowing how students were taught -- concurrently or sequentially. Similarly, the other outside evaluator, a broadcast specialist, reviewed all the broadcast stories from both classes without knowing how students were taught -- concurrently or sequentially. Student names and section numbers were redacted from the finals seen by evaluators. The evaluators also used a rubric (Appendix 2) created by instructors to score the finals.

**Analysis**

Again, the Blue class was taught two subjects concurrently, while the Red section was taught sequentially. The Blue section’s response rate to the survey was low, at almost 39 percent. The response rate from the Red section was more than 94 percent. The overall response rate for both classes, however, was almost 67 percent. Taken as a whole, the five-question Qualtrics survey that included two open-ended questions showed a clear and strong preference for learning two subjects -- writing for text and for video -- sequentially rather than concurrently.

RQ 1: Will journalism students prefer to learn writing for text and video sequentially rather or concurrently?

The survey showed that students in the Blue section were most interested in video (57.14 percent) compared to text (28.5) with 14.29 percent undecided. It also found that 57.15 percent of students in the Blue section disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question, “Learning about text and broadcast at the same time was an effective way to learn.” More than 71 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question, “Focusing on two subjects at a time -- text and broadcast -- was an effective way to learn.”

The survey showed that students in the Red section were most interested in video (69.71) compared to text (11.76) with 17.65 percent interested in digital, and 5.88 percent indicating he/she was no longer interested in journalism. It also found that 94.12 percent of students in the Red section agreed or strongly agreed with the question, “Learning about text in the first half of the semester, then learning about broadcast in the second half of the semester, was an effective way to learn about both subjects.” More than 88 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed with the question, “Focusing on one subject at a time -- text and then broadcast -- was an effective way to learn about both subjects.” Student comments in the open-ended section of the survey support the data.
“I think there should be one class for print, and another for broadcast. It really feels like everything is squashed together and the content seems to go by way too quickly. I think students need more time to learn the material effectively.”

“I think print and broadcast should be separated.”

“Keep the class structure as it was for mine -- where text is taught before broadcast, and and both are separated halfway through the semester. Students in other classes clearly articulated that they envied our structure and I, for one, found myself learning easily under this structure.”

“I would personally make [Reporting and Writing I] a journalism writing class, then make [Reporting and Writing II] or whatever comes next a reporting class that focuses more on broadcast.”

“Separate the text from broadcast.”

“It was really difficult to mix text and broadcast in one class because it becomes confusing and work heavy. It was like taking two separate classes, and there were no connections made between the text portion and the broadcast portion. We ended up with many assignments because both teachers would give their own assignments (i.e., text story and vox pop due the same week).

The outside text evaluator, a working professional, using a rubric for text provided by instructor, rated the text stories produced by the Red class higher than those produced by the Blue class. Again, students in the Red class were taught sequentially. The text evaluator reviewed all text stories from both the red and the blue group. Out of a possible score of 100, the 19 Red text finals had a mean score of 87.47, a median score of 88 and a mode of 87.88. To compare the 18 Blue text finals had a mean score of 84.94, a median score of 87, and a mode of 89.82.

A broadcast evaluator, a working professional, reviewed broadcast assignments for both sections using a rubric provided by the instructor. Results for the broadcast stories were flipped, with the outside broadcast evaluator rating broadcast stories produced by the Blue class higher than those produced by the Red class. Out of a possible score of 100, the 17 Blue finals had a mean score of 86.5, a median score of 86.5 and mode scores of 97, 83, and 84. To compare, the Red class broadcast finals had a mean score of 84.7, a mean score of 85, and mode scores of 96, 94, 87 and 79.

The text and broadcast final assessments by outside evaluators were mixed, meaning the answer to the second research question also was mixed:

RQ2: Will journalism students perform better on final assessments if they learn writing for text and video sequentially or concurrently?
Discussion

One way to explain the difference in the outside evaluator’s assessment of the broadcast final projects is to compare the number of students interested in broadcast (audio and video) as a profession. The average score for the broadcast finals in the Blue class, which was taught concurrently, was higher than that of the broadcast finals for the Red class, which was taught sequentially. But the Qualtrics survey also found that almost 65 percent of students in the Blue class said they were interested in broadcast, compared to 57 percent in the Red class. It could be that students who were more interested in broadcast put more effort into their broadcast finals than students who were not interested in broadcast.

This study had several limitations. Just two sections of the same course were examined because the two researchers realized that, by chance, they were partnered to teach one section as a team, and one was teaching an additional section as well. Although the two sections were taught using the same syllabus, rubrics and general assignments, they were not exactly alike. Each section was taught as a team. Both sections had the same broadcast instructor, but they each had different text instructors. Students in both sections had similar overall GPAs, but differed in their interests, strengths, weaknesses and number of hours they could devote to assignments. Each assignment was not exactly alike, either. For example, students were sent to cover a campus speech, but almost every student covered a different speaker. In addition, although the two text instructors had the same learning objectives and general assessments, each covered subjects using their own lectures, PowerPoint presentations, guest speakers and in-class assignments.

Overall, the difference in learning outcomes -- as assessed by outside evaluation of final assignments -- between students who learned text and broadcast writing sequentially and those who did so concurrently, were neither dramatic nor conclusive. In many ways, the data is reassuring. Students did not appear to show significant differences in their performance on a final assignment based on whether or not they learned text and broadcast writing together or in a sequence. However, they overwhelmingly disliked the simultaneous model and preferred the sequential one. This serves as reminder that student opinion shouldn’t be the sole basis for curricular decisions, as students often make mistakes when assessing their own academic progress. However, it does highlight the very real issue of capacity in journalism education courses. After all, it is far less expensive for schools to rely on a sole instructor for each course than to hire two for each course.

The class in this study focused on text and broadcast writing, with a brief discussion of social media. This made sense in the context of a “converged” curriculum when convergence primarily meant training students in web, print and broadcast skills. But in the time since “convergence” became a buzzword in academic journalism circles, the industry changed yet again. Yes, students still need to learn how to report and write, but the platforms the use has expanded, which means the ways that information is presented has also grown. Employers now need newsroom expertise in social media, data and analytics, and employees who can create content for apps, text messages and automated bots. The fields of augmented and virtual reality and artificial intelligence also seem poised to alter the field. The question of how to teach students an ever-expanding skill set, and how to assess their progress toward those goals, will continue to pose challenges to journalism educators. Squeezing more and more competencies into a finite number of core classes is unlikely to prove a viable strategy for journalism education.
Future Research

As journalism schools continue to update their curricula in response to changes in the field, more research is needed on how to best teach various skills, including reporting and writing. This must begin with identifying core competencies that form the heart of traditional journalism — the ability to find, verify and disseminate accurate information -- now that so much of that information is available across a multiplicity of platforms. Are the 5 Ws and H -- who, what, when, where, why and how -- and the inverted pyramid still pertinent? Should mastering J-school staples such as hard news briefs and feature stories still form the core of a journalism education? Should we be teaching all students about writing to video or audio in legacy broadcast formats, or for alternate medium, or both? How should we train journalists to write for Twitter (longer tweets and tweet threads), create videos for social media and online outlets, and produce stories for Snapchat, Instagram and messaging apps? Does the answer lie in teaching core reporting and writing skills that should translate across different media, i.e., platform agnostic, or is it necessary to teach component skills specific to different outlets? Many journalism schools moved toward a model of media convergence that assumed broadcast and print outlets would continue to merge; however this has not proven to be the case. Should schools now reevaluate their efforts and include social media and other digital platforms? And if the latter, which ones? A replication of this particular study, with more sections, instructors, and outside evaluators, could paint a clearer picture if barriers to class scheduling and adjunct time constraints could be resolved. In any skills course, the only way to find what works best is to research various pedagogies and programs, assess what works, and determine best practices.

About the Authors

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Appendix 1

Text Rubric

Deduct 1 - 5 points for errors depending on severity.

Scale of 100 corresponding to the following letter grade:
95-100 = A
90-94 = A-
85-89 = B+
80-84 = B
75-79 = B-
70-74 = C+
65-69 = C
60-64 = C-

Is the story interesting and newsworthy?

Does the story answer all of the 5Ws and 1 H question?

Is it factually correct and fair?

Is the writing active, clear and concise?

Does the lead draw in the reader?

Does the story flow and make sense?

Are good quotes used?

Are the correct sources/attribution sources used?

Is correct AP Style used?

Is correct grammar/punctuation used?

Is the right context/background for the story provided? Is anything missing from the story?
Broadcast Rubric

Deduct 1 - 5 points for errors depending on severity. Scale of 100 corresponding to the following letter grade:

- 95 - 100 = A
- 90 - 94  = A-
- 85 - 89  = B+
- 80 - 84  = B
- 75 - 79  = B-
- 70 - 74  = C+
- 65 - 69  = C
- 60 - 64  = C-

Is the story interesting and newsworthy?

Does the story answer all of the 5ws?

Is it factually correct and fair? (attribution!)

Is the writing active, clear and concise?

Does the lead give the latest info & draw in the viewer?

Do the visuals work with the script?

Do the visuals work with the story?

Are the SOTS interesting and relevant?

Are the SOTS set up by the track?

Does the story flow and make sense?
Appendix 2

“Red” survey for class taught sequentially

What type of news are you most interested in at this point? Please select one:

- Digital
- Broadcast (audio and video)
- Text
- Undecided
- No longer interested in journalism.

Learning about text in the first half of the semester, and then learning about broadcast in the second half of the semester, was an effective way to learn about both subjects.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Focusing on one subject at a time -- text and then broadcast -- was an effective way to learn about both subjects.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Enough time was spent on reporting and writing for text.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
Q24 Enough time was spent on reporting and writing for broadcast.
   o Strongly disagree
   o Disagree
   o Neither agree nor disagree
   o Agree
   o Strongly agree

Are there any topics that you believe should have been covered in J-207 that were not or perhaps covered too briefly?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

What would make J-207 a more effective learning experience for students?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Thank you!
“Blue” survey for class taught concurrently

What type of news are you most interested in at this point? Please select one:
- Digital
- Broadcast (audio and video)
- Text
- Undecided
- No longer interested in journalism.

Learning about text and broadcast at the same time was an effective way to learn.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Focusing on two subjects at a time -- text and broadcast -- was an effective way to learn.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Enough time was spent on text.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
Enough time was spent on broadcast.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Are there any topics that you believe should have been covered in J-207 that were not or perhaps covered too briefly?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
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What would make J-207 a more effective learning experience for students?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Thank you!
Content for VR: Features of Drama

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Abstract

Due to its high universality, the narrative paradigm is the main form of translation of experience, educational technologies and understanding of the world. Thanks to the narrative-the transfer from generation to generation of basic stories of mankind, human remains a human. VR is a new popular technology to provide narratives. Nevertheless, one of the objective problems, hindering the mass usage of VR in the media industry is not only the limited budget of editors, but also the lack of adequate VR-content that requires other models of narrative. Still VR content in journalism can be the answer to the challenge-providing extremely individualized content while maintaining the traditional function of informing. But the other, most important problem, humanity is facing- stories are also used for manipulation and with the expansion of communication capabilities, including virtual reality, we are moving towards creating a global illusion.

Introduction:

In the article, we are mainly raising a range of issues, concerning VR story telling study and teaching, which are necessary for the actualization of educational processes in the field of journalism. We consider this issue to be relevant and of great interest, because we adhered to the key trends in modern media studies in the methodology and comprehension of social reality. We have applied descriptive analysis to explain the practices of forming narratives in VR as well as the method of induction to identify possible ways and trends in its development.

Robert McKee, a Hollywood screenwriting guru, believes that: “…it is much easier to convey your ideas, feelings, and aspirations to other people if you put them into the form of story. The story is much better suited for this than logical reasoning, numbers, and statistics”.

The reason for the effectiveness of stories is rooted in the deep past of mankind: “we built our world through descriptions - narratives, so the most convenient way for us to perceive new information is with the help of stories”. The journalistic narrative broadcasts the correct attitudes from the point of view of the society the person belongs to, because “every nation exists within its own narrative system, which forms stereotypes and a sense of place…”

Today, the problem of interaction between the audience and journalist is more relevant than ever. Interactivity implies communication as a form of the existence of modern journalism: most successful forms are searched to be implemented, one of which is storified communication (according to R. McKee). In our opinion, storytelling is one of the forms of storified communication. “Storytelling is a special general genre or the “writing” style, ...which is necessary for the disclosure of dramatic events of public life, designed as stories”, which is based on narrative. The term “narrative” we understood as a “…historically and culturally reasonable interpretation of some aspect of the world with a certain position”. The idea of subjective implantation of meaning through the predetermined ending is taken as the
fundamental idea of narrativism. The narrative component is present in any kind of texts - from traditional to visual. However, immersive technology doesn’t simply serve as “another platform for visualizing journalistic stories — it stimulates the production of non-linear 3D models of a virtual narrative that has no close classical analogs”.

The problem, concerning the adaptation of VR technologies, according to Robert McKee is rooted in its nature: “virtual reality is arranged on the principle of the game. When the audience gets the opportunity to actively influence the story, story ceases to be an art, it becomes a game”.

Nonny de la Peña, a journalist and pioneer in the field of VR, states, that “thanks to the glasses, viewers can freely move around the plan, choose a viewpoint and the place in which they want to be, but cannot affect the sequence of scenes”, which means that the viewer still remains limited, and we can say, that the requirement of passivity, which is necessary for the art perception, is fulfilled. VR journalism is not an art, but on the other hand, VR journalism wants to remove “barriers of perception” - it wants to influence not less than art. Nonny de La Peña says, that “thanks to glasses, viewers can move freely around the plan, choose the point of view and the place where they want to be, but can’t affect the sequence of scenes”, which means that the viewer remains passive. Nevertheless, we see that journalism (through technology) wants to influence the minds (or hearts) of the audience and adapts the techniques and methods that belong to the art, which raises ethical questions with even greater urgency. But gamification, inherent in VR journalism, taking beyond the scope of art and journalism - a certain balance on the verge of these three phenomena makes it a new creative space.

“We all used to do ten things at the same time, open twenty tabs in the browser, look at the computer, then at the phone. With VR, it is impossible. You have to put on a Google Cardboard, for example, and not be distracted until the film ends”. In fact, with the glasses of virtual reality, the audience is going to have the same experience as with the Edison's kinetoscope: “One person could watch the film through a special eyepiece (ocular) - a personal cinema”. The fact that, historically, “victory” belongs to Lumières brothers and not to Edison, influenced the development of society. It may seem that VR technology is a return to the principle of the invention of the century ago, and this new evolutionary turn demonstrates not only the cyclical nature of the development of technologies, but also the attention to the individual. VR technologies could take us back to the Edison’s kinetoscope. It is important that dialogue with a specific person - its basic principle, occurring with the help of audiovisual facilities.

Storytelling in journalism is also addressed to a specific person, it is based on the dialogical form of communication (one of the most productive and creative forms). This happens because of the journalism paradigm shift from broadcasting to engaging and necessary in order to attract the attention of as large amount of audience as possible to make it active participant of communication. Storytelling, enhanced with VR-technology seeks to maximize the impact on each individual.

Virtual reality, as a technological platform and experimental laboratory for experiments with narrative, can change the cultural paradigm, which is based on the Aristotelian theory of art. Robert Mackey argues that: “Aristotle, placing the six components of the drama in descending order of importance, put spectacularity on the last place ...”. The story is at the first place, according to Aristotle. But today's journalism deals with generations raised on video games. The
entertainment, that VR brings to first place, however, does not deny the story, the narrative. A fundamental change, in our opinion, will lie in another area, - in reformatting the theoretical and philosophical approach, which will bring to the forefront Plato's theory of ideas. VR will become the very space in which ideas can live, separated from objects.

Thus, to study the laws of storytelling, which works with narratives and underlies the construction of media texts, designed to capture the imagination of the audience and free up emotions, is the current trend of modern journalism, along with the dominance of the visual perception channel.

Strengthening of aesthetic and emotional message is also becoming a trend in journalism, working for the media primary mission — social impact, making immersive journalism, using virtual reality technologies, an advanced area of searching for new forms of creativity, that lie in the field of storytelling and VR. But it is always should be remembered about the negative aspects of empathy, that is not supported by the rational side of our consciousness.

Journalism builds an integral picture of the world for an individual person and for society, because “experience — enshrined in the description — is a peculiar formula for the development of mankind”. Re-evaluated by VR using human experience, broadcasted by journalists can make adjustments or even change the formula for the development of all humanity, and it is journalism, that turns out to be at the forefront of transformation processes.

“VR may allow to more fully expressing and begin to explore the complexity of human experience. It can transfer us from the information age to the experimental, catalyzing a new renaissance that unlocks the latent potentials of our creativity and imagination” - says Kent Bye, the owner of Voices of VR. In 2015, at the TED conference, Chris Milk, the pioneer of virtual reality, defined VR as “the most powerful machine of empathy”, and VR journalism with inept use may be a harmless tool, because the narrative enhanced by VR “can turn the truth into a lie, and a lie into a truth. If one will change a key narrative or a number of narratives within a system, a group of people will change their views on events and their place in history”. This happens, when history textbooks are rewritten or films with an alternative point of view on the past events are made”. Therefore, one must not to forget about the risks that are invariably presented during implementation and mastering any technological and technical innovations.

The convenience of stories perception is based on the fact that “person perceives his life as a plot, and a person’s memory can correct this plot”, but any narrative connections can be questioned and new ones created instead.

**The Essence of the Empathic Effect**

Nonny de La Peña postulates the need for a new approach to storytelling in VR in view of the fact that viewers have become less sensitive to content, even to the most shocking. The essence of the empathic effect, placed in any fairy tale, lies in complicity - the effect sought by dramaturgy and any art, which also underlies immersive journalism. Moreover, empathy is associated with the effect of “knowledge” - without taking part in something in reality, we, nevertheless, know what it means, for example, to defeat a dragon. “If this is a fairy tale about how a sacred pearl was extracted from the mouth of that dragon, we feel very distinct exhaustion
and satisfaction. Listening to a fairy tale, one can capture knowledge in himself. Carl Gustav Jung followers called that mystical complicity - the term was borrowed from anthropologist Levi-Brule and is used to denote relationships in which “a person cannot separate himself from a perceived object,” – pointed out Clarissa Pinkola Estes in her book “Woman who run with the wolves”, studying the female archetype in myths and legends, the study of which, despite its gender orientation, is universal. It is well known that fairy tales contain terrible and cruel details and were not created for children. As we can see, the “cruel” element or “cruel motive” is not only a tale belonging. This element is used independently in art and serves for very specific purposes - to “… force the emotional “I” (personality) to pay attention to very serious news”.

“Brutal motifs” can be used quite practically: “in the modern world of technology, images of television advertising have replaced cruel episodes of fairy tales: for example, to show how dangerous it is to drive while drunk, we are shown a blood-blurred family photo where one of the family members is crossed out with bold cross ...

The criticism of this effect is aimed more at its thoughtless use: “cruelty for the sake of cruelty” or even “cruelty” for the sake of entertainment.

Thus, it is possible to reveal the universality of key tools for creating empathy, as well as the continuity in their use by various social institutions for the transfer of important social and psychological experience. The commitment of mankind in the desire to apply them for the regulation of social processes is obvious.

Journalism seeks to maintain its connection with the audience and makes unprecedented transformational efforts (convergence) in this regard. Losing immediacy (compared with User Generated Content), it seeks to save its social position, using the effect of empathy.

The effect of empathy pulls behind it a chain of related methods - such as, for example, the “cruel motive” or “tremblon” — stories that make you tremble. These stories are “externally entertaining, ... make listeners experience the thrill of awareness, and this generates thoughtfulness, reflection and action”. And it is an action that is the ultimate goal of immersive journalism. News organization RYOT uses a positive VR resource. The point of RYOT’s work lays in the idea, that every story they launch should inspire action: money donation or a petition signing.

Robert McKee consider, that today “one can interact with the audience and influence its behavior only through communication, based on story (storified communication)”. It is important to take into account the fact, that new generations - millennials and generation “Z” are deeply involved in digital technologies and vaguely represent or don’t present their life at all without the gadgets, that become habitual and irreplaceable for them. For these generations, the priority of the visual perception channel over others has long-been known and “… the transition of communicative processes into a virtual environment, where simulation is an integral feature of the point of view on the world”, VR technologies are something natural. But, nevertheless, no one has “immunity” against narrative, against history (in contrast with political propaganda or advertising), so, story is so far - the only tool, with the help of which you can “interact with any audience and influence its behavior”.

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The antidote against the story can be only the other story. The fears are understandable: thus, one of the comments on the VR article expresses extreme concern about the opportunities that journalism will gain through VR: “another way to intimidate people is to make them think that they are threatened by every disaster happening in every corner of the Earth, so they will be more amenable to giving up their freedoms for the safety of people, which is the biggest real threat to their freedom and security...”.

Researchers are repeating one after another thesis about the new creative environment, arising due to virtual reality; nevertheless, VR is still not fully adapted to the needs of journalism and one of the objective problems hindering the mass usage of VR in the media industry is not only the limited budget of editorials, but also the lack of adequate VR-content that requires other models of narrative. “VR is a new environment, that can provide an exciting user experience, but we still don’t have the equivalent of the Gutenberg’s Bible, which has become the starting point for typography in Europe. We are still waiting for an application that will become an inflection point for VR ...”.

On the other hand, within the framework of the journalistic education system, it is important to understand what the study of “storified communication” (including the study the structure of the myth) can give journalists and adherents of immersion. There is an opinion, that immersion changes the logic of the story, the logic of construction, changes the plot, the culmination, the outcome, and radically changes the script of the story. The user is completely immersed into the story and the “storytelling” format naturally replaces the concept of “storyliving”.

In any case, eliminating more than two thousand years of drama experience does not seem appropriate, not only in terms of a deeper understanding of the effect of empathy, but also in terms of the tools, which helps to achieve this effect.

In addition, immersive journalism actualizes the very notion of “living,” which again brings us back to art of drama as living the lives of heroes by the recipient and the reception itself. Within the framework of the foregoing, not only scriptwriters and writers should study storytelling, but also journalists. Today, journalists are almost the only making experiments “e...with VR systems in order to understand its requirements for the narrative, as well as to assess the technological possibilities and limitations of virtual communication”.

The first stage of development of any technology is the experimental period - the period of discoveries and experiments - at this stage the main figures of the process are scientists and inventors. The second stage of development includes the period of mass distribution of technology, as well as the search for organizational forms of content delivery. Usually at the second stage, being a “deliver” of content, turns into an independent social phenomenon, and acquires its own expressive means and develops its own specific language.

As for VR technology, in our opinion, technology is now at the second stage of its development, while retaining some signs of the first stage. At the moment, VR is more of a technical gimmick, trying its best to attract the attention of the audience. Meanwhile, the VR language has not yet been formed, the functions of VR are not fully defined, the technology doesn’t have a mass character.
The third stage of technology development – becoming an effective media, - is still the future plans. So far, VR is more of an experimental journalism format.

Analyzing VR Content

After analyzing the first VR materials of such leading editions as Guardian (VR app), NYT (VR app) and RT 360 app, we can conclude, how journalists work with this format today and what content they choose to present, using VR.

Guardian journalists primarily offer a unique experience: to become a newcomer police officer, who will investigate the murder, to stay at the place of a prisoner and to experience the feelings of a person, locked in the "four walls". Secondly, draw attention to unique phenomena: frogs behavior in the mating season, movement of celestial bodies, the polar lights in the Arctic. Thirdly, offer to see the world through the eyes of another (child, refugee, prisoner) and experience extreme situations (London subway). Guardian journalists based on the curiosity (positive interest) of the audience to the environment (space, nature), appeal to a sense of fear - physical (crime investigation) and social (the problem of refugees).

It is interesting to note that the Guardian VR app define the genre of its materials as «daydream» and provides VR-stories with additional materials (podcasts, articles, photo galleries) on similar topics.

As for NYT VR application, VR materials, which they offer, were shot on a 360-degree camera and can be watched both on YouTube and with the help of the NYT VR application.

The topics of NYT VR app journalistic materials are broader, than those, proposed by the Guardian, but less justified in terms of the choice of format. There are lot of materials about fashion, culture and social phenomena may exist outside the VR format. For their perception, no additional impact on the audience is required. Just like the Guardian VR journalists, NYT VR journalists turn to visually spectacular natural phenomena and offer to test a unique experience (to stay in the underwater world, in the Arctic ice, to explore the eclipse, to see the awesome effects of natural disasters, to enjoy the unique landscapes, to visit Pluto etc.). They suggest to see the world through the eyes of another (pilgrim, refugee) or to feel the world as a blind man feels.

Reconstructions of historical events are being created at the NYT (one day from the life of president Lincoln, the bombing of Hiroshima, offering virtual trips through history).

We can conclude, that the presented by Guardian VR journalistic materials are more matured in the spirit of social journalism, diluted with educational materials, than the materials of the NYT. NYT VR app more attention is paid to entertainment content: materials are created with the participation of Hollywood stars, exotic travel materials, as well as materials that tell about culture and art phenomena. There are practically no political topics: only one material is devoted to the US presidential race.
Thus, we can conclude that the NYT VR app has deliberately withdrawn from purely political topics in VR materials. We assume that this is due to the immersion effect of VR and the ethical component, the reluctance to influence with the help of VR on electorate.

RT 360 app offers materials, shot on a 360-degree camera - they can be viewed also at YouTube and RT website. It is told, that journalistic materials are taken by a panoramic camera, the concept of “virtual reality” does not appear - thus, the availability of materials for broader audience is demonstrated, because no additional equipment is required for viewing.

Only a small icon of virtual reality glasses in the corner of the phone screen reminds that the material can be viewed with the help of glasses. The application is made in the form of a circle (panorama principle), which one can scroll and search for interesting content.

All materials are structured by three topics: Discover, Engage and Feel. The structure emphasizes, how the materials should influence the audience and what effect they need to achieve. The subject of journalistic materials, however, is not diverse.

Basically, it is dedicated to very spectacular events: space exploration, all sorts of sport events (races, competitions, and extreme sports), demonstrations of peaceful force (military exercises, parades, church services)/ Political materials are also presented (about the ruins of Aleppo, Palmyra, the construction of the Crimean Bridge). While to science materials - Stephen Hawking's tribute, and culture materials - about the Bolshoi Theater minimum attention is paid. Materials, affecting social topics are also a minimum. To this category we can relate a material, that commemorates the victims of the terrorist attack in St. Petersburg.

We can conclude that each edition follows its own path in mastering VR, but created materials reflect the priorities of their editions, as well as of the journalism of their country (UK, USA, Russia). Nevertheless, all Guardian, NYT and RT materials created for viewing with the help of VR technology are created in the spirit of modern trends of world journalism. They are visual, use narrative, build communication with the user. Through the creation of a unique experience or impression, they try to provoke user’s reaction. VR technology also brings a game element.

Having studied the journalistic materials, we have identified some features of the perception of VR. There is an opinion, that VR breaks the usual structure of the story (which is nevertheless present in VR materials) due to technological features and format limitations, the most significant of which, in our opinion, are several points of view (unlike cinema).

Starting to view the VR-material, we unwittingly rely on the tradition of perception of cinematic works. This can explain the discomfort that arises, when it is not clear what to follow. There is a concern appears that you can miss something interesting and important. In our opinion, it is precisely this fact that explains the presence of a “guide” in the material - explicit or off screen (voiceover), which orients in the material and focuses attention on the main idea.

A voice or a “guide” also serves as a camera angle. The guide functions in the different productions are performed also by the focus (defocus), the sound, the arrows, the color highlighting, and the text. Thus, it can be concluded that the viewer is not ready to be alone with the material and information in general.
Another characteristic feature of VR productions: as soon as a person appears in the frame, he automatically switches audience attention for himself; the viewer begins to follow a person, which is a legacy of classical dramaturgy. The presence in the frame of the hero tells about his function of a conductor in the proposed narrative, intuitively following him, the audience selects the information.

As another feature, associated with the traditions of perception of visual works, we highlight the peculiarity of plan perception. Again, intuitively, there may be a desire to make the overall plan closer, and if an ordinary camera would solve this issue with the help of a zoom, in the case of a panoramic camera, you need to change the plan with the help of cutting (blackout and splice).

The drama itself seems too simple, devoid of conflict, contradiction. This aspect, of course, also follows from the cinema and television viewing experience, accumulated by mankind.

Attempts to implement “cinema” content in VR productions are failed, in our opinion. For example, NYT VR made VR materials with Hollywood stars. In the VR short film, featuring Natalie Portman, the viewer is offered the role of the heroine's fiancé (and his point of view). But again, the law of classical drama, which says that the viewer should become emotionally attached to the hero, does not work here.

Emotional connection is not established (because of the fact that the camera is installed too far from the heroine and the viewer cannot closely see her face, and consequently her emotions), joining the hero does not happen. The monologue of the heroine is the only possible speech format in this case (due to the fact that the second character is the spectator himself and the dialogue cannot occur). Even the element of unexpectedness (the heroine is pregnant) - a mandatory element of drama does not work.

Thus, VR is trying to use and work with almost all the elements of drama, but exists at the very initial stages of mastering and adapting these elements.

**Conclusion**

It becomes obvious the impossibility of the mechanical application of the laws of classical drama to VR-content. VR is needed to find its own language. Authentic VR language search and experiments can be carried out as part of the educational process at the faculties of Journalism. VR uses the concepts of screenwriting while creating its narrative, although it is closer to theater, not to cinema. This suggests the need for journalism students to have an idea of the theater theory and history basis as well as storytelling, and, consequently the need to include relevant courses in the curriculum.

For virtual reality productions, it is important not only to influence the audience, but also to interact with it: to receive a feedback, to engage in a dialogue with the audience, the effect of which can be expressed in a specific social reaction. Thus, with the help of journalism occurs approbation and refinement of new suggestive practices.
As a summary, we can note, that virtual reality in journalism exists today as a technological platform and experimental laboratory for experiments with narrative and the faculties of Journalism should become experimental platforms for carrying out these experiments.

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Bridging the Skills Gap: Innovation in Journalism Education

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Abstract

In this disrupted media landscape as publishers look to increase their online output and deliver news in more innovative and engaging ways, a clear skills gap has become evident between traditional journalism education and training and the emerging requirements of the news industry. The move beyond big data, massive data leaks, and towards the future of large scale societal algorithmic influence has led to the need to develop specialist skills to allow journalism to work with this information deluge. The MSc Computational and Data Journalism at Cardiff University is a one-year postgraduate course which was designed to meet some of those needs. The joint-honours programme, now in its fifth year, takes students with a wide range of backgrounds: working journalists looking to re-train, journalism graduates wanting to specialise, software engineers or computer scientists looking to broaden their skill set, or graduates with no background in either journalism or computer science looking for a change in direction. This paper presents details of the course ethos and structure, including the teaching methods used, and personal reflections and learnings from the first five years of the programme.

What Do We Mean by Computational Journalism?

Given that the work of the newsroom is an ever-evolving process, it is not accurate to say that working with data within news is a new thing – in fact many working in the field in the UK will reference the (then) Manchester Guardian as a forerunner in the field back in 1821 (‘The first Guardian data journalism: May 5, 1821’, 2011).

The development of this work into what would later become known as data journalism and its sibling discipline computational journalism has a wide range of definitions. Some see computational journalism as “the combination of algorithms, data, and knowledge from the social sciences to supplement the accountability function of journalism. In some ways computational journalism builds on two familiar approaches, computer-assisted reporting (CAR) and the use of social science tools in journalism championed by Phil Meyer…. Like these models, computational journalism aims to enable reporters to explore increasingly large amounts of structured and unstructured information as they search for stories.” (Turner & Hamilton, 2009). Others focus on the discipline as “the application of computing and computational thinking to the activities of journalism including information gathering, organization and sensemaking, communication and presentation, and dissemination and public response to news information.” (Diakopoulos, 2011). Flew and colleagues offer one of the simpler definitions: “At its simplest, computational
journalism involves the application of computing to journalism. This means not simply the application of computing technologies to journalism, journalism has of course long been engaged with information and communication technologies (ICTs) throughout the modern era but active engagement with techniques for the large-scale manipulation of data using computing software to enable new ways to access, organise and present information. “(Flew, Spurgeon, Daniel, & Swift, 2012)

To us as we consider the training and educational needs of postgraduate journalism students entering the newsroom, it is the application of problem-solving skills and understanding of data drawn from computer science as applied to the journalistic traditions of sense making, storytelling, computer assisted reporting and dissemination, combined with the ability to communicate clearly with a community. However, rather than arguing about how the field is defined the focus of this paper is to look at how a university team has successfully introduced a programme that allows students to develop a cutting-edge skillset within this field that has allowed them to work within data and special project teams within major news rooms.

Introduction

The School of Journalism, Media and Culture at Cardiff University has an almost half-century long tradition of postgraduate education aimed at delivering work-ready journalists into newsrooms, with programmes focused on (written) news, broadcast, magazine and international journalism. These programmes have long embraced the ‘new’, bringing in digital and social-media skills at a point at which these skills were only beginning to be embraced by newsrooms. Meanwhile, the School of Computer Science and Informatics at Cardiff University also has a long tradition of post-graduate education in which graduates with little or no technical background are upskilled in the coding, software development and general computational skills required by the IT industry.

An educational establishment has many forces acting upon its curriculum: In a ‘research-led’ institution there is a desire that academic research pushing at the boundaries of the field should make its way into the classroom. Many subject areas have professional accrediting bodies who require coverage of certain topics to certain depths. Finally, of course, the needs of employers must be taken into account, as students exiting programmes expect to be able to find employment in their chosen field and expect that their University education will provide them with the necessary skills for this.

Discussions with employers in the news industry over many years have presented a compelling case for a new skills-gap in the newsroom. Some of these conversations became the backbone of chapters in the 21st Century Journalism Handbook (Holmes, Hadwin, & Mottershead, 2012). This research, and subsequent discussions highlighted the increasing complexity of large-scale data-driven investigations, the desire to innovate to develop products utilising new technologies, and the need to deliver the news in more dynamic and flexible ways which has led to a need for individuals that sit somewhere on the wide spectrum between computationally savvy journalists and software developers with an understanding of and appreciation for writing stories.
But it isn’t just in industry that this skills gap had been identified. In the US there has long been a tradition of technologically-augmented journalism, which means that some J-schools have been teaching data journalism for some time. However, this was not the case in Europe at the time of programme development. This skills gap within the academy, as Mensing says, was an issue that needed to be challenged as the “continuation of the status quo within journalism schools is increasingly untenable. Developing new models more appropriate to the needs of this age, as opposed to that of the media industries of the past, is a compelling obligation for journalism educators and scholars.” (2010). It is into this gap that the MSc in Computational Journalism (as it was then titled) was launched in 2014.

Designed in consultation with figures from industry and academia, the programme retains a practical focus and aims to fill the skills gap identified by many employers and deliver technically-capable graduates able to work across a wide spectrum of roles. These graduates will self-identify along a newsroom skills spectrum with some clearly aligning themselves with the more story-based aspects of the role and going on to work as a ‘data journalist’, others will follow a more technical route and go on to work as a ‘newsroom developer’ or in other related roles.

**Designing the Course**

No QAA subject benchmark exists for Journalism at the postgraduate level1. Meanwhile, the QAA subject benchmark for Computing (QAA, 2011), while a useful guide, is not entirely relevant. There are aspects of being a computer scientist or qualities of a computer science course that are not relevant to a being Computational and Data Journalist. There are some previous areas we were able to look at for guidance, (for instance (Yarnall, Johnson, Rinne, & Ranney, 2008) examines how journalism students are taught CAR2 data analysis skills), but these were again limited in relevance, being prior versions of what is actually being used in the news industry.

In order to ensure academic rigour and standards, we had only the general level 7 Masters descriptors from the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QAA, 2008), and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (Higher Education Funding Council For Wales, 2015) to use as a guideline, and it was these that were leaned on heavily in the validation documents for the Programme Approval.

Given the practice focused nature of the course, it was deemed more relevant and natural to consult practitioners on the required skills, knowledge and qualities of potential graduates, rather than relying upon what could be perhaps a more academic assessment of the discipline. This external industry input helped guide our thinking about how an ‘educated person’ (Boyer, 1995) from this course should look, and helped us devise the overall learning outcomes for the course. It also allowed the course team to develop a network of peers that could not only offer ongoing

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1. Other postgraduate courses rely on benchmarks from professional organisations such as the NCTJ, however, these bodies are not relevant for a course in Computational Journalism.

2. Computer Assisted Reporting, the forerunner of today’s Data Journalism.
guidance to the support team, but become part of the network of the students themselves (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in order to bring in the wider knowledge of those in currently working in the industry or in hiring positions.

The core foundational data journalism and coding knowledge taught in the first semester is absolutely critical, a view held by Berret & Phillips (2016) in their recent report on teaching Computational & Data Journalism in the US. As they say: “The bottom line is that to do more advanced data journalism, its practitioners need, at a minimum, to understand how programming works” and “Above all, we recommend that all programs have a required foundational course in data journalism, teaching basic principles of data analysis…” (Berret & Phillips, 2016). This is most interesting, as the report highlights the same key skills and knowledge requirements that we identified in creating our course 5 years ago. Comparing the structure of our MSc to their suggested programme structures shows a commonality of modules and topics which validates our approach further. The coding aspect of the course is a particular concern for those students entering the course from a non-technical background, as ‘programming’ itself can be considered a threshold concept (Meyer & Land, 2003) that can be difficult for students to grasp, although in our experience so far this has not proven to be an insurmountable barrier to most of the students on our course.

Course Ethos

There has been a lot of discussion of the differing ethos around the training and education of journalists (Cutter & Marken, 2005; De Burgh, 2005; Reese, 1999) – on one level we require the classic ideas of public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics as the core of journalism “pragmatically speaking, journalism within the context of professional education and industry training means the preparation of students for a career working in news media organizations and studying the work of those people editorially responsible for different types of storytelling in a wide range of news media.” (Deuze, 2005), but this must be in a way that recognises the changing nature of the industry (Lewis, 2015) and helps drive technological development in the newsroom (Pavlik, 2013) and allows a continuous interrogation of emerging technologies (Berret & Phillips, 2016)

The course design aimed not only to leverage modern journalistic techniques and interdisciplinarity but to look towards more innovative teaching methods and philosophies. The core thinking of the development team focussed around ideas such as constructive alignment, connectivism (Boers, Ercan, Rinsdorf, & Vaagan, 2012; Siemens, 2005) and computational thinking (Wing, 2006). There is also a strong focus around problem-based teaching, and self-directed learning which is facilitated via the programme leaders. A number of classes are also flipped (Bergmann & Sams, 2014; McGregor, 2015; Talbert, 2017)and there is a heavy reliance on practical activities following outside contact theory delivery.

3. The initial 2 years of our course included the module ‘Digital Journalism’ in the first semester, this has now been replaced with ‘Data Journalism’.
As outlined previously the diverse nature of the group of students accepted on to the programme means they have to engage with a varied syllabus designed to impart the skills, knowledge and professional reflective capability required to take up jobs across a wide range of areas in Computational and Data Journalism.

Introductory courses in programming, web development, data analysis, data journalism and reporting issues are combined with elective modules in data visualisation, human computer interaction, and various academic and practice focused studies in areas of journalism which are taught between the School of Journalism, Media and Culture and the School of Computer Science and Informatics. The taught part of the course is finished with a team-based investigative project delivered between both schools, before the whole course is capped with the student’s individual masters project where students are mentored by colleagues from the partner schools as issues arise in the workflow.

Another key element, although not credit-bearing, was the creation of a group tutorial space known as “The Lab”. This is something recommended during the programme approval process; the approval panel were concerned that the course would feel very split as the respective classes were taught at the different schools. To get around this idea that they do journalism and computer science, this weekly tutorial slot allows students to work with the course leaders to harmonise the skills learned each week to ensure students see themselves as computational journalists. In the early part of each semester this is initially a problem-solving space around technical elements or news writing but over time develops into an informal project space where students and staff work together to look at issues and develop their skills in research, Freedom of Information Applications and coding – as well as team work and project management.

The formal aspects of the course are supplemented with additional activities outside of the classroom, ranging from visits to academic/practice conferences, to hackdays and innovation workshops involving organisations such as the BBC, Dow Jones, and the NHS. Students are also encouraged to work on side projects, pieces of work outside of the syllabus that can be used as part of their developing professional portfolio.

Reflections

A particular challenge has been delivering a disruptive framework for this innovative educational offer within the traditional University milieu, across two academic schools with differing aims, expectations and constraints.

A unique feature of this course is that despite these operational issues, it is a truly joint-honours programme, with significant commitment and contribution from both the journalistic and computer science teams which focusses on real-world issues and employability. This process has required the course leaders to engage with networks and keep abreast of new skills as they emerge in order to keep the syllabus up-to-date. This can be quite challenging, but real-world examples of data stories or news applications are outlined each week. The use of tools such as Slack and Github also allow easy sharing and conversations among staff and students – allowing them to
become part of a networked learning community. The team has also been scraping journalism job adverts as part of a longitudinal study of role development, which feeds back into curriculum development (Mottershead & Chorley, 2017)

Another major issue is the perception of students themselves, particularly from those coming from an Arts and Humanities backgrounds – they perceive themselves to be creative rather than technical - something not uncommon among journalists and journalism students (Jackson, Thorsen, & Reardon, 2019). One of the key educational methodologies implemented to support the transition of students away from this perception is the idea of applied learning – not focussing on theory for the sake of theory, but to show students what could be achieved and how the underlying theory supports the skills they were developing. For instance, when introducing R programming in the Data Journalism class it was decided not to approach computer science theory and programming logic but instead to show how journalists who can code could solve a wide range of problems around data acquisition and simple visualisation. The reasons for this were straightforward: the students were already learning more theory and programming skills in their Python and Web Applications classes, the applied learning in journalism classes could then be used to draw together the elements across the schools and a discussion of how the Python skills they were learning clearly aligned with the much more applied R coding they were testing in journalism classes.

The Lab was also used in a similar way, to shows the similarities between the schools and the way the module elements were designed to reinforce the idea that computational thinking (Wing, 2006) - a field of problem-solving within computer science – is actually closely aligned with journalistic investigative thinking (De Burgh, 2008; Hunter, 2011; Spark, 1999) and works well within a news room workflow.

Being a new course, potentially of niche (or at least moderately limited) appeal, resource pressures meant that we had to fit as much as possible within existing courses and modules during the programme design phase. We did not have a blank slate upon which we could design a course that was tightly integrated, pedagogically focused, or rigorously slavish to any particular model of learning or curriculum design. Instead we needed to select modules from the existing portfolio of courses offered by both schools, proposing new modules only where there was no alternative. This reduced the risk of the new course, primarily by reducing the cost required to be invested. However, it also meant that we were forced to use existing modules from other courses over which we had limited control.

Following the assessment of the existing modules available, gaps were revealed that could only be filled by new modules. Reflection on the Intended Learning Outcomes for the modules during the first year (particularly when attempting to create assessments for the first time to evaluate students’ abilities to meet these learning outcomes) revealed that initially some of the ILOs were actually difficult to assess. They had been written during the early stages of design for the MSc CompJ, and had not been adjusted since. These ILOs were therefore re-written and made more directly assessable (while not specifying the nature or details of assessments), a clear use of the Constructive Alignment model (Biggs, 1996) in order to reflect upon module outcomes and assessment strategies and adjust accordingly to ensure they are both in line. The nature of the
practical coursework in these modules have also been shown in our group project to be preferred by the students themselves.

The most significant addition of a new module as part of the programme is the module focused on ‘Digital Investigation’. In this module, students work in self-directed teams (as close to a real-world ‘investigation’ team as possible). They are responsible for managing their own projects using an Agile methodology (Fowler & Highsmith, 2001; Maher, 2009), thus giving them exposure to how real news teams operate. They are also responsible for self-managing the learning and skills acquisition required in order to successfully complete their project. Teaching staff are on hand throughout the module to deliver support and learning where required, and to help ensure projects maintain some direction, but otherwise the students are very much on their own. Using a Connectivist learning model (Siemens, 2005), it is assumed that the student teams will work as networks, sharing and gaining knowledge together from a diverse set of sources in a form of peer learning (Havnes, 2008). This model has a particular focus on the use of technology, and the temporary nature of 'knowledge' and the need for continual learning. In this module learning and social aspects of the projects are managed through a set of technological tools such as Slack\(^4\) for communication, Trello\(^5\) for project management, and Github\(^6\) for code and resource sharing.

Obviously, the course was designed with a particular set of assumptions. One of these was around the makeup of the student intake. An initial assumption held that the course would skew mostly towards home students, with international students as a minority. In actuality, the situation has been reversed across the five years of the programme. This has led us to make changes to the course. The harmonisation seminars have been skewed more towards learning about local knowledge, and English language requirements. Language has also become more of an issue during assessments, which have had their assessment criteria adjusted to take into account the fact that one of the learning activities included within assessments might be a drive to improve English language skills. The fact that there are more international students than expected is particularly something to be aware of with regard to the group investigative project. As a group based project, teams are necessarily formed from students of different cultural backgrounds and competencies (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen, 2010). This can lead to concern among students that working in multi-cultural groups can have a negative effect on marks, although this is not actually the case (De Vita, 2002), something we have seen clearly in assessments so far. A further assumption was that as a technical course intake would be skewed towards male students. In actuality, the first year was 75% female, and the second year was an equal split male/female. Every year since has been skewed slightly female. The issue of gender equality in STEM subjects is well considered (Baker, 2013; Cheryan, Plaut, Davies, & Steele, 2009), but so far we have found no issues with gender participation in the new course, in fact quite the contrary.

\(^4\) http://www.slack.com
\(^5\) http://www.trello.com
\(^6\) http://www.github.com
Outcomes

The course has seen a growth in the number of students applying to study on the programme over the last five years as it has become easier for people to understand the field due to the major news stories that have broken and an increasing interest in areas such as algorithmic accountability.

As far as the course team is concerned, the major success has been how the programme’s graduates have fared. Students on the programme have taken up paid internships either as part of their dissertation project or before, with employers such as The Financial Times, The Guardian, Full Fact, BBC News Labs, Reach (Trinity Mirror), Dow Jones and CNN.

Graduates have gone on to work for organisations including the UK’s Office of National Statistics (ONS), The Guardian, The Times (of London), India Spend, Switzerland’s NZZ (Neue Zürcher Zeitung), and The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. Others take up positions outside media, working as code-literate graduates in other fields.

Recommendations

From the experience of the programme leaders over the first 5 years of teaching this programme, there are a number of key recommendations:

1. Ensure strong participation, delivery and contact with students from both the Journalistic and Computer Science sides of the programme. This has many benefits. Firstly, for those students going on to work on the more technical or development sides of the newsroom, the stronger formal training in Computer Science competencies provides them with a solid foundation which may not be gained purely from a Journalistic practitioner training in computational methods. Secondly, the exposure to other (non-journalist) students at the same stage in their careers, who are also facing similar challenges and experiences as they begin to take on coding and Computer Science, allows students to see that their experience with taking on a threshold concept such as computer programming is not unique, and there is not something particular about journalists learning to code that somehow makes their situation harder than for others.

2. Ensure the gap is closed between the two disciplines. While fully immersing students in both the computational and journalism has benefits as described above, it can lead to an inability to see how the two relate and work together, particularly in early stages of the course. It is therefore essential either through the data journalism instruction or some form of combined seminars to provide space for students to explore both sides of their education within the context of the other.
3. Provide ‘as close to real-world experience’ as possible. The simulation of a real team-working environments through group assessment and large-scale projects provides essential experience for students preparing to enter the workplace.

There is little doubt that there is a need for further technical and computational training of journalists as the newsroom diversifies to cope with the informational, algorithmic and data deluge which must be presented to the public in ever-adapting forms. It is hoped that the lessons learnt from the first five years of providing this training will be of use to others looking to do the same.

About the Authors

Martin Chorley is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Computer Science and Informatics, Cardiff University. He is the co-director of the MSc Computational and Data Journalism, and is also Director of Learning and Teaching for the School. He is co-founder of the European Data and Computational Journalism Conference. His research interests cover aspects of Computer Science education, particularly cross-disciplinary education, as well as the areas of Computer Science where people and computers meet.

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Media Development, Gender Sensitivity and Sustainability in Egypt: Analyzing the Case of Women’s Voices Project

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Abstract

This research examines the concept and theory of “media development” and “development journalism” in the professional development of women journalists in Egypt. This is studied in the light of “Women’s Voices” project undertaken by Deutsche Welle Akademie in Egypt since 2014-2018. Women’s Voices seeks to develop the professional and gender sensitive skills of young female journalists from all around Egypt. This project has taken place through a set of intensive professional trainings which led to the establishment of Masr el Nas website, created to ascertain the sustainability and “media viability” of the project. Masr El Nas, translates “the people of Egypt,” is a website founded by the young women journalists where stories about significant people, places and traditions/events from all around Egypt are reported and published. This research focus on this case study to test the role of this media development project in promoting journalism development in Egypt. The methodology of this research, includes conducting in-depth interviews with the project managers, trainers and selected trainees. It also examines the quality of “development journalism” through a thematic content analysis of Masr El Nas website to identify how the themes covered addressed the developmental aspects stated in its editorial policy, and served the goals of “media development” at large.

Keywords: Digital Media, Media Development, Journalism Development, Gender Sensitivity, Gender Sensitive Reporting, Sustainability, Media Viability

Introduction:

Theorizing media and journalism development and gender sensitivity

The term “Media Development” refers to the overall “development” of the media in a given country, which reflects the status of free media expression, pluralism, democracy and gender equality. In developing or democratizing countries, media development is fostered through projects usually conducted by international governmental organizations of well-established democracies for the purpose of fostering development and democratization in developing nations. Whereas, “Development Journalism” is one of the goals or byproducts of media development, whereby the target trainees apply in their journalistic work the ideals they learned in media development training workshops in a way that would be more inclusive to the society’s grassroots.

Sustainability or “Media Viability,” today is a major goal for “Media Development” projects. According to Schneider et al (2016), Media Viability not only include financial sustainability, but also the media outlets’ ability of to produce high quality journalism content in the long term. In particular, “the economic, social, and political conditions in a country must provide a supportive environment for the emergence, development, and continuance of media companies providing
relevant content that informs the public, holds power to account and enables participation and dialogue. Moreover, the enterprises themselves must act in ways that promote their sustainability.” The goal of media development is to create and sustain what Susman-Peña (2012) describes as a “healthy media sector.” In any country, a healthy media sector means that the media, must be “free, independent, produces high quality information, reaches all or most of the population, offers diverse perspectives, and provides the information people need to be able to make decisions and to be able to hold their government to account.” Increasingly, it also means that people can freely create, distribute, and exchange content. As media cut across all sectors in society, their potential for impact would be enormous.

Development journalism denotes that the media have the responsibility “to contribute to overall socioeconomic development by assuming an active participatory role. The media thus collaborate with the larger development team as one of many agents,” say Skjerdal (2009) (in Lencho, 2013). To realize the goals of development journalism, Banda (2006) notes that a development journalist has to (1) motivate the audience to actively cooperate in development; and (2) defend the interests of those concerned. This includes, “the reporting of ideas, programmes, activities and events, which are related to an improvement of the living standard,” implying that the essence of development journalism rests in journalistic principle with emphasis on promoting holistic development that equally benefits the people (Wimmer and Wolf, 2005).

This research examines the concept and theory of media development and journalism development in the professional development of women journalists in Egypt. This is studied in the light of Women’s Voices project undertaken by Deutsche Welle Akademy in Egypt since 2014 to 2018. Women’s Voices seeks to develop the professional and gender sensitive skills of young female journalists from all around Egypt. This project has taken place through a set of intensive professional trainings which led to the establishment of Masr el Nas website, which was created to ascertain the sustainability and “Media viability” of the project.

Masr El Nas, which translates “the people of Egypt,” is a website founded by the young women journalists where stories about significant people, places and traditions/events from all around Egypt are reported and published. This research focus on this case study to test the role of this media development project in promoting journalism development and gender sensitivity in Egypt through an intensive variety of journalistic, managerial, technical training offered to young women journalists in Egypt through five consecutive years.

Media development, development journalism and gender sensitivity goals were sought in the Women’s Voices project at two levels: (1) personal and professional development of the trainees themselves through various capacity building and journalistic training through the project at large, (2) applied development journalism reflected in their coverage of their local communities and areas in Masr El Nas website throughout two consecutive years. To examine the efficacy of each level, the methodology of this research, includes (1) conducting in-depth interviews with the project managers, trainers and selected trainees about the impact of specific aspects of development and (2) a thematic content analysis of Masr el Nas website to identify how the themes covered addressed the developmental aspects stated in its editorial policy, and served the goals of gender sensitivity and journalism development at large.
Status of gender and media development in Egypt

The currents status of gender and media development in Egypt is inseparable from the political situation. The tight grip on the public sphere, the absence of media freedom, the crackdown on media development effort, especially after issuing the NGOs law and the media laws, legalizing the control on all media including online media and social media are just facets of the current situation. The hindered status of Egyptian women in general and women journalists in particular are just part of a whole gloomy picture.

Women are often under-represented in decision making positions in the media in Egypt, according to a country report by the Institute for Women Studies in the Arab World (2013). Women in the Egyptian print media do not have seniority, nor do they have editorial freedom. Most of the higher-level positions that women occupy are either for women’s or children’s magazines. Statistics from 2010 showed the most proportional representation of men and women in newspapers. Approximately 71% of women were part of radio programs. Gender stereotyping and sexualized representation of women in media is also common in Egypt. Women are often portrayed as passive and powerless in front of men in the media (Institute for Women Studies in the Arab World, 2013).

Gender sensitivity, or gender sensitive reporting, is key to fostering equal gender representation. According to Menegatti and Rubini (2017), language play a significant role in defining gender to the extent that it affects gender roles in society. “Linguistic processes and verbal communication are one of the most powerful means through which sexism and gender discrimination are perpetrated and reproduced. The content of gender stereotypes is not neutral, it reflects the asymmetries of status and power in favor of men, which are attached to the corresponding social roles,” say Menegatti and Rubini (2017).

This denotes that the lack of gender sensitivity in local journalism in Egypt is central to the low status of women. According to Mona Badran, a media professor and gender sensitive reporting trainer with various UN organizations, “I monitor the media representation of women in the most read newspapers in Egypt, TV programs with the highest viewership and trending hashtags on YouTube and social media. First, I check whether they tackle women issues or not, and if yes how they do so, in terms of the language, and the image of women. “I can confirm that always the governmental media tackle women in a negative way, especially the mainstream media,” says Badran. “When there is an attack on women they ask questions that held women responsible rather than support them.” The only positive thing is the Internet, she asserts. “Social Media hashtags are always supportive for women. And there is usually an action happening based on it,” says Badran. “This means that there is more hope for social media in tackling gender based violence issues.”

As for the status of gender sensitive training in Egypt, Badran noticed that “the younger generations are more willing and able to learn and apply the concepts they take in the training. The outcome and follow up reports of the training with younger generations proves more positive representation of women issues.” In contrast, older generations reject and resist gender related instructions, even women who head women departments in mainstream media outlets. Especially in the Egypt’s state television, “women resist the concepts we use to make the reporting more supportive for women. They refuse to use the word ‘survivor’ rather than ‘victim’.”
The status of media development is inseparable from the political and gender status. In an interview with Naila Hamdy (2019) she confirmed that the situation of Media Development in Egypt is worsening since the January 25th revolution. The political upheaval unfortunately led to the current crackdown on the media, she says. “There was a time of extreme freedom, but it was unstructured freedom. We have a crackdown on the media because of political instability and power struggles. The media became a victim of this instability,” says Hamdy. “The launch of the NGOs law has directly affected media development agencies, who chose to pull out of Egypt because they found it is not a good time to work in the country.”

**Case Study: Women’s Voices Project:**

**Phase One: Women’s Voices**

Phase one of Women’s Voices project started in 2014 with the purpose of raising the awareness of experienced mid-career women journalists on gender and sexuality, training them on interpersonal skills and building their capacity to seek higher journalistic positions. According to Osama Asfour, trainer and coordinator, there was a research conducted by Deutsche Wellle Akademie that found that the number of female journalism students in media faculties across Egypt is higher than the number of their male counterparts. Nevertheless, looking at media organizations around the country, it was found that the number of males working in journalism and media in Egypt outnumbers females, especially those holding senior positions.

The project was initially planned to counter the lack of gender balance in journalism positions in Egypt. “The idea of Women’s Voices, to make more Voices for Women in the media in Egypt,” says Asfour, “was based on empowering women and developing their interpersonal skills so that they can improve in their jobs and hold senior positions—that is to make voices for women who have no voice!”

The first phase of Women’s Voices, primarily undertaken by Kerstin Kilanowski, was focused on raising women’s awareness about gender and boosting their interpersonal skills as women. Discussion included what it means “to be a woman” in the Egyptian society compared to “being a man”; the meaning of gender; the representation of women in the international media; and the hidden messages in the media about gender stereotypes. “It was clear by the end of the first day that most women attending the initial workshop had never talked openly about gender barriers – lower wages than their male counterparts, for example, and sexual harassment at the workplace. Participants were also looking for ways to build their self-esteem,” reports Deutsche Welle (Egypt: Networking Women Journalists, 2014).

To ensure sustainability, the best trainees were chosen to take Training of Trainers (TOT) so that they would be ready to pass on their experience in this training to their fellow journalists in their organizations. This was followed by a Coaching Training, were a group of young journalists were chosen to receive a training by selected TOT trainees to apply what they have learned while getting on-spot feedback from DW trainers.
Outcomes of phase one:

The most significant outcomes of the 2014 activities were:

(1) The founding of the Egyptian Women Media Union (EWMU), at the closing conference of 2014. This union was established to empower and support women journalists and provide different journalistic training to all journalists in Egypt since 2015, says Shahira Amin, independent journalist and board member.

(2) One of the participants who were selected to take the TOT at the end of the year, Ms. Soha Tarek, became a trainer with Deutsche Welle in 2015, then DW’s Main Trainer in Egypt, as well as the Supervisor and Chief Editor of the DW sponsored, Masr El Nas website, from 2016 to 2018.

Phase Two: More Women’s Voices

Phase two of the project, “More Women’s Voices”, from 2015 to 2018, aimed to avoid some of the obstacles encountered in phase one. It was noticed that the trainees selected from governorates outside Cairo apologized on a short notice before the start of the training, telling reasons predominantly related to the male boss who discovered she would spend a week away from work. To avoid this obstacle, More Women’s Voices, says Asfour, offered training to women journalists around Egypt in their own locale, in four different governorates: Aswan, Asyut, Alexandria and Port Said.

The trainees were typically selected from each city and the surrounding cities as well, to allow for more opportunities. They were selected to be a mixture between 3rd and 4th year of students of Mass Communication as well as fresh graduates. According to Asfour, the initial purpose of “More Women’s Voices” was to inhibit the gender culture and develop their personal capacity at an early age, so that young female journalists from all around Egypt can easily find jobs, when they graduate. In addition, since we noticed that journalists from the different cities usually seek jobs in Cairo due to the scarcity of local opportunities, the project manager, Christine Mikliss, pushed the trainees to brainstorm for an idea of a digital media project. “The purpose was to create an online platform for them where they can work from their own cities,” say Asfour (2019).

After finishing the basic capacity building training in the four governorates, Christine Mikliss, formed a boot camp for them in Cairo, bringing together the top performing students of each basic workshop, about 25 participants from the four governorates. As they had project ideas about digital media formats, the purpose of the boot-camp was to invalidate those ideas and have a concept and specifications developed. They had intense workshops to provide them with the skills to conduct needs assessment, business modelling, project management and marketing, and how to structure a team, says Asfour.

At the end of the boot-camp, students have developed an idea of a digital platform, “Masr El Nas” website, and designed its specifications under the supervision and guidance of experts in the fields of media, project management, and entrepreneurship. On the final day, they pitched their idea in front of media professionals, representatives of the private sector and non-governmental organizations (Asfour, 2019). According to DW Adakemie, “The long-term project “Women’s
Voices” supports female journalism students and young women entering the profession as they develop their own media projects in preparation for the start of their journalism careers,” (DW Akademie in Egypt, 2016).

**Outcome of Phase Two: Masr El Nas Website**

Launched at the end of 2016, *Masr El Nas* website, the brainchild of young women journalists, reflects the outcome of two consecutive weeks of stress, effort and unending discussions among 25 women journalists from all around Egypt, during an extensive boot camp of training, says Asfour. “Taking ownership of the website is the main reason why journalists reported stories in a volunteer basis during three years,” says Soha Tarek, the main trainer with DW Akademie in Egypt, Supervisor and Chief Editor of the *Masr El Nas* website. While, Ms. Tarek herself is a caliber and outcome of the phase one of the project, she became a major catalyst for change in phase two of the project, guiding and inspiring students throughout the journey.

“During the run-up to the launch of *Masr El Nas* website, extensive journalistic training was taking place during 2016 to produce a large variety of stories, enough to launch a website,” says Tarek. “In fact, a blog carrying the same name was initially formed to encourage the trainees to report stories and see them published online and be able to share them with their community members.” The blog was only meant to boost their morale and get them to write more and more stories. The stories published in the blog were republished later on the website, says Tarek.

The website is divided into three sections, determined by its founders: (1) “Woshoush” or Faces: profiles of local and influential people; (2) “Hekayat” or Stories: features about traditions, practices, achievements of local Egyptians, and (3) “Foshetna” or Our Outing: featuring pictures and stories about historical or significant places in the different governorates which are not usually under the media spotlight. This section aims to enhance tourism in under discovered spots. In addition, in 2018, a new feature, mobile videos, was introduced to the website, showing stories covered by mobile phones, after a mobile journalism (MoJo) workshop has taken place.

Sustainability, say Asfour, was realized through the amount of development realized in the girls. Not only in the professional/journalistic training that they had, but also in the fact that their live have completely changed throughout those years. The fact that they cannot accept anymore the lack of freedom to travel or to report freely in the media, as they used to do in the past. Many of them are actually working in mainstream media now and advancing in their jobs. According to Basma Rashad, “Now it is unacceptable that I work under limits on my freedom of expression. I cannot cope with the limits on freedom and professionalism. I cannot cope with those things anymore. I don’t accept anymore a worst experience, after the quality of journalism I experienced in Mas El Nas.”

**Methodology**

The methodology of this research is focused on fulfilling its primary purpose, examining the theories of media development and development journalism through the practical application of the DW funded project “Women’s Voices,” its follow up “More Women Voices” and the website, *Masr El Nas*.
Offered exclusively to young female journalists from all around Egypt, Women’s Voices offered a set of extensive journalistic and professional training which led to the establishment of Mas El Nas website. The central purpose of this empirical research is to test the role of this media development project in promoting journalism development and gender sensitivity in Egypt, in the light of the theories of Media Development and Development Journalism.

The empirical research has taken place at two levels, since development journalism and gender sensitivity goals were sought in the Women’s Voices project at two levels: (1) Media Development: personal and professional development of the trainees themselves through various capacity building and journalistic training throughout the entire project, (2) Development Journalism or Applied Development Journalism reflected in their coverage of their local communities and governorates in Masr El Nas website throughout two consecutive years.

To examine the efficacy of each level, the methodology of this research, includes (1) conducting in-depth interviews with the project managers, trainers and selected trainees about the impact of specific aspects of development that they have gone through; and (2) a thematic content analysis of Masr el Nas website to identify how and to what extent have the themes covered in the website addressed the developmental aspects stated in its editorial policy, and served the goals of gender sensitivity and journalism development at large.

The in-depth interviews with the trainees addressed the following research questions:

**Questions related to Women’s’ Voices project:**

**RQ1:** How has the capacity building/professional development training affected your views, role, skills and professional performance?

**RQ2:** How do you support or help developing others in your local community, especially women?

**Question related to Masr El Nas website:**

**RQ3:** How has Masr El Nas website been positively reflecting and fostering micro-level development and supporting women in local communities?

**Research Findings:**

**RQ1: Capacity building and professional development**

Concerning the capacity building and professional development offered by DW Akademie (RQ1), all respondents concurred that their vision in life, for themselves and their surrounding has immensely shifted to a more liberal approach. As the space is limit in this research, I would only show a few examples of that.

“My first lesson with DW was that I should always try to reach my goals regardless of societal or gender obstacles because I am a girl from upper Egypt. I leaned that I am capable of doing what I want if I just try,” says Samar Mohamed, PR Officer at change academy, and former DW trainee.
Hanan Fawzy, another DW trainee and a journalist from Beheira, now adheres to a more liberal approach in life.

“I deserted a lot of my traditional ideas and traditions, and I now think that everyone has the right to do what they want. I became more open to life and more self-confident and self-assured. I learned to accept my own mistakes and learn from them, rather than blame myself.” Personally, she says, “I became more daring and my voice became a bit louder, as I turned to be more open to new cultures and traditions and new opinions and beliefs.”

At the professional level, Hanan Fawzy clarifies,

“I became more daring to go through dangerous experiences, which requires a lot of wisdom and experience. Knowing my rights and responsibilities, when I found myself less appreciated and unable to work freely, I did not hesitate to leave a job so that I keep my self-respect and self-appreciation in everything that I do, and I don’t regret it.”

According to Basma Rashad,

“The project was not only about journalism, but also about business management, founding our own project. There was development in plenty of areas not just in journalism. Travelling in my own gave me a personal space. This was a milestone for me to realize. Now if there is training or work I can easily travel in my own.”

Dina El-Naggar, Journalist at Al Masry Al Youm in Alexandria, says

“I am now asked to do special reports that none of my colleagues at work can do. In my work, I used to do only news. Now they ask me to make features. Or there was an issue that someone was using Disney characters to publicize for the touristic places. They started to ask me to do different type of work. Work that I was trained to do with DW. Also the content of the features themselves. I started to work Video and videography also. Videography is a mixture of things that I learned in DW and things that I learned also through other workshops.”

Lamia Mohamed, also asserted that she became able to face problems, and see the different angles for the situations, and treat them in a more logical way before taking any decision. “I acquired the “persuasion” skill, through which I get my rights, and complain about the traditions and norms that prevent me from getting my rights.” Lamia Mohamed says “I am now more determined to achieve my goals and I have the power to help others.”

**RQ2: Help in supporting local communities, women in particular**

As for benefiting local communities from their capacity building development (RQ2), especially women and women journalists in their surroundings, Fawzy says,

“I became more trustworthy for my colleagues at work, and they trust my judgment about the different professional and personal situations they face.”

Likewise, Samar Bahnasawy says,
“I support my female colleagues to become more positive and effective, and ask for their rights even if they are small rights.” Bahnasawy adds, “Among the things I learned in the trainings with DW is being able to find for myself and other women good job opportunities without having to go to Cairo. The trainings encouraged me to seek my dreams. I had a dream of studying business management, and now I am studying business management through a scholarship by the ministry of communication.”

As for Lamia Mohamed, she concurs,

“I advise my friends on how to live their life without fear of facing people and defending their rights. I try to help my friends who still can’t find their way to find it, and search with them for their inner skills and help them develop those skills.”

Dina Mahmoud, Producer at Sout Masr channel, says she supports every girl who face the same societal difficulties she faced for being a girl from upper Egypt, pass on her experience and how she overcame those difficulties. “Now I support a large number of girls who need a lot of support to know their rights and insist on getting them,” says Mahmoud, who established a project in Aswan called for women journalism called “genderist” to write about indigenous women in upper Egypt, the different types of gendered suffering they face, such as the use of violence against them, discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment, marital rape and marriage of minors.

RQ3: Role of Mas El Nas in reflecting / fostering development, supporting local women

As for the role of Mas El Nas in women’s development and societal development at large (RQ3), according to Hanan Fawzy,

“Masr El Nas was a breath of air for local working women, women journalists or local culture that nobody has ever heard of. Many women came under the spotlight through Masr El Nas, whether women with business startups, women with problems, or women who wished for their voices to be heard,” says Fawzy.

Societal development, says Bahnasawy, “happened exclusively to the women journalists who were extensively trained by DW.” Lamia Mohamed, agrees, we always shed light on issues related to upper Egypt, a blind spot for the mainstream media.

“The most viewed and read topics are the ones from upper Egypt because they are very scarce, and the mainstream media always focus on Cairo. It does not pay attention to issues related to upper Egypt nor the humanitarian issues in general.”

According to Hoda Magdy, journalist from Port Said,

“the topics we like to focus on in Masr El Nas include the success stories of local women despite the hard circumstances that they face, especially in upper Egypt.” This was a crucial goal for the project, to reach out to places and people far away from the media and break the centralization of media in Egypt, she added.
Thematic content analysis of Masr El Nas Website:

Conducting a thematic content analysis of Masr El Nas website, during 2018, it appeared that the stories published over last year are 211 stories, covered all sections putting into account gender balance. Those are thematically divided on each section as follow: Hekaya section or stories of local people (features) included 96 stories representing 45.4% of all stories; Woshoush section or faces, profiles of local people included 74 stories representing 35% of all stories; and Foshetna section or our vacation about special places out there included 41 articles, representing 19.4% of all stories. Out of all those stories, 65% of all stories put gender balance into account, or exclusively covered women issues or were profiles with special women, say Soha Tarek the Chief Editor.

The themes addressed in features and profiles sections were predominantly about local people, mostly women, who have special achievement, established a new business using a simple idea. “People used to wait for the stories about them to get published. Then they start showing it to other people around them proudly. They started to feel that what they are doing is meaningful and worthwhile, as they became an inspiration for others in the meantime,” says Ahlam Al Mansy. According to Lamia Mohamed, “women in rural areas have lots and lots of stories to tell. They just need to be heard. They deserve that their voice reach out to the world.”

According to Tarek, in 2018, The website has launched two campaigns under the Hashtag #Tell_her_story. The first one was on March 2018 in conjunction with 3 occasions: International women’s day, March 8; Egyptian women’s day March 16; and Mothers’ day, March 21. The second campaign was in October 15th in conjunction with the International day of rural women. The first campaign was very successful according to audience interaction presented in social media comments and the analysis reflects the number of post reach. This is in addition to the published articles in mainstream media outlets about Masr El Nas and its campaign.

During the campaign, friendly agreements were made with 4 famous writers in order to reach high reading rates. Those writers are, Kareem El Bakry, Editorial Secretary of El Shorouk daily newspaper; Mohamed El Hawary, Head of Multimedia Unit at El Masry El Youm newspaper; Fatma Kheir, Journalist and founder of Women in Media Network; and Marina Makary –journalist, poet and a former trainee of DW Akademie (participated in Tunisia workshop about gender sensitive reporting). She wrote a poem about women’s challenges in Egyptian community. The Total number of published articles in this campaign include, 19 articles and 3 interactive videos on social media. This analysis, say Tarek, demonstrates that the website realized the purpose of fostering gender balance, through its themes, style of coverage and the number of stories that represented women and covered their issues.

Conclusion

Drawing on the theories of media development and development journalism, the research outcome shows that media development has been realized through developing the interpersonal skills of the trainees via professional and capacity building training. Their professional skills also developed through various types of training including technical and media training, managerial training, and media viability training. The establishment and funding of the website for two years was a serious attempt by DW at realizing media viability. Nevertheless, it is strongly argued that although viability was not completely realized due to the current circumstances in Egypt, yet sustainability
was realized due to the immense amount of development that the trainees have reached and passed to others through this long-term project.

For Masr El-Nas website, it was hard in the current political moment to find a partner who would fund the project and sponsor a media website and be responsible for its content in front of the current regime. Yet, phase two of the project, developing the skills of women journalists from rural areas, has realized a major target: development to women in rural areas, who are also journalists and have the capacity and eagerness to spread this development in their surroundings, awareness and application of gender sensitive reporting. According to Dina El Naggar, “I always think of women, when I think of a story to write about. I reconsider the angle of my story to make it positive, promoting development at grassroots level.” The thematic analysis of Masr El Nas demonstrate that there was a serious attempt at realizing gender balance in the stories covered, with 65% of the stories taking gender balance into account.

The purposes of Development Journalism, as reflected in the outcome of RQ3 and in the thematic analysis of Masr El Nas website, is demonstrated through writing for people and about people. According to Basma Rashad, people used to follow the development stories about other people in the same areas and use it as an inspiration to get developed themselves, by taking a similar path or starting a similar project. People also used to buy from the projects that we write about in Masr El Nas, which indicate that the website served as an indirect advertisement for women with small projects.

About the Author

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Appendix

Personal Interviews:

• Shahira Amin, Independent Journalist and co-found of the Egyptian Media Women Union, May 25, 2019
• Osama Asfour, Trainer and Coordinator, Women’s Voices project for Deutsche Welle Akademie, May 20, 2019
• Soha Tarek, Trainer, Supervisor and Chief Editor of Masr El Nas website
• Mona Badran, PhD, Trainer on Gender sensitive reporting with various UN organizations as well as DW Akademie and Journalism and Media professor at different universities in Egypt, May 25, 2019
• Naila Hamdy, Associate Professor of Journalism, The American University in Cairo, May 28, 2019
• Samar Bahnasawy, Journalist at Masr El Nas and former DW trainee, May 6, 2019
• Asmaa Basel, Journalist at Masr El Nas and former DW trainee, May 16, 2019
• Hanan Fawzy, Journalist from Alexandria and former DW trainee, May 13, 2019
• Samar Mohamed, PR Officer at Change Academy and former DW trainee, May 12, 2019
• Lamia Mohamed, Journalist at Masr El Nas and former DW trainee, May 11, 2019
• Dina Mahmoud, Producer at Sout Masr channel and former DW trainee, May 11, 2019
• Ahlam El Mansy, Journalist at Masr El Nas and former DW trainee, April 13, 2019
• Dina El Naggar, Journalist from Alexandria and former DW trainee, April 20, 2019
• Basma Rashad, Journalist at M
The Interactive Mutation: Storytelling in the Age of Mixed Reality

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Abstract

Hybrid approaches to both research and journalistic practice can lead to technological innovations, new theoretical approaches, and disruptions in storytelling. Mixed reality (MR) provides a way to use hybridity in journalism and documentary. Interactive practices change not only the story — traditional linearity may be discarded in favor of increased audience agency — but potentially also the audience’s understanding of a subject. In this paper, we discuss our experiments in multiple MR platforms (web-based interactive, virtual reality, and augmented reality) for journalistic storytelling. Using focus groups, we determine if the experiments lead to greater audience understanding of an issue.

Introduction

Hybridity, or the blending two unlike cultures or traditions, offers scholars and journalists non-traditional ways to approach documentary and news storytelling. Borrowing from Graeme Sullivan (2014), this approach is “a creative and critical process whereby imaginative leaps are made into what we do not know — as this can lead to crucial insights that may change what we do know.” Experimentation — and the willingness to make mistakes within the experimentation — is the key.

Mixed reality, or MR, is one example of how hybridity is used in journalistic and interactive documentary (i-Doc) storytelling. In it, virtual objects are “anchored” within the real world, allowing the user to interact with them as part of storytelling practice. For instance, The New York Times produced a story on Winter Olympians, where the reader/user could learn about the athlete by walking around an image placed inside one’s living room. Contrast this with the fully immersive digital world of virtual reality (VR), or the web-based world of interactive storytelling, and there are myriad choices for a news organization (or reporter) to make.

These approaches can also be profoundly disorienting (what happens to “story” when there is no traditional beginning, middle or end) but also profoundly expensive. The technologies require teams of not only journalists but also web and product designers and coders. It can seem overwhelming for a DIY storyteller or a small market newsroom or college.

In this paper we discuss our research on (relatively) low cost immersive platforms for journalistic storytelling. We developed a story across three app-based platforms (VR, MR, web-based interactive) and asked focus groups to determine user satisfaction and storytelling effectiveness. The platforms allow storytellers to focus on the story, rather than the technological components needed to make the platform work. We argue that while mass produced apps offer an entry point
into experimentations in immersive and mixed reality storytelling, platform robustness and full experimentation may be lost.

**Literature Review**

Sullivan argues that practice-based research (PBR) -- the artist’s studio, the digital humanities website, the i-Doc -- offers powerful ways to deconstruct the “‘truthiness’ of knowledge” (Sullivan 2014, 276). The traditional model of academic knowledge building, scaffolding new knowledge upon that of the old, “does not acknowledge the benefits of many other productive ways of thinking, including risk” (Sullivan 2014, 277). In other words, the risk of failure through PBR is a powerful way to come to new understandings. Risk, Sullivan argues, demands hybridity. By “finding pathways along, through, and around boundaries,” the hybrid scholar/practitioner engages in “‘post-disciplinary’ modes of research [that] are multimedia and multisensory as many different forms of representation are created” (Sullivan 2014, 279).

The i-Doc similarly is grounded in the idea of the value found in risk. It is defined as “any project that starts with the intention to engage with the real, and that uses digital interactive technology to realise this intention” (Aston et al 2017, 1). By nature, it includes all of the platforms used in this project. The i-Doc is defined by experimentation and the successes (and failures) that experimentation may entail. More important, according to Judith Aston, Sandra Gaudenzi, and Mandy Rose, is “to ask not what documentary means but what a documentary does” (2017, 2) with a focus on crossing disciplines and erasing the boundary between praxis and theory.

That concern -- what a documentary does -- is at the core of this project. Specifically, we are interested in how documentary users interact with and gain knowledge from immersive technologies found in MR. Yet despite the increasing use of MR within documentary and journalistic storytelling, such as experiments by publications such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation or the *New York Times*, there is little research into the efficacy of MR as a journalistic storytelling platform. Instead, researchers in MR tend to focus on how humans interact with technology rather than their responses to topic-based applications. The most cited categories for research into MR applications are medical devices, games, and tourist guides (Kim et al 2018, 2953).

Over the last decade, just 13.7% of papers at the premiere conference on MR focused on “evaluation,” a broad category that includes surveys of responses to technologies, user evaluation of technology, and perception studies (Kim et al 2018, 2954). The authors identify this as a “significant increase in user evaluation research in recent years,” and specifically over the previous decade (Kim et al 2018, 2954). Nonetheless, the studies within the category the vast majority of studies focus on user reactions to -- rather than efficacy of -- the technologies. This is exemplified by a recent study published in the journal *PLoS ONE*, which explored how people respond to an AR human in a room, including avoiding a chair the virtual human “sat” in even when he was no longer “present” (Miller et al 2019).

Kangsoo Kim et al recognize the importance of ethnographic and other innovative methodologies to study “the social, cultural and psychological phenomena” of MR in “real world settings” within commercial and/or consumer applications (Kim et al 2018, 2958). This is being done in limited form in relation to VR, where researchers are testing its potential as an “empathy machine” within
documentary storytelling. Jeremy Bailenson (2018) argues that because VR immerses users in another’s shoes, it can help increase understanding for a subject or experience that one could otherwise not experience. Experiments with VR have determined that when done well the projects allow users to at least temporarily empathize with another’s life experience (Schutte and Stilinović 2017, Shin 2017). Similar studies have been done with AR at pivotal sites, with researchers finding that spatial visualizations can help increase “historical empathy” (Sweeney et al 2018).

But as Erick Ramirez (2017) cautions, these experiments may be conflating empathy with sympathy:

> Empathy is distinguished from sympathy in the sense that empathy, but not sympathy, is often thought to require feeling what our target feels. If I am sad and you empathize with me then you too feel sad. Sympathy, on the other hand, is not typically thought to require this kind of co-feeling, and in some cases co-feeling would interfere with sympathizing with the target. Sympathy requires that we feel for not with our target.

Ramirez argues that “in their shoes” i-Docs cannot adequately allow for individual experiences that may impact the success or failure of empathy for the virtual experience. He argues that VR thought experiences may be better starting points to determine empathy. i.e. what would you do in a specific situation after being given information in an embodied virtual space. (766 words)

Most of the research on immersive technologies for storytelling have focused on questions of empathy or sympathy with another person’s life and choices as created by this “in their shoes” experience. Here we want to extend the inquiry from empathy or sympathy with another person – the Guardian’s VR story on life in solitary confinement is an example – to whether immersive technologies can engender an ethic of care around an issue or public concern. Borrowing on Carol Gilligan’s concept in moral psychology, an ethic of care recognizes the connections between individuals and is “separated politically and psychologically from a realm of individual autonomy and freedom which is the realm of justice and contractual obligation.” (Gilligan 1995, 122). Her work, which is focused on social connections, argues that a feminist ethic of care provides a lens that places issues that had been framed as relational – domestic abuse or child care – more squarely into the political arena, and this includes the issues related to the relationship of humans to the environment.

In applying this idea of an ethic of care to immersive storytelling, this study seeks to answer questions about whether immersive storytelling can provide a stronger connection to the content of the story, particularly when the story is about an issue that is both more complex and more contentious. Fracking, in the community where the focus group research was conducted, is both a source of income and a source of concern. Fracking sites are popping up throughout the community, and the issue has become contentious politically with measures to limit fracking showing up frequently on election ballots in the region. The study also explores learning gains from the story formats as a way of addressing whether immersive storytelling is a superior way of engaging and informing audiences, and possibly increasing their level of care and commitment around a public policy area.
Methodology

The project is based in oral histories of female environmental photographers, in this case two women who photographed the same farm in Western North Dakota. The farm has been impacted by the environmental risks of fracking, specifically the brine runoff found in discarded fracking water. The farmers themselves do not frack their land, but a neighbor did opt to use the technology. Each photographer took a series of images at the farm. We selected two from each woman to ground the storytelling. We did not interview the farmers impacted because of a gag order instituted in a settlement of a lawsuit against the energy company.

We traveled to North Dakota in January of 2018, and took a series of videos and still images (HD, 360, drone) of the region. Over the course of eighteen months, we developed the platform and story protocols. We produced a total of twelve video stories to be shared across the three platforms; in the final versions of the project, each platform has up to ten stories. Two of the stories were discarded at the request of the interviewee and so don’t appear in any of the platforms. We also developed a list of facts related to fracking, gathered from news organizations, environmental groups, and industry. In addition to the oral history interviews, we interviewed the lead faculty advisor for the National Science Foundation funded project AirWaterGas, a group seeking to integrate research (environmental, economic, social) about oil and gas development into policy decisions. The stories are designed as non-narrative: users can watch as much, or as little, as they like.

We devised our platform protocols with the idea of expandability. We plan in our next phase to produce stories about fracking’s impacts in Pennsylvania and Texas, and so wanted to use North Dakota as a case study to develop further project parameters. We also sought to give the same information across multiple platforms, while at the same time tailoring the experience to the specific platform.

The iDoc uses the most video of the platforms (all ten produced stories). We decided to limit the user to a single location (the farm in question), allowing access to new stories and information as the user completed specific story elements. It is built using the content management system Racontr, the framework behind award winning iDocs such as Prison Valley and Fort McMoney. The MR platform is designed to be location specific, using tables and walls as spaces where the user can “find” videos, graphics, and photographs. It also allows the user to digitally place a life-sized drilling rig into their own space. It was built using Arcore. In VR, users can wander through four different locations, each containing specific video elements. We made sure in VR to make use of the tactile nature of the program; users can pick up photographs and turn them over to get more information. Users are also able to teleport to parts of the drilling platform. It was built using Unreal Engine 4. Each experience takes approximately fifteen minutes to fully complete.

To assess the impact of each story format, we conducted four focus group discussions, recruiting participants from a community of just under 100,000 people that is surrounded by fracking sites. The choice of this community was intentional and was an attempt to recruit from a population that was somewhat more economically and politically diverse. Among the community’s workforce, 81 percent are in white collar jobs and 19 percent are in blue collar jobs. The median income in the city is $66,349 USD (59,605 €) and 12 percent of the city’s residents live below the poverty level. In the 2016 election, 55 percent of the city’s residents voted for Hillary Clinton, the Democrat, and
33 percent voted for Donald Trump. Focus group participants were recruited using online neighborhood bulletin boards and social media, and they were paid $50 (45 €) for their participation.

Participants were divided into four separate groups, which ranged from six to eight participants. Three of the groups experienced the story in just one of the three formats – MR, VR or iDoc – and one group was exposed to all three of the story formats. Prior to interacting with the fracking story, participants filled out a questionnaire that asked about their use of traditional and immersive storytelling formats and their environmental attitudes. After their time with one or all of the story formats, participants filled out a second questionnaire, which included some open-ended questions about what they liked and didn’t like about the story format (or formats) and again asking about their environmental attitudes. The study was looking for any changes, even subtle ones, between a participant’s pre-test and post-test environmental attitudes to see whether immersive storytelling can impact the level of engagement or care that someone has on an issue.

Once the second questionnaires were completed, the participants took part in a focus group discussion about their experiences with the story that was led by one of the researchers. They were asked about what they learned from the story and what parts of the story were most interesting to them. They also were asked about whether they believed the technology enhanced the story or detracted from it. The focus group discussions ranged from roughly 60 minutes to 90 minutes. The recordings were transcribed and then were analyzed to pull out key themes and concepts from each of the groups. Those key themes and concepts became codes that were used to conduct a second analysis of the focus group discussions.

Findings

Our findings are divided into two areas: production and audience analysis.

Production challenges

There are numerous challenges to doing this sort of work in a situation where there is not sufficient support. The one-line summary? Collaboration is key. We worked with a relatively small crew, attempting to mimic the conditions in small market newsrooms with limited staffs; our production team was all experienced in producing documentary projects with one or two key team members. But we quickly discovered that it is impossible to produce across multiple platforms without collaboration. In our field production, we had a minimum of two team members in at a shoot at all times. This was especially crucial during our drone flights. Our pilot, who is licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration, flew the drone and operated its camera, but asked to always have a spotter for safety.

Other issues cropped up when transitioning the story from the field to the i-Doc sphere. Initially, we attempted to create identical stories across the platforms. This did not work. A good example is the photographs we shot at various fracking sites and wanted to use to convey information about the extraction process. In VR, this worked brilliantly: users “picked up” images and then turned them over to gather more information, such as the details about the technology or the chemical pollutants generated from drilling. But in the online platform, this interactivity confused beta testers. They didn’t understand that clicking on the photo would trigger additional information. The
resultant photo flip felt like an interruption of the storytelling immersion -- it didn’t offer the same sort of tactile enjoyment as in VR. Using a photo to trigger a video -- a video that gave the exact same information as the graphics -- was a much more satisfying experience for viewers. In MR, we initially (and unsuccessfully) created floating framed photos, which again confused users. Table-based photos, which users could tap to get more information, was a much more successful interface.

The technology also posed challenges, such as issues with things like rendering, content availability, or playback speed in the online content management system, Racontr. This required consultation with developers based in a time zone eight hours away from our location. These issues point to the complexity of the technology and the need for flexibility by the hybrid researcher. For instance, in the initial focus group testing we hoped to use 360 video as a background bed for the interface in the VR and immersive online platforms. This was relatively easy to do in the VR, but technical issues within the immersive online app prevented us from placing clickable elements in that platform. This was disappointing because the immersive quality was interrupted -- users could only travel so far in any direction before hitting a virtual wall and having to move back to the center of the page. Navigation in full 360 would have been more intuitive, and is something we plan on adding in later versions of the project.

That being said, the CMS for the online immersive platform is fairly straightforward in terms of utility, with a drag and drop interface, limited need for coding, etc. VR and MR are much more complex, demanding separate producers for each platform and longer-than-expected production time to allow for platform production and revisions. Our initial plan was to do focus group testing in May of 2018 for all three planned stories (North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Texas); we ended up doing focus group testing for just one story (North Dakota) a full year later. These aren’t technologies that can be produced on a short deadline. We found it important to have regular consultations where team members played with each of the platforms, and scheduled two pilot testing groups. This was crucial to working out kinks in the systems.

We also discovered that despite the saturation of media conversations about VR, MR, and interactivity, average users aren’t terribly familiar with the technologies. Media producers and journalists need to remember to give users adequate prompts, reminding them how to navigate out of a specific situation, how to use tricks like teleportation to move from one VR location to another, or how to know when a story is “over.” Gamification, or “the application of typical elements of game playing (e.g. point scoring, competition with others, rules of play) to other areas of activity” (https://www.dictionary.com/browse/gamification), is an important concept in interactive design. We specifically designed each platform with specific rewards for completing certain elements (i.e. watching a video would open up new content). In a non-narrative story, this sort of action/reward approach is necessary to keep users watching -- and engaged.

The pre-test and post-test questionnaires do support the idea that the fracking story increased a person’s care or positive affect about the environment, at least for the most part. Attitudes were measured by asking participants to use a 10-point scale to indicate either strong disagreement or strong agreement to a series of statements. Some of these statements were reversed in terms of their “anti-fracking” sentiment in the second questionnaire to avoid issues of response set bias. There were two participants who were excluded from this part of the analysis -- one who failed to fill out the pre-test questionnaire and another who failed to adequately fill out the post-test questionnaire.
Several participants had very strong opinions about fracking, filling out their pre-test questionnaires with either a 1 or 10, depending on the direction (pro-fracking or anti-fracking) of the statement itself. In these cases, viewing the story or stories had little or no impact on their post-exposure views. However, there were interesting findings among those whose opinions on fracking were less strong.

In comparing the three groups that saw only one of the story formats, the MR group saw the largest net gains in their care about the environment. Of the nine statements they responded to, the MR group showed an average positive net gain ranging from +.2 on the statement, “We need to consider alternatives to fracking in order to preserve our environment,” to +2.4 on “Although fracking is an economical source of oil and gas, we cannot risk the environmental impacts.” The VR group had a net gain of +1.3 on the latter statement, and the iDoc group had a net gain of +.7 on it. The next largest gain in environmental care came on the statement, “Oil and gas extraction can’t be done safely through hydraulic fracturing, or ‘fracking.’” Here the largest gain was among the VR group, which increase overall in ethic of care by +1.25. The iDoc group increased on this statement by +1 and the MR group by +.4. The only other statement with consistent gains in environmental care attitudes across all three groups was one that said, “We need to consider alternatives to fracking in order to preserve our environment.” Here the VR group increased its care level by +1, the iDoc group by +.7 and the MR group by +.2. On the other nine statements, the results were more mixed, and on some – including statements about concern over fracking contaminating water sources or causing earthquakes – the participants reported a more positive attitude about fracking after their immersive storytelling experience.

For the group that saw all three formats of the story, there were gains in an ethic of care across nearly every statement. The only statement to show a drop in a care ethic was the one that said, “The risks of fracking are minimal and are offset by the gains from economical oil and gas extraction.” The net loss in environmental care attitude on this statement was -.25. The group showed strong environmental care gains on statements saying that fracking could not be done safely (+1.8), that fracking is not a good way to access oil and gas (+1.5), that the economic gains from fracking are not worth the risks (+1.6) and that fracking risks triggering earthquakes (+1.8).

In the focus group discussions, a key finding is that regardless of the format they experienced, many of the participants yearned for a more linear format. In the MR group, for example, one participant in her mid-20s said:

“It’s an issue that I care a lot about. I feel like, you know, going through some of the information was nice because it just gave me more information about the topic. I like some perspectives that were offered but it was just like I just want to just sit down and listen to that.”

Others in the MR group said that while they got something out of each section of the storytelling experience, it was disjointed and didn’t flow well, which made it harder to follow. What they did learn was more about the cultural values of the community in North Dakota where the filming was done and they appreciated the narratives from the two women photographers who were interviewed for the story. One woman in her 60s said she like the concept and the possibilities, and another woman said she appreciated being able to move at her own pace and “to choose what I wanted to do.”
But generally, they wanted a common starting point, and one participant, a man in his 40s, said that he was frustrated by the fact that he didn’t know when the story was over. Added a woman in her 60s:

“I was reminded of going to a museum where you can get, you know, that tour. And I think that’s a really fun and useful way to go through it. But it wasn’t like a story, though.”

In other groups, the comments were similar. The immersive experience was interactive and interesting, and people appreciated being able to make choices about where they wanted to go or what they wanted to experience. At the same time, it didn’t feel like a story and in the MR and VR conditions, they were distracted by the technology and by feeling unsure in their real-world environment as a result of being focused on the technology.

In the VR group, one man in his 30s said he enjoyed the experience, but didn’t learn much from it because he was focused on how he could interact with the objects in the space. So the photos, which had information on the back if you flipped them over, became a toy for him:

“I didn't even read the cards. I’d pick them up and I was just too excited to focus on reading them, so I threw them because, you know, they were like a frisbee. So what I did was I actually flipped it, and then saw the text and in my excitement I want to see the other one, but I batted the other card out. So sometimes the content was a bit distracting.”

Still, the man said he learned something about fracking, despite the distraction, and another man in his 60s said that VR would be a good tool to get someone interested in the topic, even if it would not be a good way to convey very much information about it. Another participant, a man in his mid-20s, said he liked being able to walk around the fracking site, but that there was too much information for the format:

“And I don’t also the storytelling aspect of it because if you were writing a story what you’d want is start off with an anchor. Right?”

From there, he said, the story should introduce a character – one of the photographers, for example – and then they the person talk, and then discuss fracking and the mechanics of it, and then balance that with the value of fracking to a community. Essentially, as he talked, he described – once again – a preference even in an immersive medium for a linear narrative.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Despite the delays, the length of time it took to produce these platforms provided a benefit for the project as a whole that speaks to Sullivan’s idea that it is through creation that knowledge is generated. Initially, we thought to approach the stories in a relatively similar fashion: i-Docs that focused on story first. But as we moved toward the focus group testing, we began thinking more of how to embed experiential knowledge gain/knowledge within the stories.

This shift in thought from a conversation with an earth scientist at Colorado State University, who we were considering as a potential collaborative partner. She discussed her own experiences of
knowledge gain through decision-making -- how students in the classroom better grasp complex issues when they are forced to make choices informed by science, stakeholders, etc. We began wondering if moving from the simple use of gamification strategies in the i-Doc to the creation of an actual interactive game as part of the platform may help enhance audience’s knowledge gain and an ethic of care.

We plan on introducing a game as a facet of the i-Doc in our next production phase. We would not have even come to this idea, that a game could be a vital part of a journalistic story, without our struggles to produce the stories in a way that encourage an ethic of care. To take it one step further, we wouldn’t have known to even consider the possibility and to explore the ethical and practical ramifications without the radical act of hybrid scholarship. Paraphrasing from Sullivan (2014), the creative act caused not only imaginative leaps into the topic of the story, but also provided crucial insights that transformed what we understand about journalistic practice and even what is defined as a legitimate part of the journalistic or documentary story.

The creativity of the immersive storytelling formats also challenges notions about what people think on a cognitive level and how they response to the experience of the non-linear story. For some, the story became an area to play, for others, it was marked by the emotional connection to the women photographers who told their own stories, and for some it was more confusing, even as it caused them to think more.

The pre-test and post-test questionnaires tell us that the immersive stories did have an impact on the participants overall, at least in the short term. One shortfall of this study is that without a second post-test a week or two after the focus groups, it’s impossible to tell if the subtle – and sometimes less subtle – shifts in the participants views about fracking would hold up. But there were measurable differences across all groups that is evidence of an increase in their anti-fracking opinions, which indicates that immersive storytelling may be effective for increasing an overall ethic of care and sense that we need to be more active in preventing harm not just to individuals, as Gilligan (1995) suggests in her work, but also to the environment.

This study’s results suggest several things. First, even in an immersive format, a more complex and less entertainment-oriented story may need greater context and a more linear beginning and end. Participants in this set of focus groups routinely wanted to be more grounded in the topic as they started to explore the story and, for several people, also wanted a clearer cue about when they were done. Several even mentioned adding a progress bar to the format. One woman said she could see immersive storytelling being a great way to experience a book, but only if you had read it first so that you were familiar with it and knew, ahead of time, where the end was so you knew how to navigate the immersive version.

Second, participants wanted more cues about whether this was a news story or a human-interest story or a documentary. The newness of the format, at least at this point in time, creates more confusion for people who are trying to gain information from the immersive story.

Finally, as we look to news and information uses for immersive storytelling, we need to consider which stories might be told best through these formats. Perhaps immersive storytelling is an entry point for the uninitiated since it can, according to our participants, engage a person more deeply in the story. Perhaps it’s a good secondary way to tell a story -- something that adds value after
someone has “read the book,” as one participant suggested. And perhaps it is a better element for longer form storytelling since several subjects expressed frustration at the time it took to explore in the immersive space and said they would prefer a Twitter or headline approach for news that wasn’t as important to them. These are issues the researchers plan to explore in additional iterations of this study.

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References


Visualization as a Tool for Reflection in Journalism Education

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Abstract:
It has been argued that journalism educations can best prepare students for the fast-changing media reality and an increasingly unpredictable work-life by improving their ability to reflect on their own routines, products and learnings (Mensing & Ryfe 2013, Allen et al. 2015). In this paper we explore how and to what extent visualization can improve journalism students’ capacity of reflection. Visualization has been reported to benefit reflection in other so-called creative educations, and in theory visualization holds a great potential for embodied cognition (Dourish 2001). By drawing on e.g. Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy in comparing two different types of visualization sessions, we explore how this potential is best tapped into. Finally, we deduce recommendations for visualization in journalism education.

Keywords: Visualization; design theory; cognitive visualization; reflection-in-action; embodied cognition; journalism education; visual facilitation; aesthetic learning processes; innovation; rethinking journalism as a profession

Introduction

To many journalists and journalism students ‘visualization’ means data visualization. Others might think of visualization as graphic design, meaning e.g. finding the right picture for a story or a layout for a website or magazine. However, there are more ways to interpret visualization, some of which can help journalism students reflect on their own practices and learnings. David Sibbet (2013) offers a valuable illustration of the huge universe of visualization (fig. 1) and offers two important notions – visual facilitation and cognitive visualization – which are the focal points of our experiments and of this paper.

Visual Facilitation refers to the growing practice of using visualization as a part of e.g. strategic planning, problem solving and group work (Sibbet, 2013, xvi). Cognitive Visualization refers to the externalization of personal visions and mental models, meaning the presumptions and generalizations that influence our habitual thinking and acting – the ‘lenses’ with which we see the world (Sibbet, 2013, xvi). Our use of metaphors is rooted in these mental models. According to e.g. Ken Robinson (2013), a mental model that dominates the way we see educational institutions is the so-called ‘industrial paradigm values’, in which the metaphor of the ‘school as a factory’ is rooted.

Sibbet (2013) argues that visualizations can be used in three ways: 1) to upgrade personal perspectives and thinking 2) to communicate directions and plans and 3) to empower organizational learning and creativity. It is with this in mind that we test and analyse visualization in two different
settings: In one we focus primarily on cognitive visualization and how this might help students reflect on their practice – ultimately helping them to enhance their practice and their ability to innovate (cf. Mensing & Ryfe 2013). In the other, we focus on both cognitive visualization and visual facilitation in order to help the students ‘communicate directions and plans’ (Sibbet 2013) in relation to a future exam.

![Fig. 1: The landscape of visualization (Sibbet, 2013).](image)

Before going over these experiments in detail, we will elaborate on the potential benefits of visualization and visual learning processes and briefly describe how visualization can be regarded as both a design activity and as an aesthetic learning process.

**Visualizing as a reflective activity**

In design practice, we ‘think with our hands’ (Pallasmaa 2009) by drawing, sketching, building models or prototypes and thus combine thinking and doing. Our understanding of thinking has shifted towards something we do with our whole being – humans simply understand the world through all senses cf. ‘embodied cognition’ (Dourish 2001).

In the field of design research, Sibbet’s notions of visualizations are similar to the so-called ‘generative design’ (Sanders 2000), where ‘generative design tools’ can help people express their ideas and dreams by creating different types of objects, such as collages, drawings, models etc. The generative tools are also considered ‘thinking tools’ as they take advantage of our visual ways of sensing, knowing, remembering and expressing. Moreover, they appeal to deeper levels of knowledge (Sanders 2000). Thus, visualizations can be considered thinking tools that can appeal to deeper levels of knowledge.

These reflective design processes can be seen as learning processes, which is in line with Schön’s notion of ‘reflection-in-action’, which describes doing and thinking as complementary (Schön 1983, 280). In his book *The Reflective Practitioner* Schön argues that "competent practitioners
usually know more than they can say. They exhibit a kind of knowing in practice, most of which is tacit…” (1983, 8-9). Moreover, reflections on this tacit knowledge precede rethinking one’s practice (Mensing & Ryfe 2013, Schön 1983).

As design is about making, doing and creating, design processes can be considered ‘aesthetic learning processes’, where one creates an externalization or a materialization of one’s experience and understanding. Similar to Sibbet’s categorizations of cognitive visualization and visual facilitation, we can use aesthetics and reflective design processes for two things: 1) to communicate and express ourselves and 2) to reflect (Sørensen in Asterisk, 2015, 6).

**Enhancing the quality of learning**

By integrating visualization we can therefore, among other things, help students enhance their quality of learning. Drawing on Bloom’s taxonomy (1956) this means that students advance to what he calls the ‘higher order reflection’, where they both remember and use what they have learned.

Bloom distinguishes between a ‘lower order of skills’ (remembering factual knowledge) and a ‘higher order of skills’ (applying this knowledge in complex ways). The taxonomy moves from ‘Knowledge of Understanding’ to ‘Application’, ‘Analysis’, ‘Synthesis’ and finally ‘Assessment’. In their 2001 update, Anderson & Krathwohl redefine the noun ‘assessment’ and changes it to the verb ‘create’. This redefinition and the newer notion active learning underline the need for lecturers and institutions to make learning situations more active, and it actualises artistic and designerly approaches and activities like visualization (Sørensen & Davidsen, 2014). Trying to reflect and comprehend the world (e.g. knowledge) through creation and not solely through language, engages the mind in a more powerful way.

**Visual Language**, a term introduced by Robert Horn (1998), refers to "language based on tight integration of words and visual elements" including shapes and images. Actually, our brains are most effective when visual and language modalities are combined (Ware 2008). Colin Ware (2008) argues that visual perception is a dynamic process and that drawings, illustrations etc. should be regarded as ‘cognitive tools’. These tools help solve problems through the process of visual thinking (Ware 2008, ix).
A fair amount of research has been conducted on the effects of drawing and visualizing. In terms of remembering, taking visual notes helps students keep their focus on the lesson and increases information retention and recall, and it even improves the chance of getting top grades (Brown 2014). Also, a study of students’ ability to learn science discovered that when students shift their focus from interpreting presented visuals to creating their own visual representations, they have a considerably deeper learning experience (Ainsworth, Prain & Tytler, 2011).

**Research Data and Method**

In our research we have used mixed methods, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches (cf. Brannen, 2007). We have analyzed data through so-called ‘meaning condensation’ (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, 205).

Data is gathered in two different contexts during the second semester of the journalism BA studies.

**Experiment A, reflections on a previous project**, marked the conclusion of a period of several weeks where students had worked on an assignment involving data processing, interviews, argument analysis etc. This session was conducted once (a 90-minute session) involving the entire class (approx. 110 students). The constituent elements were:

a) Students were briefly introduced to the benefits of visual reflection and then to an array of simple symbols and process metaphors inspired by standard visual facilitation tools (Sibbet 2013, Brown 2014).

b) Students drew their learnings in pairs.

c) Students displayed their finished creations and watched and discussed each other’s drawings.

**Experiment B, reflections on a previous project and a future exam**, was conducted twice, involving approx. 25 students each time. This happened in relation to an exam that tests students’ investigate skills and also requires e.g. news writing, video production and argument analysis. Students work on exam projects for approx. three weeks and defend their project at an oral exam. They are entitled to three short (10-15 minutes) meetings with a supervisor, who meets with his or her students (approx. 25) for a joint session early in the process and introduces examination requirements, guidance framework etc. The visualization experiment was part of this session. It was conducted twice and consisted of the following:

a) We introduced the task of visualizing their reflections by drawing our own, personal example within each of the following four categories: 1) what went wrong in your last assignment? 2) what went well in your last assignment? 3) what is your theme/idea?¹, and 4) what is your desired outcome from this exam? The idea of metaphors was implicitly conveyed to the students (see fig. 3).

¹. In the spring of 2018 this category was different: ‘What are your expectations for exam supervision?’ However, this questions turned out to be the weakest of the four and was replaced with this new questions - ‘what is your theme/idea’ - in the fall of 2018. We will elaborate further on this in the exposition of student drawings.
b) Students created individual drawings on A3. After approx. 15 minutes of drawing, a handful of volunteers briefly presented their drawings.

c) During the first round of guidance sessions, students were asked about e.g. the desired outcome.

**Types of research data**

Our data from experiment A (reflections on a previous project) consists of the following:

- **QUESTIONNAIRES**: A questionnaire concerning experiment A was mailed to the class of approx. 110 students seven months after the experiment. It included a question on students’ attitude towards drawing in general; 57 responded. Moreover, one of the questions in the mandatory course evaluation (presented at the end of the term) concerned this experiment; 103 students responded.

- **VISUAL**: 44 student drawings.

- **DOCUMENTATION (VIDEO)**: 24 short videos documenting the students’ drawing process (15 videos), the ‘vernissage’ where students watch and discuss each other’s drawings (6 videos), and the students’ own explanations of their drawings (3 videos).

- **DOCUMENTATION (PHOTO)**: Five photos of the session.
• QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS: Two individual interviews with fellow lecturers who were present during this experiment. One focus group interview with eight students approx. two weeks after the experiment.2

Our data from experiment B (reflections on a previous project and a future exam) consists of the following:

• QUESTIONNAIRE: The questionnaire included a section reserved for students who participated in experiment B (fall 2018); 9 (out of 24) responded.

• VISUAL: 15 student drawings from the first time we introduced this type of visualization (spring 2018); 24 student drawings from the second time (fall 2018).3

• DOCUMENTATION (VIDEO): Eight short videos documenting the students’ creation process and their presentations (fall 2018).

• OTHER: Our own observation notes (’field notes’) from the guidance sessions.

Analysis & Insights

In order to analyze and discuss how visualization can most effectively be used in journalism education, we compare experiment A and experiment B on five key parameters. This comparative approach offers an insight into which elements, aspects and nuances can be valuable, effective, problematic etc.

We have identified the following five key parameters:

1. Purpose and perceived purpose
2. Process design
3. Types of work: individual or in pairs
4. Timing and setting
5. Students’ mental models

Similarities and differences among each of these parameters are analyzed below. The table summarizes our most important findings.

2. The focus group is a recurring concept, where students meet with lecturers to give feedback on behalf of their peers. This particular focus group was deliberately conducted by two lecturers, who had no share in the experiment.

3. The lower number in the spring of 2018 is due to the fact that students were told to photograph their drawings and email the photo to the supervisor. Although 25 students were present at the introduction, only 15 students mailed their drawings. In the fall of 2018, we collected and kept the drawings instead.
If we compare outlined purposes in A and B, there are a number of differences, which, in turn, seem to have an impact on students’ perception of the experiments: In A, students were told to reflect on a past project in order to enhance their learning. Overall, our data suggests that this exclusive focus on the past had a negative influence on students’ experience. In B students were told that visualization was a prerequisite for exam supervision - and that it would improve the supervision. Although half of the visualization in B concerns a past project, this half is framed and experienced as explicitly concerning the upcoming exam, including in our wording: “Draw what went wrong in your past project – what not to do in the next project.” Our data points at this being perceived as worthwhile and expedient.

Looking at the negative student feedback on A, a (sense of) purpose is commonly mentioned. In the free text boxes in both the questionnaire and the course evaluation, the session is described consistently as irrelevant and “a waste of time.” The overall evaluation of the second semester is generally very positive, but the visualization session received an all-time low score of 2.45 (on a scale of 1 to 5). Moreover, 67 percent of questionnaire respondents say that they only benefited from the session to a low or very low extent, and 40% chose the option “it was by no means clear why this would be useful,” this in spite of the fact that the session was introduced with exactly that – an explanation of why it is useful to a) reflect on past processes and b) do so by visualizing.
There are a number of reasons why students in A might experience this lack of purpose. One is that it simply has not been explained sufficiently during the introduction. In addition, our assumption that reflection on their learning process was in itself a valid, professional goal – not least since students often have to hand in written reflection reports – was wrong. This, in turn, has to do with students’ mental models, on which we will elaborate later.

**Process design**

The process design of A and B differs on two key parameters: Level of structure and level of complexity. These differences are vital to understanding the different outcomes and student experiences.

The level of structure in A is rather low. Students have to create visualization from scratch on a blank A1 sheet. B is much more structured: Students visualize their answers to four specific questions in specific squares on their sheet of A3 paper (fig. 3). Our assumption is that students feel safer in this much more structured process design and that it helps them overcome their sense of irrelevance (and possibly “performance anxiety”). Videos and observations from A back this assumption: “I don’t know how to draw this!” is a common student comment.
In B students seem to perceive the visualization as much more accessible. Videos and observations show students venturing into the visualization without hesitation, and practically everybody is able to fill out all four squares in the allotted time.

Obviously, requiring the high level of independent thought and creation like in experiment A can enhance students’ learning. This is harder to achieve when the barrier between visualization and drawing is as high as it is, which might be an argument for introducing visualization in a highly structured manner. However, there are important nuances to this conclusion, not least that students – in spite of their negative feedback – actually did seem to learn a lot from experiment A (see Mental models).

With regard to the level of complexity, the core object of reflection might seem rather similar. Nevertheless, in B students are asked to extract just one thing that worked well and one thing that did not work in this past project. In A, the required reflections are much more complex; due to the aforementioned low level of structure and the longer available time – and possibly the larger sheet of paper – students set the bar much higher. As the above examples demonstrate, the level of detail and the visualized number of learnings are in general high.

Types of work processes

In experiment A, students worked on their visualizations in pairs, as opposed to B, where they worked individually and thus had an obvious access to reaping the benefits of negotiating experiences and meaning (Sibbet 2013, Ware 2008).

Videos from A clearly document this collective reflective process. The fact that students have to visually represent notoriously ‘tricky concepts’ prompts in-depth conversations about what these really mean. One example is a conversation between two students visualizing argument analysis as a machine:
Student 1 (laughing): *This is kind of hard! We have to find a symbol...*
Student 2 (pointing to the inside of the machine): *In here, it’s just all evidence. Evidence and claims and all these things. I don’t know whether to write it or... How do you draw evidence? I mean, you can’t!*
Student 1: *Well...*
Student 2: *Something that enters (the machine) as one thing and comes out as something else!*
Student 1 (now drawing): *Like this?*
Student 2: *Yes, perfect, perfect, very good!*

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**Fig. 7:** Screenshot from video documentation. Two students negotiate how to visualize ‘argument analysis’, especially evidence.

**Fig. 8:** Details from other visualizations of argument analysis in A.

It is clear – from the above examples and the visualizations in general – that the argument analysis has played an important part in the assignment process, *and* that A forces students to wrestle with their otherwise tacit notions of this concept and to make a tangible representation. This observation
that A succeeds in prompting reflections – approaching Bloom’s ‘higher order reflection’ – is backed by the interviewed lecturers. One says: “It (the experiment) had opened up to something. For example, someone had drawn something about drowning and clearly had good conversations about what that meant.”

Other common concepts from class – e.g. source contact and data processing – are widely represented in the visualizations. Nevertheless, looking at similarities between all 44 visualizations, something stands out even more, namely students visualizing an emotional aspect of their process. Students choose to represent their ‘journey’ through the assignment – often using arrows or drawing a road – with themselves as main characters: They draw smiley faces or other symbols for people illustrating how they felt at various times. These students have not visualized the argument analysis as such; they have visualized their emotions connected to this particular part of the assignment.

Nevertheless, even those students who focus mainly on feelings have ‘re-lived’ the assignment process and evaluated and externalized what went well and what was confusing or frustrating. Regardless of the students’ critical attitude towards this experiment, it is hard to discard this as just “a cosy break” (quote from focus group) or “a waste of time” (from questionnaire).

Experiment B entails an individual work process with no obvious room for negotiation. Though videos from B document that students talk while drawing, conversations in general have a different character, “Oh, what’s that? (Laughter)” and “You’re so good at drawing.” This mainly individual approach does offer a number of benefits, especially that by ‘thinking with their hands’ (cf. Pallasmaa 2009) students can gain access to perspectives and perceptions they were not conscious of prior to the experiment (Sanders 2002, Sørensen, 2011a, 2011b, Sibbet 2013). It is hard to assess how many students had this kind of dialogue with the drawing; some students certainly seem to react to their own lack of drawing skills more than anything else. But for some students the surprise...
at the work of their own hands and their externalized reflections on the paper is remarkable (cf. Bamberger & Schön 1983). One student draws the argument analysis as the weakest part of the past assignment (see figure below), and spontaneously reflects, “Oh my god! It’s like a monster! A monster with penises all over the head! I knew I didn’t like it... I didn’t know how awful I found it!”

Fig. 10: Detail from experiment B.

As this example shows, when the visualization in session B works well, it is perfectly aligned with Sibbet’s take on cognitive visualization, embodied cognition as well as Sander’s use of generative tools (Sanders, 2000, Sørensen, 2011). However, cognitive visualization does not stand alone in experiment B, which has three elements of communicating directions and plans and thus of what Sibbet would characterize as visual facilitation: 1) A handful of students volunteer to present their visualizations, which in turn prompt further reflections (cf. Ware 2008).

2) Our videos show that all students engage in informal discussions and comparisons right after the session, and how students look very curiously at their exam partner’s drawing. Six out of the nine questionnaire respondents remember talking about the visualizations with their partner. For the minority of students that are not in sync with their partner with regards to desired outcome/goal, the visualization prompts an especially useful conversation. One example is a pair of students with one drawing the supervisor saying ‘you just passed!’ and the other student drawing herself on top of a rostrum, holding a trophy with the number 1.

3) Students communicate their visualization is during supervision, which seven out of the nine questionnaire respondents remember. In general, students are asked about elements that stand out or are not self-explanatory. Returning to the ‘argument analysis monster’ (fig. 9), this was an obvious focus point during the first supervision session; The student was asked to reflect on his experience and on how this important method could be less of a monster in the upcoming exam. Moreover, the student’s partner was asked about his experiences with argument analysis. In the other example, where a pair of students demonstrated very different levels of ambition, this was the obvious focus. When nothing in particular stood out, supervision focused on desired outcome and how to achieve this. From a supervisor perspective, this access to a seemingly honest depiction
of students’ desires and perceptions makes immensely sense, also to the students themselves as a kind of value clarification (Sørensen, 2011a, 2011b, Sørensen & Evers, 2015).

From our - admittedly biased - supervisor perspective, the value of student visualizations as a guidance tool can hardly be overrated. However, when students themselves respond in the questionnaire (albeit only nine out of a total of 24), they seem less enthusiastic: only three answer that drawing helped them gain new insights and reflexions (3/4 on a scale 1-5). Five have recollections of specific elements of their own visualizations (approx. six months after the session), mostly the level of ambitions. One can speculate that this recollection has to do with the fact that precisely the ambitions/goals was the focus during supervision, much in line with Horn’s (1998) notion that visual methods are most effective when combined with language. However, with this few respondents it is indeed speculation. One can also speculate that visualization has helped students more than they are aware - this is certainly the case seen from a supervisor perspective - but further research is necessary.
Fig. 11: Details from the ‘desired outcome’ part of visualizations in B - the part that was mostly discussed during supervision. These four types of goals - getting a good grade (10-12), being the best, getting the project published in a paper and causing societal change (e.g. ‘human traders behind bars’) - are representative for the most ambitious students.

**Timing and setting**

Quantitative and qualitative student feedback clearly point to the presence of problematic external conditions surrounding A; students had a deadline in another class, which made the barrier towards visualization even higher. One representative comment from the evaluation is: “1,5 hours of drawing right after we were given an assignment with deadline the next day! We have been insanely busy on the second semester, and I found it to be a waste of time to draw.”

B benefitted from better timing: Students had just begun their exam project, their sole focus for the following weeks. Moreover, B’s shorter time frame (30 minutes) might have reduced some of the pressure/”performance anxiety”.
Fig. 12 The different time frames are evident in the finished visualizations; in A (top) significant attention has been shown to detail, colours, symbols etc. B (bottom) has a sketch-like quality.
Students’ mental models and perceptions

Student visualizations deserve a content analysis in their own right. Here it will suffice to point out indicative and representative examples concerning how students’ choice of metaphors are rooted in and reveals important aspects of their general mental models of “success” and “good journalism” (cf. Sibbet 2013, Sørensen 2011, Visser et al. 2005). Moreover, we will analyze what data from the two experiments – on a somewhat general level – might tell us about mental models concerning visualization and journalism education.

We have already seen examples of ambitious students’ desired outcome (fig. 10): Good grades, publication or societal changes. Especially the latter – in the form of new laws, human traders behind bars or even a burning parliament building – gives us an indication of how students see the role of journalism; a ‘classic’ perception of the journalist as a watchdog with an important democratic. This is hardly surprising, as we tend to promote this exact ideal in class. What is surprising, though, is the large number of students who visualize their desired outcome in a very different way: From video documentation and visualizations, we estimate that approx. a quarter of them define their desired outcome as something not connected to the school or their project as such. They depict their goal as whatever fun is awaiting them on the other side of the exam: Holidays, music festivals, trips etc. (see fig 11). When asked about why he had drawn a stage of the “Roskilde Festival”, one student explained: “I just have to pass, because the reexamination takes place at the same time as Roskilde.” These kind of success metaphors are clearly rooted in a different mental model than especially the ones concerning societal change; a school- and journalism-external framework of reference, where their identity as human beings and social creatures are more important.

Fig. 13: Detail from B: Success defined as “passing” in order to go to a music festival.

The externalizations of desired outcomes lead to a very big payoff from the experiments, as they make lecturers aware that these desires are often rather different than we expect. And thus, in turn, we become aware of our own mental model of ‘the student’ as someone adhering to firstly the aforementioned democratic ideals that are the dominant mental models in our educational institution, and secondly as someone who really wants to perform well at exams. This is clearly beneficial to exam guidance but also prompts discussions between lecturers as to how we might
educate different types of students, and ultimately re-conceptualize our practices and advance educational renewal.

From our data and the above analysis, it is clear that drawing helps students identify and express issues that can otherwise be hard to express in both A and B. However, the benefit of challenging lecturers’ mental models – and thus of what Sibbet refers to as empowerment of organizational learning - seems easier accessible in B, where all students are asked to visualize the exact same concepts. In other words, B result in a tangible and easy-to-understand set of comparable metaphors and models, whereas A due to the free format requires more content analysis to retrieve the same kind of knowledge.

While visualizations of success point us towards variations in mental models, reviewing the entirety of data from our two experiments leads us to believe that practically all students have a shared model of what journalism education is – and what it is not. On the one hand students are seen clearly enjoying themselves: videos of experiment A show students are seen laughing and smiling, the interviewed lecturers describe the atmosphere as “fun in a different way that we normally see” and can clearly be described as active learning. Moreover, a surprisingly high percentage - 57! - of questionnaire respondents state that the session was enjoyable, and, as we have already demonstrated, students do indeed benefit from both A and B. In addition, students who participated in A demonstrate a significantly improved visual literacy (e.g. by using symbols and techniques learned during A when participating in B. They also use visualization in later projects. See fig. 12 and 13) (cf. Sibbet 2013). On the other hand, both qualitative and quantitative feedback is very negative. From what mental model does this paradox between actual and perceived experience and learning originate? It is clear that students – no matter the payoff – do not consider visualization a part of journalism education. Students seem to experience a dichotomy between what is playful, creative and fun and what is serious, professional and worthwhile. These two domains are considered mutually exclusive rather than beneficial to one another. In the words of one student: “To many of my fellow students, this was a joke. As a journalism student, drawing or visualizing is not what you associate with groundbreaking, government-intensive journalism.” Note, how the perception of journalist-as-watchdog fits perfectly to the perception of journalism education as something serious and professional, whereas drawing is rather something childlike and emotional. Interestingly, the students who did like the much-criticized experiment A, called it “cosy”, “stress-reducing” and “a nice break”; in other words not worthwhile because of any professional, serious purpose.

Again, this is more distinct in experiment A than B, probably due to the fact that the purpose and immediate usefulness of B was perceived as much clearer, and that the drawing of a (past) process in A as mentioned connoted something ‘emotional’ to many students.
Fig. 14 Both visualizations are from experiment B, but the one above (spring 2018) is drawn by a student, who has not participated in A and thus not received any introduction to drawing. The bottom one (fall 2018) is made by a student who has participated in A.

Fig. 15: Examples of visualizations from students who had participated in A

Discussion

The most interesting issue revealed in our analysis is the paradox that students consider drawing to be ‘a waste of time’ and yet benefit from numerous learning outcomes, value clarification, better
supervision etc. This dissonance is rooted in students’ mental models, which direct our attention to how we might change or challenge these models.

The students’ mental models are part of a whole educational system. As Robinson (2013) argues, our system is rooted in an industrial paradigm including conformity, standardised testing and favours classic, deductive reasoning. This in turn constitutes an impediment towards benefiting from active learning, creation, embodied cognition and the general rethinking and learning (cf. Anderson & Krathwohl 2001, Pallasmaa 2009).

A prerequisite for challenging or changing these mental models must be having an awareness of them; something that experiments and analysis like ours can be a small step towards. Furthermore, one might acknowledge existing mental models of (journalism) education by e.g. putting much emphasis on a ‘traditional’ academic line of reasoning - with extensive references to quantitative research showing the benefits of drawing - when introducing the visualization. This acknowledgement can also happen by paying closer attention to students’ learning needs in general, e.g. good timing, and their visualization needs in particular: a very clear structure, a limited time frame to reduce performance anxiety, etc. Thus, it might be tempting to discard experiment A entirely and design future sessions more like B. However, we need to take into account the visual literacy achieved in experiment A - something that might support students’ reflections in the future and, ultimately, help them become better, more innovative practitioners (cf. Schön 1983). And we need to take into account the obvious benefits of A’s open process: that students’ choice of metaphors and emphasis (like how we have seen that many focused on argument analysis) prove an extremely valuable insight into e.g. what is difficult to many students, which in turn holds a great potential for professional reflection among lectures and ultimately educational renewal. This is important in light of the fast changing professional future awaiting our students; Not only do students need to become the best possible reflective and innovative practitioners, journalism education is in need of renewal (Danish Union of Journalists 2019, Machado & Teixeira 2016, Mensing & Ryfe 2013). With earlier research and our analysis in mind, we argue that challenging students’ mental models is an obvious step towards this renewal.

This leads to a third argument for open processes like the one in A. As an unpredictable worklife of constant change and learning awaits students (Westergaard & Schultz Jørgensen 2018, Allen et al. 2015), exposing them to 90 minutes of (some level of) insecurity and performance anxiety might actually help prepare them for the future. This standpoint clearly does not entail an altogether dismissal of general and didactical considerations in the form of e.g. academic reasoning; it merely serves as a reminder that sometimes negative feedback might not be entirely due to e.g. poor timing or lack of clear purpose. Instead it might be rooted in a mental model that needs to be challenged. Importantly, one must expect this to show up as e.g. bad reviews, low scores in course evaluations etc. In other words, it might be vital to thoroughly match expectations with management before introducing visualization to students.

Conclusions

We have researched how visualizations can be used in journalism education. We have made a simple, however not exhaustive, outline of theory in the field of cognition, aesthetics, design, visualization, metaphors, in order to understand the reasons why cognitive visualization can be considered a valuable activity in journalism education and how we can learn from best practice.
We have described and analyzed two different visualization experiments; one where students visualized a previous project, and one where student both visualized a previous project and visualized goals and plans.

An important finding is that students show significant barriers to visualization, described by the majority as “a waste of time.” This perception is rooted in a mental model, where journalism studies are seen as something serious and professional - and inherently different from visualization, which is seen as fun and unprofessional.

In line with visualization and design theory - and in spite of students’ resistance - visualization proves valuable in terms of enhancing reflection. From our data, we conclude that:

1. It is important to journalism students to be presented for and have access to scientific argumentation on the benefits of visualization.
2. Students seem more comfortable with tightly structured drawing exercises.
3. Visualization as a part of an upcoming project is perceived as most worthwhile by our students.
4. Visualization is can help students clarify values and express e.g. fears and goals.
5. Visualization used for personal value clarification is a strong and valuable ‘dialogue tool’ in supervision.
6. Reflective processes have the potential to enhance future practice and students’ ability to rethink and innovate.
7. Student visualizations can inform lecturers and challenge lecturers’ mental models.

Generally speaking, we see many interesting perspectives in an increased use of visual methods in journalism education.

About the Authors

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Kirsten Bonde Sørensen graduated as a graphic designer in 1995. After a career as a global Art Director she changed direction, received a MA in rhetoric and later a PhD in Strategic Design (Kolding School of Design, 2011). In her PhD, she researched how to use strategic design in business development, but also among individuals. She proved, how design processes can be used for value clarification and make people reflect and also change behavior. Later, she has developed these processes, particularly among entrepreneurs, trying to connect personal- and ‘business’ values. Today, she is a Docent in Creativity at the Danish School of Media and Journalism, where she researches and offers different types of teaching within creativity, design+journalism, services/strategic design, entrepreneurship and 'life design'.

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The State of Teaching Data Journalism in Some Schools of Journalism in the Arab World

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Abstract:

Given that too much information kills the information, it has proved essential to review how the information is presented to the public. This has been supported by the Internet which has placed at the disposal of the journalists of the tools involved in the birth of the data journalism. This prompted us to reflect on the teaching of this type of journalism in the schools of journalism in the Arab world, given that the university is called to open on the employment market. Through a series of interviews with a few university professors and media professionals, we have confirmed that the teaching of data journalism a collaborative work. However, the schools of journalism in the Arab world are faced with particular challenges.

Keywords: Arab World, journalism of data, teaching, professional market digital,

Introduction

In recent years, the media practices of the public have changed following the emergence of the Internet and the diversification of devices (Veglis, 2009). In parallel, the multiplication of sources of information has put the traditional media in competition with content aggregators, social media, etc. The public was in a situation of overload information.

Given that too much information kills the information, it has proved essential to review how the information is presented to the public. This has been supported by the Internet, which has placed at the disposal of the journalists of tools to submit a new form of journalism: the data journalism (The Champion, 2012).

The data journalism has become ubiquitous word in recent years. Although it is called journalism of citizen and journalism social media formerly, as was said by Sir Tim Berners-Lee in 2010, "journalism based on the data, it is the future" (Arthur, 2010). This journalism "is to exploit databases, to extract the intelligible information and relevant, presented attractively" (Goulard, 2010). It is to make visible the information through the computer graphics, mapping and other visualizations (ibid). Considered elsewhere as a new track of journalism, the arguments that legitimize focus mainly on two dimensions, "the processing of data from the real world and the visual scene of this information to reach an understanding of the complex phenomena" (ascending and Touboul, 2013, p: 135)

What has participated in the birth of new trades (graphic designers, web designers and developers) obliging them to find new arrangements (Mercier and Pignard-Cheynel, 2014), knowing that the
professional definition of the journalist from data rests on two trends: that of the double jurisdiction and that of cooperation (ascending and Touboul, 2013, p: 136).

Appeared for the first time in the British newspaper "The Guardian", Simon Rogers said:

"As of yesterday, our development team has come up with an application which takes the raw data and turns it into an editable map. Which meant that we could produce a fantastic interactive graphic based on these figures. It’s data journalism - Editorial and developers creating something technically interesting and that changes how we work and how we see data. (Rogers, 2008).

In the Arab world, some initiatives on the part of media companies have seen the light of day, as it was confirmed during the first meeting of Arab Data Journalists’ Network, which took place in March 2018, at the American University of Cairo, and which has been moderated by journalists of data carriers of projects in various Arab countries, for example Infotimes in Egypt, Inkyfādha in Tunisia and Bayanat box in Lebanon.

Problematic

In many scientific works, researchers have always tended to study the journalistic practices or to identify the profound transformations that the business knows or will know (Mercier and Pignard-Cheynel, 2014). For example, some research proposes to interrogate forms of interventions of the actors in the media space to promote the emergence of Data journalism (ascending and Toubou, 2013).

We should also remember that two journals have however devoted a number to this, namely Médiamorphoses in 2008 and Le Cahiers du journalism in 2010. "There are the traditional perspectives of sociology of journalism, assessing the profession by the yardstick of the new skills to acquire and organizational restructuring in the Editors" (ibid.). But the transformations of the profession of a journalist must impact one day or the other formations, in a simple manner or comprehensive.

As well the context of the evolution of data journalism pushed us to reflect on the teaching of this type of journalism in the schools of journalism in the Arab world, given that the university is called in our days, to open on the employment market. Camille Laville calls elsewhere, the trainers to journalism at "essential to enter the transformations the profession at the risk of creating an unbridgeable gap between the representations that they convey and the reality of practices in constant mutation" (Laville, 2008: 96).

In fact," During this period of upheaval in technological, the editors are forced to reflect themselves to their internal reorganization, to the accompaniment of change for the journalists, and their new economic model. It was thus observed the emergence of a self-reflexive speech on the part of journalists, more often in the responsibility in the media or of training centers" (Mercier and Pignard-Cheynel, 2014, p:3). Journalists and professors or trainers of journalism, are found all involved in this reform journalism.
As well the next question we challenged: In the era of data journalism, what approach did was adopted by the universities?

Other questions arise from this central question, namely: Is what we teach already the data journalism in the schools of journalism in the Arab world? What are the profiles who teach data journalism? Is that what he is a matter in full or a diploma? What are the issues?

**Methodology and research corpus**

A scientific method is "a process of reflection guiding a set of techniques for data collection and analysis that leads to a better understanding of a phenomenon" (Mucchieli: 2004: 3). But since that the digital we invaded, we were called upon to review our scientific methodologies to study the new digital practices.

In order to respond to our problematic, we have conducted a series of semi-structured interviews of a few responsible for projects of data journalism or other, the Maghreb and the Middle East:

Walid Mejri (Editor-in-Chief of the Arabic-speaking version of "Inkyfadha "— Tunisia)
Amr Eleraqi (Executive Director and founder of "Infotimes" and President of the Arab Data Journalists’ Network - Egypt)
Mohamed Ismail (President of the Network of Yemeni Data Journalists - Yemen)
Alya Alaali (Co-founder of "Bayanet Box" — Lebanon)
Mustapha Assaad (Editor-in-Chief of the journal "Alaan" — Morocco)
Ali Srour (Co-founder and an expert in data analysis of data Aurora - Lebanon)

Other interviews were conducted with professors and directors of a few schools of journalism in the Arab world, namely:

Dr. Marwa Attia Mohamed (professor at the University of King Abdelaaziz - Saudi Arabia)
Dr. Miral Sabri (professor at the Canadian University - Egypt)
Dr. Laarbi Bouaamama (professor at the University of Mostaganem - Algeria)
Dr. Rouba Helou (professor at the University of Notre Dame Louiza - Lebanon)
Dr. Abdelatif Ben Safia (professor and assistant director of the Institute of Communication - Morocco)
Dr. Maha Abdul Majeed Salah (professor at the University of Ajman - United Arab Emirates)
Dr. Walid Hayouni (professor at the Institute of Press and Information Sciences – Tunisia)
Dr. Mouna Majdi Faradj (professor at the University of Cairo - Egypt)

Note already that the interview is a method of information collection that consists of oral interviews, individuals or groups, with several persons selected carefully in order to obtain
information on facts or of the representations, which is to analyze the degree of relevance, validity and reliability in terms of the objectives of the collection of data. With respect to the semi-directive interview, it is a speech by a theme in which the order of questions is determined according to the reactivity of the interviewed person (Keteleet and Roegiers, 1996).

Also note that the corpus of response has been treated by the technical content analysis (Mucchielli, 1976), which is based on four stages: reading of the corpus, categorization, counting and qualification to draw the results.

The interviews conducted are also strengthened by the observation of the media scene Arabic (Paterson and Domingo, 2008), to determine the presence of data journalism in the Arab world. As a consequence of all the previous, we have chosen to present the media context in the era of journalism of data, referring first to the questions of access to the information, open sources, reorganization of rooms of editors, the evolution of the activities and new skills.

The State of Data Journalism in the World Including in the Arab Countries

In a world digitized, everything is become possible to describe by the figures (Gray, Chambers and Bounegru, 2012). What has changed the data journalism except that the latter could not develop if there is not already access to data? Thus, the "a critique of the relationship between journalists and their sources has also played a major role in the design of new journalistic products" (Parasie and Dagiral, 2013, p: 2).

In our days, the citizens have more and more access to data: To the extent that the world is scanned, more and more information is stored in data formats, and to the extent that the freedom of access to information is a reality, at least in the developed countries, more and more of the data stored will become accessible to the public and journalists in one form or another (Knight, 2015).

In the case of the open data" it’s a power to act delegated by the public authorities to individuals and organizations of the civil society, which relates to the purposes, economic, social and political, via the allocation of different resources, both civic and technology (the public data and applications to their exploitation)" (Badouard, 2013). In fact, "the opening of public data and their exploitation through new applications would then constitute an nth resurgence of a "techno ideology-policy "preaching the Democratic renewal by the technological innovation". (Ibid.).

In the Arab world, access to information has always been a significant problem. According to Yahia Chekir (2019), four Arab countries only defend the access to the information through a text-laws: Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Egypt. But in most of the Arab countries, citizens are faced with many challenges, including the most important challenge is the laws guaranteeing the confidentiality of the information under the pretext of the protection of the national security. According to Chekir: "It is difficult to arrive at a state of harmonization between the right to information and the maintenance of national security, in particular of our days and this, in the
world, after the overlap in the fight against terrorism and the need to protect national security" (p.12).

On the Technological Plan, "since the middle of the years 2000, new links were forged between the computer worlds and the journalistic worlds on the altar of a desire to renew the relationship between journalists and their sources (Parasie and Dagiral, 2013, p: 2). At this time, many American newspapers have hired the journalists who have computer skills, for the design of "web applications" to journalistic value, namely: infographics, databases, maps, etc. (ibid.).

Subsequently, the rise of the movement defending the opening of public data to 2005 in the major North American cities, has encouraged political activists, computer programmers, journalists to demand the release of the data produced by the public authorities. This is part of the transparency of Governments and the participation of citizens (Lathrop and Ruma, 2010). For example, the case of MapLight.org, a web site launched in 2007 by Daniel Newman (Programmer, contractor and a political activist) which allowed to cross the votes of the members of the Congress with the funding they have received from groups of interests (Lathrop and Ruma, 2010: 223-232).

Some models developed also exist in the Arab world, namely: Infotimes (2012), Inkyfada (2014), Bayanet box (2018), and others.

During a questionnaire launched online in 2018, in which responded 60 journalists from the 8 Arab countries, although 83% of the interviewed person do not know data extraction, the majority has confirmed to be ready to learn how to use Microsoft Excel considered as a vital tool for a data journalist. Similarly, the majority of respondents confirmed that they meet two problems as journalists of data: The access to the information and the availability of information. But in some countries, the Access to Information Act exists, except that the journalists do not benefit.

This does not prevent to confirm that the journalists of Arab countries have obtained these last years several opportunities (Abdul Majeed, 2018), including:

* The emergence of new Arab journalism agencies that provide training programs on data journalism (such as Info times, the Arab Data Journalists’ Network, ARIJ Network).

* The beginning of data Journalism academic races, merged with online media diplomat and programs in several Arab Universities. (Examples: Central University in Tunisia, the American University, and the Ahram Canadian University in Egypt).

* The continuous and increasing efforts for spreading data journalism practice among Arab journalists. For example, the Info Times team won the first place winner for the best small data journalism team in 2018, in the data journalism competition organized by the international journalist’s network.

* The adoption of "smart" and "E-governments" systems in several Arab countries.

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Recent issues with the Arab media credibility that increases the need for data journalism

Similarly, competitions in the field of data journalism have been launched in the world to promote the spread of this type of journalism and the sharing of knowledge. The first "Data Journalism Awards" held in Paris on 30 and 31 May 2012. The organizers have received 300 nominations and 57 projects have been nominated. These projects have been divided into three categories: Investigative journalism leads from Data (Data Driven investigation), data visualization and the narration (Data Visualization and storytelling) and web and mobile applications around data (data-driven applications). For each category, two projects have been rewarded, the first of national or international scope and the second of local or regional scope.

In the Arab world, the Network of Arab data Journalists’ Network has launched at its second annual conference held on 23, 24 and 25 March 2019, at the British University of Cairo, two types of competition: Investigative journalism leads from Data (Data Driven investigation), data visualization and the narration (Data Visualization and storytelling). The organizers have received 50 projects of which 12 projects have been retained in the short list (Shortlist) and three candidates have won.

The Teaching of Data Journalism

Nowadays, the University is called upon more and more to respond to the request of the market to train graduates likely to find opportunities for hiring in the future.

As to the journalism of data, it is imposed for some years in the schools of journalism in the US after having been affected by the professional world. In fact, "in the academic world, computational methods applied to report mainly did not have an impact on other university programs or how journalism was taught. Instead, professional journalists taught other professional journalists the new techniques, and only as those data journalists began to enter academia did data journalism education begin to take a broader hold in that setting" (Berret and Phillips, 2016, p: 21). It is indeed the case also schools of journalism in the Arab world.

In addition, in 1989, Elliot Jaspin has launched the Institute of Missouri for the Computer-Assisted Reporting (MICAR) at the University of Missouri where he has given courses and organized training sessions for the benefit of professional journalists. Four years later, in 1994, a subsidy of the Freedom Forum helped the Institute to strengthen its presence and to become an integral part of the IRE as NICAR (National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting). But in 1993, NICAR has launched its conference "computer-assisted reporting conference" in Raleigh, North of Caroline, which has attracted several participants. This event has become an annual appointment inescapable international, during which the new generation of journalists and editors in chief learn to use spreadsheets or query data and with the use of maps and statistics for lead to interesting results (ibid.). This event is only a solid bridge between the academic world and the professional world.

The first experience of teaching of data journalism at the university took place in the United States, to Arizona State University in 1996, followed by the Columbia University in 2003, to arrive to
count in 2016, at least 63 technical data sheets of courses covering the journalism based on the data, the web journalism and the visualization of data, in 113 schools of journalism (*ibid.*).

In the Arab world, where schools of journalism are not numerous enough in all the Arab countries, the teaching of the data journalism is recent. The years of experience in the field of education of Data journalism vary between a year and five years. Although the experience is recent at the University of Cairo in Egypt or the Central University of Tunis, the University of Mostaganem in Algeria, the University of Notre Dame Louiza in Lebanon, the Institute of Communication in Morocco and the Institute of Press and Information Sciences in Tunisia, have begun to teach this kind of journalism since at least three years.

As well, it is clear that the teaching of data journalism in these schools of journalism in the Arab world has evolved in parallel with the evolution of the media scene. During our interviews conducted with professors interviewed, six professors of the total of eight, teach journalism from the data to their students, although these professors have all of the technical skills developed.

As for professors, at the time where the profession of journalism is feminized, there is no precise distinction. It is sufficient to have a minimum of three years of experience as a professional of the media or have the technical skills developed as a professor, to be able to teach journalism from the data.

Subsequently, two professors interviewed, of the total of eight are limited to teach journalism digitally, but they have confirmed the usefulness of this type of journalism. This confirms the statements of the journalist trainer Alain Jonannès that of our days, "a journalist should be interested in the programming to be able to discuss meaningfully with the programmers, know what they can bring, what it is reasonable to ask them" (Joannès, 2010: 151).

Similarly, the majority of schools of journalism who teaches journalism is limited to a chapter integrated with the course of electronic journalism. However, the Higher Institute of Communication in Morocco has added a full field named "journalism of data". This course is facilitated by a professional of the Moroccan media. This experience is regarded as being the most developed among the skills presented.

About the content taught, the majority of professors interviewed grants an interest to theoretical knowledge as well as practices, relating to the journalism of data. These teachers have confirmed as well that it is necessary that the student has already an idea on the evolution of this type of journalism and models prevalent in the world. Similarly, for media professionals, interviewed, who are invited to assume the journalism course in data. With their opinion, discover the journalistic models based on the data journalism presents a fundamental step in the training of a student. These models are for the students a source of inspiration in their next journalistic work based on the data. Of their sides, the professional professors are based elsewhere on their work as examples to present to the students, since they tell the realities and facts close to the context of the student. The Tunisian journalist Walid Mejri explains:

"Our course was aimed at presenting the tools and tell stories through data. It was 85 percent of the course based on the practice. As to the rest of the course, it is useful to explain to students the concepts, software, the features as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the tools. In the framework of our course, I return of course, on
models or examples of data visualization in the world including when we present the possible formats to adapt to put in advance of quantitative or qualitative evidence".

Thus "the exploration of new forms of columnist to the new tools and strategies to Eve of online information, outline of new fundamentals for the journalistic practice" (the cam & Trédan, 2008: 111). Therefore, "It now seems impossible to consider the teaching of journalism which does not understand learning the techniques of digital uptake of the real, or dissemination tools online, including so-called services of Web 2.0 (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)" (Estienne & Vandamme, 2010: 163).

The professors and media professionals have confirmed that they have met within their universities problems about journalism education data, namely:

The absence of the teaching staff necessary to teach this type of journalism

The lack of appropriate software and the use of online applications for free

The lack of bibliographic references dealing journalism of data

The modesty of the academic infrastructure (the quality of the Internet, the quality of computers, etc.).

Note already that many researchers have studied the use of the production Assisted by Computer (OAP) in the halls of drafting, generally linking to technological changes: the adoption of computers for the production and archiving and access to an extensive range of electronic resources (Knight, 2015). What makes the quality of the infrastructure The primary challenge of the professional world and academia.

Subsequently, some professors think that a student at the level of license in journalism was not necessary technology skills to master the journalism of data. This type of journalism should be taught to their opinion, to students in the more advanced level.

Walid Mejri has even proposed the establishment of a master "viewing of data and graphic designs." Although this kind of a master already exists in many European and US universities, such experience will see the day for the first time, next year at the Lebanese University. Ali Srour resumes his expertise on the data-driven journalism program:

"About the Data Driven journalism program itself, the main idea was to provide a multi-dimensional program for both students and journalism instructors. Training the faculty members on the data literacy and data-driven journalism tools, materials, and curriculum is a prerequisite for any data-driven journalism program.

In this matter, we were facing two different boxes: The first checkbox is applying a data journalism program on top of the traditional data journalism curriculum during the significant races (like editing some tracks, providing additional classes, and training on a real-time projects) in addition to developing a particular data-driven Journalism Program Senior Project program in collaboration with third parties (data specialists, designers, and developers). The second box is applying for a new full data-driven journalism program major curriculum so that students will be enrolled in the program from the very beginning".
Remember already that in the majority of Arab countries, there is always a difficulty to put in place a new academic program, which makes the establishment of a data-driven journalism program, a difficult mission to undertake. Ali Srour explains the situation in Lebanon:

"Here in Lebanon, both programs have been successfully applied in some universities, while some other universities are still studying the best concept that fits their strategy. Some of the multimedia schools were able to migrate our proposals with their current digital journalism programs and that was also a kind of success. In addition, we have collaborated with some schools on training their staff members and providing deep technical and conceptual workshops to be able to master the program as well as mastering the followup procedures. And finally, some other institutions preferred to work with us as Data Consultants to provide the best use of data in their desired programs".

Walid Mejri went further by confirming that the journalism students do not have experience in journalism in the field, and they do not have sources of information, do not know collect information and do not master modern technologies. It has even confirmed that often the student does not have an account on Gmail while it is called upon to use the tools of Google. This makes the work of the professor of complex journalism data in the absence of technological skills required.

By contrast, Ali Srour confirmed:

"In any data journalism program, a journalist should be aware of understanding different technologies and using different tools to provide their final reports. No. IT skills are required at all, goal else, knowing how to use Excel and its data features, for example, is a must for any data journalist to use when manipulating and using row data".

In his opinion:

"When it comes to challenges that students might face during the program lifetime, we are able to identify many challenges like: technical background level, ability to understand Web development architectures, ability to work in teams with designers/developers/and Data engineers, and ability to work individually on each part of the data-driven content they intend to provide”.

To succeed in the teaching of data journalism, Dr. Laarbi Bouaamama has proposed to limit the number of students participating in this course. Concerning the Dr. Abdelatif Ben Safia, Dr. Maha Abdul Majeed Salah, Dr. Walid Hayouni and Dr. Mouna Majdi Faradj, they have proposed to concentrate much more on the practical activities for those students have an opportunity to realize the theoretical knowledge. As well, the data journalism as the course will take the format of homework or a practical, within a computer Lab.

For its part, the Moroccan journalist Mustapha Assaad offers not only the teaching of Data journalism as a material as a whole but also:

The spread of service of data journalism within the media as a kind of recognition of the usefulness of this type of journalism;
The awarding of a Prize of Data journalism to students and journalists;

The publication and dissemination of the work of students in data journalism from media;

The contribution to the spread of the media and electronic sites specialized in Journalism from the data.

Dr. Mouna Majdi Farad has even proposed to organize training sessions on the data journalism to the benefit of the professors of schools of journalism to democratize the knowledge and making the teaching of this type of journalism possible. But this does not prevent to confirm that the learning of Data journalism in the schools of journalism is today, a collaborative work between the academic world and the professional world.

In this regard, Alya Alaali confirmed:

"To fill the existing gap in the current number of journalists from data on the labor market, universities should not consider the analysis of data, the economy and the visualization of data as areas of complementary studies. They should be the cornerstones of a journalism program. These topics should be included in a basic program followed by all journalists. A good understanding of the data is not a luxury in the era of big data, of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automatic learning. It is rather a need for the media to keep abreast and to avoid giving false information".

As a media professional, Walid Mejri has recommended the experiences of the hackathon, which present laboratory applications to journalism students to develop their skills in data journalism (Parasie, 2018). Some lessons have taken place elsewhere in some Arab countries, namely Tunisia and Egypt. The first experience in Tunisia was held on 17 and 18 April 2017. It is the Tunisia Data Driven Journalism Hackathon launched by Tunisia E-GOV Society and the African Center for the Training of Journalists and Communicators (CAPJC). But this first initiative was followed after by many competitions of this kind including the "Mapathon 2019", organized by Tunisia E-GOV Society, open Data Forum and the Central University of Tunis, on 27 and 28 April 2019.

Generally, in the hackathon, although teams were composed of journalists, designers and web developers, some believe that the journalist must have skills in programming while being able to read, understand and put in the forms the scientific data and statistics complex, be a "journalist-hacker" (Parasie, 2011). In the world, training for developers has been launched by the School of Journalism of Medill at Northwestern University. At Columbia University, journalism and technology are taught in the same curriculum (ascending and Touboul, 2013).

In addition, note that professional journalists are taking advantage of the training sessions in the field of journalism of data. Although they are graduates of a school of journalism, it is not clear that they would have the practices developed in this type of journalism. Walid Mejri explains:

"There is a difference between a student and a professional journalist. The student is still in the learning mode and has no experience in the field of journalism. As well, the professional journalist knows better than the student the usefulness of this kind of journalism. The journalist attends the TRAINING, everything already starting with"
The Yemeni Journalist Mohamed Ismail confirmed that the graduates of schools of journalism do not necessarily have the skills developed in the field of data journalism. He said:

"On the contrary, graduates of journalism schools develop their skills in this type of journalism through the training sessions that organize the institutions and organizations such as Internews and the Network of Journalists of Yemeni data".

Note also that the data journalism requires a good culture on IT, new skills that are not the prerogative of the majority of the journalists who have more literary culture. Already, journalists are not familiar with databases, data cleaning and data interpretation, nor of the new data visualization tools.

**Conclusion**

The debate on the data journalism that bears the opinion of the professors and professionals collected through this article, concerns the adaptation of schools of journalism to mutations of the media, to the culture of innovation, the journalistic versatility, computer and digital agility.

In most of the schools of journalism in the Arab world, there is not a clear policy in the teaching of data Journalism. It is an initiative taken by the professors of the course of a digital press or the electronic media. But the actors of the training in journalism are more and more convinced of the usefulness of this type of journalism even if it is to concentrate sometimes on tools too quickly perishable foods saw the technological evolution continues.

By contrast, it is clear that the cooperation between the actors of the universe and socio-professional teachers and researchers is beneficial for the learning of this type of journalism. It is a collaborative work.

Already, the media companies are facing a major economic crisis that makes it unable to invest in data journalism (Abdul Majeed, 2018), which makes the presence of a multitasking journalist is a utility to adapt to the new media practices.

Finally, the teaching of data journalism is not in arrears in the schools of journalism in the Arab world. On the contrary, it has evolved in parallel with the evolution of the media scene Arabic. But the professors are called to confront some challenges to democratize the teaching of this type of journalism.

**About the Author**

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To Listen and To Lead: Taking Lessons from Newsroom Ethnography into the Classroom

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Abstract

In attempt to better prepare students for a disrupted media environment, the focus of journalism education seems to have shifted towards empowering graduates with digital, entrepreneurial and data journalism skills. Nevertheless, and as argued in this paper, educators should not lose sight of the softer skills needed in the newsroom. Informed by the findings of a recent ethnographic study in a South African digital-first newsroom, this paper contends that the concerns and comments of working journalists should help guide curriculum renewal. The conclusions of the study suggests that students should also be guided towards self-reflection on issues such as leadership, communication and cultural adaptability.

Introduction

Journalism and its practitioners are living in “a time when flux seems to be the only certainty” (Siegelbaum & Thomas, 2016, p. 387). There is a never-ending onslaught on the practice and profession due to variables ranging from economic downturns and declining advertising revenue, to the rise of social media, disinformation and challenges to the boundaries of professional newswork. With an industry facing seismic disruptions to its very core, concerns around what skills a new generation of journalists should be equipped with are only natural (Meier & Schützeneder, 2019; Larrondo Ureta & Peña Fernández, 2018; Williams, Guglietti, & Haney, 2018). Jackson, Thorsen and Reardon (2019, p. 1) explain that journalism students are faced with “a career path that is increasingly precarious, fluid and unpredictable”.

There are no easy solutions to the challenges faced by either the newsroom or the classroom. Nevertheless, one thing remains clear: the journalism graduates of today will have to help reinvent the newsroom of tomorrow (Meier & Schützeneder, 2019).

The need for journalism graduates to innovate constantly has led to an upsurge in discussions and research in areas such as entrepreneurial and data journalism training (Heravi, 2019; Singer & Broersma, 2019; Barnes & de Villiers Scheepers, 2018). As Meier and Schützeneder (2019, p.2), for instance, highlight: “The ability to innovate, pioneering spirit, and the will to experiment have become vital aspects of journalistic competence.” Or in the words of Barnes and De Villiers Scheepers (2018, p. 97): “[A]n entrepreneurial mindset requires journalism graduates to be adaptable, innovative and proactive as they enter a career where disruptive change is now part of the landscape.”

While skills geared specifically to a disrupted digital landscape are certainly needed and worth developing, I would argue, along with Ferrucci (2018), that an overemphasis on what might be
called newer skills can lead to a loss of the “basics”. His interviews with 29 digital journalism “veterans” based in the United States, led Ferrucci (2018, p. 411) to the conclusion that these experienced journalists believe new entrants “have more technology skills but lack traditional journalism skills, which potentially leaves them at a significant disadvantage when they enter the field”. Some of the skills these veterans found lacking in new journalists include the ability to think critically and an understanding of the need for accountability in journalism (Ferrucci, 2018).

Through my own research, I have similarly concluded that journalism education and training institutions should not lose sight of so-called softer skills when preparing students for an increasingly challenging workplace. I thus concur with the views of Bronstein and Fitzpatrick (2015, p.83) who argue that:

*It is incumbent upon us to redesign curricula so that we are training not only technically adept, thoughtful practitioners, but also individuals who have the interpersonal skills, the psychological attributes, and the global sensitivities to be the next generation of mass communication leaders.*

In support of the call for including skills such as listening, communicating, leadership and cultural adaptability in journalism curricula, this paper discusses the findings of a recent ethnographic study of a digital-first newsroom in South Africa. The concerns and comments of journalists working at this news outlet inform my suggestions around what soft skills will help journalism graduates to thrive in the present-day, digital-driven newsroom.

**Newwork Ethnography at a Digital-First News Publication**

Using ethnography to study newwork has a long-established legacy stretching back over six decades (Thomsen, 2013; Jordaan, 2018). British media scholar Simon Cottle, who famously called for a “second wave” (Cottle, 2000) of newsroom ethnography, explains that:

*Ethnographic studies of news production provide invaluable insights into the nature and determinants of news production and a necessary corrective, therefore, to grand speculative claims and theories about the news media.* (Cottle, 2007, p.1)

I also believe that journalism studies researchers need to return to the very places and spaces where newwork happens if they wish to grasp the intricate nature of the challenges modern-day journalists face, and to explore how journalists cope with such challenges.

The ethnographic study that informs this paper took me back to Media24, the South African media company where I started my career as journalist more than 15 years ago. I had worked at various print publications at Media24, a subsidiary of the media conglomerate Naspers. When I started my fieldwork in May 2016, I had been in academia for around seven years. As a result, the newsroom I entered looked very different from the one I left at the end of 2009.

I chose to study Netwerk24, an Afrikaans-language news website and newsroom – partly because this publication developed out of the print publications for which I had worked. Wolcott (2008, p.30) encourages ethnographers to choose a place or setting that is “of genuine interest” to them, and then develop their focus while conducting the fieldwork. Netwerk24 was initially created in August 2014 as digital home for Media24’s one national and three regional Afrikaans print
newspapers. This publication has since evolved to include the content of around 35 newspapers and 11 magazines.

Over a period of 18 months, I spent more than 250 hours in the various geographically dispersed offices where the Netwerk24 journalists work, and did interviews with around 60 participants, ranging from the chief executive officer of Media24 to junior journalists. Out of the 60 journalists and news managers I interviewed, 52 had at least an undergraduate qualification – mostly in the field of journalism and media studies. I spent little time on the output of the journalists, or the content of the website itself. My focus was rather on how and why journalists do what they do.

The interview data, complemented by photographs and some internal documents, were analysed thematically using Atlas.ti. I relied on the combination of two distinct theoretical concepts, habitus and actor-network theory, to contextualise my study. The theoretical departure point of the study is, however, not the focus of this paper.

I can summarise the overall conclusion of my study (Jordaan, 2018) thus: The newswork network at Netwerk24 is undergoing transitions and will probably remain unstable because of continuous experimentation – often at short notice. How journalists experience and cope with this instability does not rely on how well-equipped they feel to use the most recent digital media technologies. Rather, it depends on whether they experience their contributions as useful enough to make them a capable and useful part of the newswork network. In other words, they want to feel they have agency to help transform and build the future of Netwerk24. Based on my study, I argue that there needs to be open and clear communication on the side of editorial managers at Netwerk24, and Media24 as a whole, if the aim is to realise journalists’ need to belong and make a difference.

In the sections to follow, I will highlight two specific themes that emerged from my study and that I believe are relevant for the journalism classroom of the present – and the future. The first theme centres on the need for proper internal communication and the second on leadership and culture.

**To Listen: The Importance of Internal Communication**

You hear it through the grapevine, and then you ask them if it is true, and they say ‘Yes’ and that is it. I have started to accept that if you hear gossip, it is true. - Junior journalist, Netwerk24

When I started my fieldwork, the journalists who produce content for Netwerk24 had experienced a massive disruption in the form of a merger between former print-only journalists, and a small team of journalists who had already been working within a fast-paced, digital-first environment for six months. The announcement around this merger was made less than a month before it took effect. The chief executive officer of Media24, parent company of Netwerk24, told staff in an internal memo that with this merger, they will “move into the fast lane”. The focus of this memo was on some of the practical implications of the move, such as workflow and distribution of responsibility. She seemingly also wanted to allay some fears by saying that this is “not an exercise to reduce headcount and costs”, while emphasising the fact that the company was taking “the right steps” to accelerate its digital future.
This merger inevitable lead to clashes around cultures, practices, routines, technologies and personalities. These clashes were seemingly exacerbated by a perceived lack of clear internal communication around the potential impact of the changes. Journalists, especially the ones who had been working at the print publications, felt excluded, ill-informed and uncertain about the future. As a senior journalist in the Cape Town office remarked shortly after the merger:

I think one of the most important things that makes you feel safe in your career, is that you are part of your own career choices; not when a person is not part of it, when it is forced on you, even if it is sugar-coated. We are not stupid.

Despite the apparent unhappiness on the side of the journalists, it could be argued that they were in fact informed by, for instance, the internal memo referenced above. However, communicating with staff in this way may not help to dispel unease, as illustrated by comments made by one of the deputy editors of Netwerk24 at the time. She told me that even as senior editorial staff members they do not always know when the big announcements are coming:

We also read it in the [company] newsletter. That means you do not know what to say to people. I think especially when things can have a big effect on people it feels horrible to say: ‘I do not have an answer for you’. Because it can be interpreted as you do not want to tell me, you are lying, or how could you not have known.

It was thus clear from both my observations and conversations with journalists that they were far less concerned about how emerging digital media technologies might influence their newswork in a digital-first environment. My field and interview notes were rather full of references to how these journalists experience what happens around them, and whether they feel informed and prepared enough to cope with new challenges and changes. Shortly after the merger, for instance, a journalist told me that there was a lot of confusion in the newsroom:

People do not know where they fit in and they do not know where everything is going. I think it also causes some people to start losing interest a little and to be less motivated, unfortunately.

Questions around how well the merger – and resultant changes – were communicated to the editorial team are therefore certainly valid. The former national head of news agrees that the “goal” of the publication could have been communicated better from the outset. According to him, there was no opportunity created for a senior person to get the team together to say: “This is the route we are now going to take; this is the vision.” He added that “people are not against change, but they are tired of the uncertainty”.

This uncertainty continued alongside a high staff turnover – also in senior positions. With each new editor came a new set of expectations and a new way of communicating. One production editor, who made a plea for some stability at Netwerk24, suggested to me that “bosses who say they are not going to come and change everything” do not really exist. At the time of writing, Netwerk24 is working with the fourth editor in less than five years. The most recent editor told me that she communicated with journalists about exactly what their target is – also in terms of subscribers and page views:
I also told them if they do not want to be here, then they should rather not be here. Because only if you want to be here, you will be able to keep up with the pace and handle the pressure.

I would thus argue that staff morale and motivation are largely reliant on how well the vision, in conjunction with the practical implications thereof, are relayed to the people who actually have to enact this vision. As the national head of news told me: “Routines and processes can always be fine-tuned and improved. The most important thing is the culture – and unity around the vision for the future.” In addition, the chief executive officer of Media24 told me that she understands and have sympathy with people in the newsroom who have a sense of loss and loss of belonging. She believed that if this feeling was still present in the newsrooms, she would have to pay a lot of attention to better communication in order to make people feel like these newsrooms are “their home”.

Based on my ethnographic exploration at Netwerk24, I further argue that this type of internal communication is crucial during times of disruption and transition – especially in the media environment where change is the only constant. News and business managers need to listen more closely to what exactly the needs are of their editorial teams, instead of focusing on short-term solutions and the implementation of the newest digital media technologies. This apparent wish for news managers and editors to listen to their subordinates and peers, confirms to me the need for journalism educators to equip their students properly with skills that stretch beyond the practical.

To Lead: Navigating Culture and Personalities

It is not as though we call everyone together every morning to sing ‘Kumbaya’ and remind them that this is how we work with each other. It is the invisible glue that keeps colleagues together. - Editor, Netwerk24.

Closely related to communication are issues around newsroom culture and the role individual personalities play within this cultural environment. As mentioned above, Netwerk24’s newsroom actually consists of a series of geographically dispersed offices. Some journalists also work by themselves in more remote parts of the country. I personally visited the two main newsrooms, in Cape Town and Johannesburg, as well as two smaller regional offices, in Bloemfontein and Pretoria. The other journalists I interviewed via email.

I quickly realised that, as in most other research, context is key. The various news offices all produced content for the same publication and were supposed to work according to the same guidelines and deadlines. Yet, there were noticeable differences in the way they related to the Netwerk24 brand and vision, and how they described what they view as good digital journalism practices. In Johannesburg and Cape Town, for instance, the small team of journalists who had started to work digital-first before the merger literally moved into new offices, away from the newspaper team. The editor of Netwerk24 at that time said it felt like they were working for a “start-up”:

I think the fact that the office was situated at 24.com [the digital division of Media24], out of the newspaper office, played a big part. When I walked into 24.com’s offices in Adderley Street on the
first day, it looked like something out of Google. There were foosball tables and coffee machines and everything was out in the open.

The merger meant that these journalists had to move back to a more traditional newspaper environment. The editor of the website’s features and analysis pages, who worked in Johannesburg, told me that they had been through a “tough ordeal” because of the changes wrought to their environment – both physically and more conceptually. According to this editor, relationships soured when the original team of digital-first journalists moved away from the newspaper office:

It caused a feeling of estrangement between digital and the newspaper. It caused estrangement between colleagues who had been working together happily for years, and who had a good relationship. Then there was the move back, and I don’t think those relationships have been completely restored yet.

Journalists in the smaller, regional offices did not have the same experience of the initial move or the merger. This could partly be ascribed to the fact that there were few changes in terms of their physical environment, and because the editorial managers they reported to remained the same.

Another element of the merger that disrupted journalists, personally and in their work routines, was the apparent lack of a clear message about how they should identify themselves to their sources or people they interact with. Netwerk24 was a new brand and was often mistaken for its sister publication, the English website News24. Editorial managers were seemingly also not in agreement about how, or even if, journalists should link the Netwerk24 brand with the printed newspapers. Some editorial managers discouraged the journalists to link the brand to the newspapers, because they wanted to build Netwerk24 as a separate entity. Others actively encouraged journalists to use the well-established newspapers as bridges to the digital publication. Journalists were therefore understandably confused about what the relationship between the printed products and their digital “home” was. In addition, and especially shortly after the merger, the journalists in principle reported to the digital editors, but sometimes still received assignments or instructions from the print editors. The confusion about reporting lines was especially tricky for journalists who had previously, and often very closely, worked with the newspaper editors.

It is noteworthy then that individual personalities, the way they communicate and their interactions with journalists have a telling influence on the general culture, or what the journalists often referred to as the “vibe”, in the newsroom. A journalist told me, for instance, that having new people in senior positions on a regular basis is a big adjustment: “You have to start to prove yourself again if the person does not know you, or you have to get used to that person’s way of doing things”.

One journalist bemoaned the fact that the merger led to a loss of urgency in the newsroom to produce news fit for a digital-first publication: “Not that I am saying we should be checked-up on, but it is about the energy of the people in the office. That is extremely important.”

Based on my observations and interviews at Netwerk24, I would thus also argue that journalists, but more importantly news managers, should be well-versed in how to manage expectations, culture clashes and uncertainty in the newsroom. As the chief executive officer at Media24 told me:
I think if you are dealing with such dramatic changes, it is incredibly important that you have people who can communicate very well; people who really understand the vision; and who have the ability to take people along with them on the journey. So for me the leadership part is just as important as the technical ability to be a news editor or editor.

Translated into journalism education, I believe my research shows there is an urgent need to cultivate leadership skills, and by extension the skills needed to manage change and disruption – on the newsroom floor. Whoever trains young journalists, should also make them aware that the personal touch or approach they bring to the newsroom can have a telling effect on the broader culture in the newsroom. It is impossible to produce journalists and editorial managers that are as similar as if they have just come off some sort of training assembly line. Yet it is possible to help aspiring newsworkers understand and manage their leadership approaches and how they can strive to create a collaborative atmosphere in the newsrooms they end up in.

The need for people who can lead a newsroom through disruptions and transitions was implicit in an interview I had with the current editor of Netwerk24. She said she realises the various disruptions have “traumatised” the people in the newsroom and that there is a “measure of negativity that needs to be overcome”. Importantly, however, she added: “I hope that there will come a point, or that there will be enough people in the system who are inspired so that it will overpower the negative energy.” My argument is that proper leadership skills and the ability to manage disruptions to the culture in the newsroom, are essential for building the newsrooms of tomorrow. It is therefore incumbent upon journalism educators to look beyond the technical skills needed to function in a digital environment. My research has shown that journalists, as a rule, adopt and adapt digital media technologies, such as WhatsApp, as naturalised tools used to enhance more traditional newswork practices. As I argue in the presentation of my findings:

Journalists use digital media technologies in order to enhance their newswork and they bemoan the fact that such technologies can increase their workload. Yet they often consider these technologies mere tools (or intermediaries) to enact deeply rooted ideas, or ideals, of what it takes to be a good journalist. (Jordaan, 2018, p. 138)

Students should therefore be equipped not only in how to engage with digital media technologies, but also how to handle personality and cultural clashes in their future workplace.

From the Newsroom to the Classroom: Teaching Soft(er) Skills to Foster Future-Fit Graduates

The call to enhance journalism curricula through the cultivation of skills that are less concrete and less practical than writing and digital competencies, is not new to the lexicon of journalism studies researchers. In fact, the age-old practice versus theory debate clearly rages on (see for instance: Deuze, 2006; Newton, 2012; Creech & Mendelson, 2015; Hermann, 2017; Larrondo Ureta & Peña Fernández, 2018; Meier & Schützeneder, 2019). Deuze (2006, p.21) explains how the divergent expectations and approaches of journalism practitioners versus journalism academics are often captured as “binary oppositions [that] function extremely well to dig fictitious trenches to separate the social systems of journalism and the academe”. Or as Creech and Mendelson (2015, p.145) contend:
For journalism as a profession to adapt to changing conditions, commentators from the academy and the industry alike target their interventions at journalism education, and these debates about the nature of journalism education often reveal competing visions of both journalism and the role of individual reporters.

This paper is not an attempt at reconciling the differences between what industry professionals expect and what journalism educators and academics think are important. It is rather an exploration of how the experiences of journalists who currently work in digital newsrooms can contribute to shaping the way aspiring journalists are prepared for the workplace. In other words, establishing what the concerns of journalists are around their daily routines, practices and culture, arguably sheds light on how a new generations of journalists can be prepared to address such concerns themselves.

As the website for this congress highlights, journalism schools face the double challenge of managing student expectations of what they should be taught, as well as the need to relook the actual academic teaching methods (WJEC, n.d.). I would be so bold as to add that the concerns raised by individual journalists already working in the field add further fuel to the fire of uncertainty about the future of journalism education and training. By incorporating what actually happens in the newsroom on a more experiential level, journalism educators can sketch for themselves, and their students, a holistic picture of what disruptions to the industry actually mean for them. It would be to everyone’s detriment to ignore journalists’ personal experiences, their need to be listened to and their willingness to follow leaders that can make clear and unambiguous decisions during times of disruption. Like everyone else, journalists just want to feel they belong somewhere.

The few ideas I have formulated here for consideration during curriculum renewal are thus directly inspired by what Netwerk24 journalists view as challenges and opportunities in a digital-first newsroom. I believe that aspiring journalists and media workers should at least be made aware of how important it is to have a basic understanding of the following:

- **How to reflect on your own abilities**: Encouraging students to reflect on their own abilities, strengths and weaknesses is not an easy feat. However, through formalising self-reflection, students may become more aware of the role their own personality and approach can play within the broader newsroom context. In other words: students should be expected to write reports on what they believe their contribution to group projects, such as the running of a class website, is. In our postgraduate journalism programme at Stellenbosch University, we have instituted a grade focused on “workplace proficiency”. Students have to grade, and then defend, themselves in the same way as regular journalists would have to do during a performance evaluation conversation with their line managers.

- **What is effective interpersonal communication**: Students should practise how to properly engage with others when working in a newsroom environment. Experiential learning projects, in the tradition of the “teaching hospital” (Newton, 2012) model, can serve as a good training ground in this regard. However, the focus of the training should not just be on the output, routines and practices of the students. More attention should be paid to how and why the students do what they do. Opportunities should be created for students to gauge how their classmates react to the way they communicate. From my experience as convenor of a postgraduate journalism course, formal
and informal student focus groups can be an effective way of gathering and discussing such feedback.

- **What it means to lead and inspire:** I concur with Bronstein and Fitzpatrick (2015, p.78) that students need more than just leadership skills; they need “early exposure” to a leadership mind-set, or “a purposefully cultivated understanding of oneself as capable of exercising leadership in daily context”. This view of leadership supports the notion that students must be taught and encouraged to do self-reflection. As discussed above, my research at Netwerk24 has shown that individuals in the newsroom can have an enormous effect on what happens around them. Journalists are prone to using the names of specific journalists or news managers when they try to explain what inspires or demotivates them in the newsroom. Naturally it is not possible to influence students’ personal idiosyncrasies and I am not suggesting that educators should try.

What I am rather advocating for is a more formal curriculum-enhancing approach to cultivating leadership. Instead of allowing stronger, or louder, students to always take the lead during class discussions or experiential training exercises, educators should skilfully coax all students to realise and develop their own leadership skills. It has been my experience as educator over the past eight years that some students surprise even themselves when they are put in a position they did not necessarily apply for or want.

- **How to understand what culture means:** It is not easy to define what the culture of a newsroom or organisation actually refers to. In a seminal set of essays, American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973, p. 4-5) cites a variety of sources to define culture as everything from “the total way of life of a people” to “whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members”. More relevant to the context of newwork perhaps, is the finding of one of the earliest newsroom ethnographer, Warren Breed, that journalists are not officially inducted into their newsroom’s culture, but that they instead learn what is expected of them “by osmosis” (Breed, 1955, p. 328). No formal induction into newsroom culture therefore takes place. It could be argued that journalists simply learn to know what is “acceptable” in a specific newsroom by observing and copying their peers. The question then becomes whether students can in any way be prepared to find and manage their position within the cultural context of the newsroom. My suggestion is that the mere awareness of what it means to be part of a specific group of people, whether in a physical or digital newwork space, would go a long way in preparing students for the challenges they might face in the so-called real world. Once again, self-reflection becomes critical. Students should be expected to continuously take note of their own role within the group, whether they are the editor-in-chief or the person responsible for drawing up the shift roster.

I want to reiterate that these suggestions are mainly intended as starting points, or perhaps rather road markers, for continued debates on what skills journalism students need in their arsenal should they wish to take on the daunting task of joining the media industry today. My main point of contention remains that it is not sufficient to school students in the use of digital media technologies – or even to aid them in developing data journalism skills and an entrepreneurial spirit.

In addition, I would argue that the skills highlighted here crosses disciplinary boundaries which ultimately enhances their value. Whether journalism graduates end up in the newsroom, a public relations office or a coffee shop with Wi-Fi where they work as freelancers, they will always need to know the limits of their own abilities; be able to properly communicate; step up to lead when
the moment calls for it; and, realise that every new environment comes with its own cultural challenges.

Conclusion

The study that underpins this paper admittedly did not explicitly focus on journalism education and training. Nevertheless, I believe that ethnographic explorations of newswork allow the researcher to access “not only what the journalists say they do but also what they actually do” (Møller Hartley, 2013, p. 574). In other words, my conclusions are not only based on what the journalists told me, but also how they acted and interacted with each other during the 18 months I (intermittently) spent in the newsroom.

I also readily admit that drawing conclusions from an ethnography of one research site could be challenged as being too narrow in its focus. Yet, Netwerk24 remains a good example of a digital-first, paid-for-news platform – definitely in the South African context, and arguably more broadly on the continent. When I completed my fieldwork in October 2017, Netwerk24 had around 22 300 subscribers, already making it the largest paid-for news platform in South Africa. More recently, this subscription base had grown to more than 45 000. In early 2019, Netwerk24 was also nominated for an International News Media’s Association (INMA) Global Media Award.

My contention is therefore that findings and conclusions from the newsroom and journalists who create content for Netwerk24, can serve as a valid reference point for further explorations into what exactly happens where and how news is created for a digital-first news platform. More importantly, I would argue that exploring and analysing the experiences and responses of journalists at Netwerk24 provide valuable insights into how aspiring journalists should be prepared for the present-day digital newsroom.

The theme of this congress emphasises the fact that journalism education has been in unchartered waters for a while. There does not seem to be any signs that we will make (stable and predictable) land soon. This uncertainty makes the need to innovate and experiment even more pressing. Yet, as I argue throughout this paper, such experiments should not happen at the expense of softer skills needed to survive and thrive in modern-day newswork spaces.

References


The Convergence in Journalistic Process – Scenarios and Challenges

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Abstract

The work seeks to contribute bringing the reflection related to different experiences experienced by different brazilian journalistic vehicles, with different public coverage: local, regional and national. In addition, data and reflections will be brought about how convergence, with special attention to the field of journalism, has been thematized in the academic works developed in Brazil, especially in the last five years.

Introduction

The processes of convergence of media and languages, disseminated, above all, due to the advances in technological conditions for this, especially, from the end of the twentieth century, incite the need for analysis of this reality experienced in different areas. In a particular way, we observe the importance of understanding these transformations in the field of journalism. Such changes are observed at different levels, and begin to encompass from the productive routines involved in journalistic work, in the modifications operated in journalistic practices, in the products that are generated from such processes, and in the form of public consume the information generated from this reality that arises and transforms in recent years. Thus, it is important to emphasize the importance and necessity of studies that can better understand these settings. In these contexts, issues are involved ranging from implications in the processes that relate to the productive routines and to the work of organizing journalistic production, to questioning the current business models and involving the journalism, passing, of course, by the different ways such transformations have also impacted the public.

In this sense, this work seeks to contribute to the reflection related to the different experiences experienced by various brazilian journalistic vehicles, with different comprehensions of public: local, regional and national. In addition, data and reflections will also be brought about how convergence, with special attention to the field of journalism, has been tematized in the academic works developed in Brazil, especially in the last five years.

It is up to the academic research to also investigate how the distribution of content offered by journalists is faced daily with transformations in relation to the new habits of web users. "Unlike journalistic criteria, such as social relevance and actuality, the algorithms cross the individual preferences of users and reduce the space for the diversity of viewpoints and alterity" (AGUIAR; BARSOTTI, 2017, p. 7). In this logic, the content offered as "menu" of novelties is replaced by the sharing of digital platforms, such as social networks. "The complex network of content distribution in the essays – based on the export and publication of links in portals and social networks – contributes to the weakening of the first page online as a map of meaning", supports Aguiar and Barsotti (2017, p. 17). Thus, there is the hypothesis that the role of journalists can lose relevance when being replaced by algorithms of large technology companies, which possessed different criteria of journalistic (social relevance and current), but rather the preferences of users in an
individualized and localized way, with little diversity. Faced with such complexities, journalism seeks to develop strategies in order to legitimize its field or to remain embedded in digital media. "[...] In addition to mapping the relations among journalists, it is necessary to perceive the network as a whole and the processes invisible to the first look of the researcher who are continually being woven "(BARSOTTI, 2018, p. 146).

Post-industrial journalism, inserted in a network society (CASTELLS, 1999), carries transformational aspects when it can exploit collaborative networks, analysis tools, databases and other ways of communicating due to the use and potentialities of Digital media (ANDERSON; BELL SHIRKY, 2013). "As everyone is networked – news sources, journalists and the public – all influence and are influenced by the other actors involved in the process, regardless of degree and support" (BARSOTTI, 2018, p. 144). Such expectations correspond to the convergence scenario, which exceeds journalism with the hegemony of technologies, but also summarizes socio-cultural issues: "In the political plan, we have more and more examples of ordinary people who affirm their voices in Public affairs and more and more examples of collective mobilization around popular causes "(JENKINS, 2006, p. 218). It seeks to define the qualities and problems that the new conversational networks offer in the post-media context.

Convergence Investigations

For the development of the work one of the linked objectives was to relate investigations that bring discussions about journalism and convergence. For this, some methodological directions were adopted, which will be explained below. In the case destand aspect of the research, the quantitative methodology, represented by content analysis, assisted in the measurement of how many papers were published in two of the main Journalism events in the last five years (2012-2016). The following events were selected for analysis: Annual Meeting of the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Journalism (SBPJor) and National Symposium of the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Cyberculture (ABCiber), for aggregating part of the studies focused on cybertculture and Internet that are conducted in Brazil today. Thus, in some way, the events offer some of the main sources for analysis also with regard to the articulation that links journalism with the debate about convergence.

It is worth here to differentiate each method of analysis according to the disposition of articles in each event. There was an exception for the analysis of papers presented at ABCiber. Since the symposium does not have the available annals of all years, then it was necessary to seek more edits to obtain a material of sufficient sample of analysis, thus, the collection comprised the 10 years of the event. For this, the articles presented, enrolled and selected within the "Working Group" modality of the Symposium Of The ABCiber were collected. Despite being an interdisciplinary event that encompasses other areas of Communication, Humanities, Applied Social Sciences, Linguistics, Letters and Arts the goal was to raise how much journalism is represented at the symposium, in particular, from the debate on journalistic convergence.

A five-year temporal cut (2012-2016) was performed in the collection of articles SBPJor. Such clipping is linked to the current factor of research. However, the research continued using as a method the observation of information contained in the following spaces: title, abstract and
keywords of each article collected. After reading these topics, the articles/papers that brought
discussions of convergence and journalism were identified. From this, we created categories of
analysis, which allowed us to identify the main subject of each article. The categories did not bring
the expression "convergence" directly, but were present in a less explicit way. It is important to
emphasize that the categories were created in a variable way, obeying the themes that arose in each
event. Next, we will bring the main results found through the collection and analysis of the articles
of ABCiber and SBPJor.

The symposium of ABCiber is an event that has happened since 2006 and completed its tenth
edition in 2017. The papers presented at the event from the available annals were counted, and then
we have the following result:

Table 1: Relation of papers presented throughout the history of ABCiber in the segment "Working
Group"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event editing</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Annals</th>
<th>Total Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABCiber Foundation Symposium</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II National Symposium of ABCiber</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Could not quantify, site under maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III National Symposium of ABCiber</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV National Symposium of ABCiber</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V National Symposium of ABCiber</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI National Symposium of ABCiber</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII National Symposium of ABCiber</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII National Symposium of ABCiber</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX National Symposium of ABCiber</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X National Symposium of ABCiber</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the data in the table above, it was noted that the event was not carried out in the years 2007 and 2015. Half of the symposia that have been performed so far have not made available the electronic annals of the event, which makes it difficult to collect academic works. Thus, the research followed with the analysis of the works presented in the symposia of the ABCiber of 2008, 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2016. It is important to emphasize that they were selected as work dealing with journalism and convergence those who bring in the title, keyword or abstract a discussion related to journalism, convergence, transmedia or transformations. Then, the sum of the articles collected and the number of those that followed for the analysis of this article:

Table 2: Sum of the total of articles presented followed by the sample selected for analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Articles</th>
<th>Journalism and Convergence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the survey of the totality of articles produced, we sought the works that enunciate approaches and perspectives related to the convergence processes, as shown in the table above. Thus, the research followed with the analysis of 29 academic articles from a preliminary classification, based, especially, on the observation of information contained in the following spaces: title, abstract and keywords. From there, it was possible to organize the resulting data in some categories, as a way to enable the analysis processes. This organization also visualized the occurrences of the topics and approaches that were categorized.

Table 3: Main themes and approaches mapped in the ABCiber event of 2008 years, 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and approaches</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic formats, genres and languages</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public participation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses of digital networks</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telejornalism and audiovisual journalism</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural changes of the media</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological influences and automation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio journalism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in vocational training</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Database usage</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each of these typologies developed is organized from the perception of a direct connection with issues related to the processes of convergence, whether of media, in a more general, or journalistic way, to where the more direct focus of interest of the work in question. Thus, the classification brings the points of articulation in relation to the notion or the development of convergence. Based on the data collected and organized, we sought to understand better what are the main approaches, related to convergence, and that has aroused the interest of researchers who participated in the meetings of the ABCiber in recent years.

Succinctly, it is important to mention that the analyses were made from a total of 633 papers presented in the years 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2016 and properly mapped. Of these, 29 presented some articulation in its formulation, theoretical-methodological and/or analytical that is related to convergence. Synthetically, this is the sum of studies observed and analyzed in a more detained manner. We now bring the analyses made regarding the categories determined, which discuss the main issues involved in their constitution and development.

The category "Journalistic formats, genres and languages" was the most classified work, encompassing 6 of the 29 papers analyzed. Such academic articles brought the discussion of journalistic convergence from an observation focused on the language of the news content. The works classified here were concerned with discussing issues involving hybrid language, construction of contents, specificities of formats and genres, transmitted narratives and remediation. That is, the concern was to analyze the main obstacles that cyberjournalism faced with the processes of convergence and emergence of new formats and narratives.

Then, one of the categories that had the most work classified was "public participation", and 5 of the 29 articles brought a debate on journalistic convergence, having as reference the reader. The main focus was the discussion of a collaborative journalism, the architecture of participation, as the journalistic convergence allowed the performance of the reader in the production of the news. Within this classification, it was also possible to notice a concern with the circulation of news content in a transmittable environment. These are academic articles that bring discussions of computer-mediated interaction, multifunctional reader and collaborative journalism.

Another category that also presented 5 articles classified was "use of digital networks". It is noted that the works that brought a discussion of journalistic convergence from the digital social networks sought to discuss the impacts of the appropriations of these digital media in journalistic production. There were articles that brought debate on Twitter and WhatsApp to illustrate how the news production became collaborative. Also due to the manifestations that occurred in the month of June 2013 in Brazil, some articles sought to bring the discussion of the protests that intensified with social networks, seeking to understand the journalistic coverage in this context. Therefore, in general, the category of "Uses of digital networks" presents works that reflect on the potential of interaction and collaboration of social networks for journalism.

In the category "Television news and audiovisual journalism" were counted 4 articles of 29 in analysis. It is noted that the great concern of the works was to bring a discussion about the digitization of television, web videos and changes in the production of TV news. Two of the articles were based on the following question: Digital TV or Internet TV? It is perceived that the works
were focused on a discussion about the processes of technological convergence in television. There is a discourse loaded with some insecurity about the future of television and the changes that the Internet can provide in audiovisual journalism. The proposal of a more recent article, from 2016, sought to discuss the news in one click, addressing the issue of journalistic convergence focused on the changes of interactivity and sharing that are proportionate to the arrival of social networks.

In the category "Structural changes in the media" there were two, in a total of 29 studies that fit the sample analyzed. It can be said that, within this classification, the works that in one way or another bring as a main approach the modifications by which the different means of communication pass in recent years. It was observed the presence of questions related to the media already born in digital spaces, as is the case of news portals, however, what is observed as an important mark evidenced in the discussions carried out within this category are the approaches related to convergence processes in situations where the vehicle originated as a printed newspaper.

The two articles referring to this category bring an approach related to the changes that the Internet has brought to the production and journalistic routine. One of the articles tries to make an overview of the differences between generalist publications (printed) and publications cyberjournalists (online) in order to show the transformations that journalism faces in the day-to-day production. The other work seeks to bring a profile of news production from a daily journalism portal in order to show the structural changes within the productive processes and media used.

The category "Technological influence and automation" brought two articles that fit the classification. The work had a discussion of journalistic convergence more focused on technological transformations, automation, actor-Network theory, digital virtuality culture that seek to raise the contributions of Cyberculture to online journalism. The category "Mobility" also had two classified articles that dealt with a discussion focused on mobile journalism. The work sought to analyze the perspective of journalistic convergence based on the adaptations that the news production has suffered in relation to mobile devices, support and the medium that transmits the information.

Only one work was in the category "Radiojournalism", and it sought to bring a discussion of uses of transmedia narratives in the production of content for musical programs, newspapers and advertising of a commercial radio. The category "Changes in vocational training" with also an academic article brought questions involved with the modifications of the journalistic making and the new articulations that the convergence processes brought to the formative work of future journalists.

Finally, with only one job the category of "database utilization" brought approaches that seek to relate the use of data-based sources for the development of journalistic work. It was also emphasized the concern for understanding the influences of the journalism of the database in the circulation of news content. Nowadays, this has been a point not only of academic discussion, but it reveals the articulated development in the journalistic making evidenced in different means.

It is important to highlight that during the collection of the articles it was possible to notice that many studies brought convergence discussions related to advertising, education, teaching,
communicative processes, the relationship of human beings and technologies, but without bringing the discussion of journalism itself. Therefore, these studies were not selected for the analysis sample, since the focus of the research is the debate on journalistic convergence. There was a significant variety of approaches dealt with by scientific articles. As a whole, there were 10 topics organized as categories. It is noteworthy that the classifications of the analysis, in some way, had relations among themselves, and a work could be included in more than one category. However, it was decided to classify the articles considering the most preponderant specificities of each one.

Continuing the survey, the articles presented in five years of SBPJor achievement were selected enrolled and selected within the modality "free communications". With an approach made from the most recent studies that have been developed and presented, it is understood that there is a more evident possibility of better understanding of the concepts of convergence present in the articles presented, this being an important interest described by the research effort. From this marker were then counted the papers presented in the years that were part of the sample and in this way, we have the following sum:

Table 4: Sum of papers presented from 2012 to 2016 in the segment "Free Communications"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>642</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the realization of this selection process, a second movement consisted of, from the totality of articles presented in the sessions "free communications", to seek the works that enunciation approaches and perspectives related to the processes of Convergence. Thus, we sought to perform a preliminary classification, based, especially, on the observation of information contained in the following spaces: title, abstract and keywords. From there, it was possible to organize the resulting data in some categories, as a way to enable the subsequent analysis processes. In this organization it is also possible to visualize the occurrences of categorized topics and approaches.

Table 5: Main themes and approaches mapped in the segment "Free communications", between the years 2012 and 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and approaches</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural changes in Media</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telejornalism and audiovisual journalism</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio journalism</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of professional performance</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photojournalism</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public participation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalistic formats and genres</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses of digital social networks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in vocational training</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using databases</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender issues</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to emphasize that each of these typologies developed is organized from the perception of a direct connection with issues related to the processes of convergence, whether of media, in a more general, or journalistic way, to where the More direct focus of interest of the work in question. Thus, the classification presented in table 5 brings the points of articulation in relation to the notion or the development of convergence. Thus, the expression "convergence" does not appear in a textual way in the organization of the framework, but it is a conductive axis and is presupposed in all the articulation performed.

Thus, based on the data collected and organized, we sought to understand better what are the main approaches, related to convergence, and that have aroused the interest of researchers who participated in SBPJor meetings in the last five years. Next, the attempt to expose an argument that facilitates the understanding of this scenario that is present today.

The analysis developed from the categorization presented above classifies the totality of the articles presented in the period determined from a joint in 12 categories. These categories sought to establish an organization for a better understanding of the phenomena that relate issues in which convergence, media and journalistic, appear as a central approach.

It is pertinent to mention that when classifying the work in a certain category and not another, it took into account the preponderance of directing presented in its spaces determined for the analysis. In other words, it is possible to think that certain work could be framed in more than one established category. However, it was decided to categorize it from the preponderant character of its approach. Succinctly, it is important to mention that the analyses are made from a total of 642 papers presented, from 2012 to 2016, and properly mapped. Of these, 34 have some articulation in its formulation, theoretical-methodological and/or analytical that is related to convergence. Synthetically, this is the sum of studies observed and analyzed in a more detailed manner. It is now about the categories determined, bringing the main issues involved in their constitution and development.

The first perceived articulation was named "structural changes in the media" where, from the classification undertaken, the highest number of occurrences was observed, totaling nine in a total of 34 papers. It can be said that, within this classification, the works that in one way or another bring as a main approach the modifications by which the different means of communication pass in recent years. It was observed the presence of questions related to the media already born in digital spaces, as is the case of news portals, however, what is observed as an important mark evidenced in the discussions carried out within this category are the approaches related to convergence processes in situations where the vehicle originated as a printed newspaper.
In this sense, the promoted discussions brought about the way changes have been seen and implemented, as well as on the challenges faced in these described trajectories. It is noticeable, based on the work in analysis, a concern, especially in the case of printed vehicles, with issues related to aspects such as observation regarding possible positions relating to the readers of such products. In relation to the modifications operated in the middle, are observed from a working structure, which reflects on the final product. We also observed discussions that seek to highlight a concern related to the uses of techniques, technologies and even formats allied to the work developed for the different printed journals. These questions were then considered, which in this set of organization of themes and approaches was what related the greatest number of incidences. Occupying second and third positions in the classification of themes and approaches were, respectively, the categories "Telejornalism and audiovisual journalism and radiojournalism". In these two perspectives, we observed the concern of the work carried out in situating and understanding how, like the previous category, "Structural changes in the media", the position adopted by the hearings, the ways in which they are impacted and reorganize their Actions, the different ways, in convergent configurations related to journalistic work, are seen and directed the efforts on and for the public. There was also an effort to define, describe and seek to understand the impacts with respect to productive work in televisual and Radiophonic media in the midst of transformations and processes involving convergence.

In the organization of the categories, the fourth position is occupied by the point that was called "challenges of professional performance". In this topic, the papers that addressed the modifications directly related to the production processes in progress were contained, especially with regard to the idea of convergence implied in such configurations. Thus, we related the studies that brought discussions of aspects such as the use of specific tools (digital social networks, for example) in the professional routine, as well as on the multiplicity of tasks incorporated, and often imposed on do journalistic in general. Reflections were brought about general changes in day-to-day work in different journalistic media and how they impact and reconfigure previously established and consolidated practices.

The categories "photojournalism", "Public participation", "journalistic formats and genres" and "uses of digital social networks", appear following the organization of the data. They occupied the fifth, sixth and seventh positions, but in terms of the incidence of studies dealing with each of them, they presented the same values, that is, two articles contained in each of the categories. With regard to "photojournalism", the discussions were forwarded in order to address the transformations especially in the way photojournalism is offered in digital media, presenting different possibilities with regard to the space it occupies in means and also in the form of a relationship that suggests to the consumer of this type of imagetic information. It was also present the discussion that relates the changes regarding the modes of production and dissemination of journalistic photography in convergent journalistic realities.

Regarding the category "Public participation", it was noted that this point of view, in particular, had already been problematized in the context of previous categories, however, as was also mentioned, the organization of the categories was related to Traits that were identified as main in the argumentation exposed by the works. Thus, the presence of similar discussions in other classification spaces was not excluded, given the fact that it is considering the priority direction in the debate of each article. The problematizations here were forwarded in order to question the behavior and also directed towards considerations about the public in realities in which
convergence is present, in different means. It was then taken into account the primordial role played by the media in the face of transformations that impact the whole process, including to whom all the work developed is destined, that is, its audiences.

As regards "formats and genres" as an important category to be analyzed, the direction given by the works has transited through discussions that address since the relations established between issues of journalism and entertainment from configurations that consider convergence as an important point, but there are also related reflections about the changes observed in what would be considered traditional genres and formats, in comparison with the possibilities currently arranged. Thus, this targeting, in particular, brought questions and analyses about crucial and even founding aspects to the journalistic perspective.

As the last category within this set with the same number of grouped works (two), it was "use of digital social networks". In this articulation, the articles that have tematized the presence and uses of this type of tool as possibilities in the work currently exercised in different journalistic organizations were related. In this sense, discussions were present related to the understanding of movements of journalistic information, organized and produced by different vehicles, and disseminated through various types of digital social networks. In addition, discussions related to different languages or even strategies employed for the most effective distribution of content through digital social networks were also present in this category.

The last analyzed set articulated formulations that added to themselves the classification of a work composing each division. They were: "Changes in vocational training", "mobility", "use of Databases", "Gender issues". The first category of this set has a joint that can keep similarities with the category that occupies the fourth position in number of occurrences of work, that is, "challenges in professional performance". However, it was decided to perform this division, even considering the existence of similarities. The category "Changes in vocational training" sought to articulate especially issues involved with the modifications of the journalistic making and articulation with the relations established from the convergence in a bias that privileged to look at the work Formation of future journalists. Thus, the discussions were undertaken in this direction.

In the category that added formulations to discuss the uses and potentialities in "database utilization", it can be perceived the presence of approaches that sought to relate the use of data-based sources for the development of the work journalistic. Nowadays, this has been a point not only of academic discussion, but it reveals the articulated development in the journalistic making evidenced in different means. In the same way that the use of a database was present as a relevant discussion to be considered for the development of journalism nowadays, the category "mobility" brought with it discussions that are directly involved in forms of Production of also the consumption of journalistic information. Thus, the reflections undertaken in this aspect, in a particular way, sought to analyze and understand how journalistic productions are impacted and also reorganize themselves from the importance that mobility acquires in the work everyday journalism. It is also important to consider that this has been an evidence feature in the different journalistic media.

As a category that concludes the analytical movement of SBPJor articles, "Gender issues" was found. It was perceived then how, from a point of view of women who work in the journalistic environment, the intense transformations operated in the professional sphere are understood, and
also present the specific challenges they face because they are women working in journalistic media.

**Final Considerations**

It is to relate some questions that have links in relation to doing the research: what elements, activities, actions reveal the new ways of doing journalism regarding the processes of capturing and processing data? What systems of contamination, and collaboration, define the various languages used, and what effects do they cause for the totality of the meaning of the subjects? What are the practical modifications experienced in the daily work of journalistic production in the investigated media?

Regarding the reflexive process aimed at monitoring, systeting and analyzing such practices, some intuitive designs, of an assystematic observation, but also curious and interested in the field, can be demarcated: cohested groups of researchers who Align themselves around common interests by database journalism; More dispersed researchers, but that capilarizate the same ideas in other institutions or graduate programs in a more or less isolated way; Works specifically directed to multimedia, or to the production of journalistic information designed for mobile platforms, among others. Seeking, from researches already carried out or in the process of realization, how such productions are being developed in Brazil, by which researchers, in which institutions, programs or groups, with what type of aggregation, with which theoretical approaches, and the Methodological approaches.

Finally, from all data collected and related, what are the main transformations operated in order to consider the convergent processes in the current journalistic making, based on the consideration of their routines and planning?

It will be important to consider the systematic and detailed analysis of journalistic work in their daily lives. In the three areas that will be investigated – journalistic organizations with national, regional and local targeting – the observation of activities in loco realization will be a fundamental activity for understanding the application of the processes Convergent journalistic. Allied to this, the importance of conducting interviews with professionals who occupy relevant positions in different organizations with regard to decision-making processes and execution of convergence in work and journalistic materials developed.

With the results obtained from different methodological movements, such as observation and conducting interviews, it is expected to better understand how convergence is associated and develops in the journalistic production processes of Today. From the point of view of the journalistic itself, the reflections that will be generated in the light of the realization of the different activities involved in the investigation bring perspectives so that the individuals and institutions involved can rethink, reevaluate Their practices and thus, if they deem it interesting, to modify processes and ways of gestar the production of convergent journalistic content, or that are intended as such.
In addition, the research-related data will serve as a subsidy for the work performed in the classroom, both in undergraduate and master's activities. The data obtained will be related to both the contents worked and which have direct articulation with the topics approached by the research, as well as the researches developed by the students, in the fields of graduation and also of the master's degree in journalism.

About the Author:

PhD in Communication Sciences. She holds a degree in Journalism. She has experience in the field of Communication research mainly in the following subjects: Radio, Reception, Journalism, Digital Media, Gender Studies, Research Methodologies. Since 2016, she has been leading the Group of Studies and Research in Digital Media - GEMIDI (UEPG / CNPq). She is a reviewer of several national and international journals. Adjunct Professor in the Postgraduate Course in Journalism (Master degree) and Graduation in Journalism at the State University of Ponta Grossa.

References


Technology Challenges in Canadian Journalism Education

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Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Abstract

Journalism educators face increasing demands to produce graduates who have a wide range of technological competencies. In Canada, educators recognize that some of the skills in highest demand relate to social media. This presents a challenge because at the same time, educators in this study almost universally report having a more negative attitude towards social media platforms than they did a year or so ago. Educators in Canada also report that it is important for journalism students to have at least some facility with data journalism. This study elaborates on some of the challenges that educators face and some of their pedagogical approaches to meeting them.

Keywords: journalism education, technology, skills, social media

Introduction

The range of skills required in order to qualify for a journalism job in 2019 may appear daunting. A recent study that examined journalism job postings in the U.S. concluded that “students who aspire to work for print media will be better equipped if they are able to enhance their ‘skill variety’ by possessing such innovative, digital skills as being able to use software packages ranging from Information Management System and Adobe Visual Design to programming languages such as R and Python” (Guo et al., 2019). In Canada, newsroom leaders appear to be more interested in social media, photography, videography, mapping and data than in programming skills. Nevertheless, there’s no doubt that the range of skills required for an entry-level journalism job is much broader than it was 10 or 15 years ago. The purpose of this study was to determine how Canadian journalism educators are responding to current perceived technology-oriented needs in newsrooms. The results of this study are discussed in reference to the literature and also compared to a relevant study conducted in 2018 which examined journalism employers’ perspectives on the use of emerging technology in journalism. Using structured interviews and an online survey, this study helps identify which technology-oriented skills Canadian journalism educators feel are the most important and some of challenges they experience in teaching technology to journalism students.

It should be noted that the purpose of this study was not to conduct a comparison between the perceived value of specific technology-oriented skills as compared with more traditional journalism skills and abilities, or between what Guo et al. (Ibid.) refer to as innovative expertise versus traditional expertise. Innovative expertise includes “newly-developed, machine-related skills including big data analysis, audience analytics, multimedia, technical skills (hardware/software use), website or social media publishing, web development, content strategies, and design” (8). Traditional expertise, meanwhile, includes skills such as “writing, editing, news judgment, reporting, interviewing, shooting/photographing, on air, live/ad lib, and research skills” (Ibid.).
There is plenty of evidence that employers continue to value more traditional expertise more highly. A study in Western Australia (Callaghan and McManus, 2010) found that the skills and characteristics rated most highly by news employers were the ability to learn, good spelling, grammar and punctuation, enthusiasm and clarity of writing. And a U.S. study into desired skills in sports journalism (Ketterer et al., 2014) found that writing ability was perceived to be the most important among many different skills. The researchers concluded that “[a]s journalism and mass communication programs continue making revisions to their curricula for addressing convergence journalism, these findings should be a reminder that even as new technology comes into newsrooms, the skills to construct and tell good stories remain the cornerstones upon which good journalists are created” (293-294).

Canadian journalism educators appear to agree with this assessment. While most of the participants in this study expressed enthusiasm for helping their students develop more innovative expertise, many are concerned that the focus on technology risks squeezing out the traditional expertise.

Methods

There are approximately fifty journalism programs in Canada. Many larger university-based schools, such as Ryerson, Carleton, Concordia and University of King’s College, offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Some schools, such as the University of British Columbia and University of Western Ontario, offer only graduate degrees. And many colleges and technical institutes offer diplomas or certificates.

For this study, 34 faculty members in journalism programs were identified who teach at least one technology-oriented course. Preference was given to the larger programs, which graduate larger numbers of students each year. These educators were invited to participate in an a structured telephone interview and take an online survey, which was developed in SurveyMonkey. Telephone interviews were generally between 45 minutes and an hour. There were 21 educators who were interviewed, representing 17 different journalism programs. Of those 17, 10 were university-based programs while seven were in colleges or technical institutes. There were also 21 educators who completed the online survey. This survey was anonymous, so it’s not known exactly how many of the interview respondents also took the survey. At the end of the interviews, educators were asked if they would agree to complete the survey and all of them indicated they would, so it is likely that there is considerable overlap between the survey and interview respondents. The interviews and surveys were conducted in the spring 2019.

Of the educators who were interviewed, 62 per cent were from university-based programs and 38 per cent were from colleges or technical institutes. Of the educators who completed the survey, 58 per cent were in university programs that offered an undergraduate and/or graduate degree and 42 per cent were in college or technical institute programs that offered either a certificate or diploma.
Results & Discussion

Importance of visual media

Results from both the interviews and survey suggest that journalism educators who teach technology-oriented skills place a high value on visual media. Survey respondents were asked how important it is for journalism program graduates to have different technology-oriented skills. Results (Figure 1) suggest that there are a considerable number of skills that are deemed to be important for journalism graduates. Skills that had an average Likert-scale value of 4 (very important) or higher included the following: taking photographs; shooting video; publishing with a content management system; recording audio; disseminating information on social media; conducting research on social media; editing and producing video; interacting with members of the public on social media; uploading video on online hosting services; collecting and organizing data in a spreadsheet; editing audio; analyzing data with spreadsheet functions such as sum and average; writing search engine optimized headlines; editing photographs; and reporting on live events through social media platforms.

Please indicate how important you think it is for journalism graduates to be comfortable performing the following:

Figure 8: Journalism educators were asked how important they think it is for journalism graduates to be comfortable performing different technology-oriented tasks. Responses were given on a Likert scale from 1 (unimportant) to 5 (extremely important).
Notably, some of the more ‘leading-edge’ skills are not currently perceived to be highly important. Tasks involving coding, 360-degree photo and video, animated graphics and drone photography and videography were the lowest-ranked of the technology-oriented skills identified. Canadian journalism educators are fully aware of the extent to which multimedia skills have become highly valued in newsrooms. A longitudinal study (Wenger et al., 2018) examining journalism job postings in the U.S. in 2010 and 2015 found that “the traditional print or TV job is, in many ways, a thing of the past” (33). In particular, the researchers found that the demand for web/multimedia skills had increased sharply. “As recently as 5 years ago, no more than a third of positions (33%) required web/multimedia skills—now it is nearly two thirds of all jobs (62%)” (Ibid.).

Canadian journalism educators have responded by adding new courses that focus on technology and constantly revising them to keep up with what they perceive to be changing technology needs in newsrooms. For example, more than 80 per cent of survey respondents indicated that photography/videography and photo editing were taught in required courses in their programs. At least 60 per cent indicated (Figure 2) that mobile-specific reporting methods (covering breaking news, recording photos, audio and video, etc.), search engine optimization, data visualization and online design and layout were taught in required courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology-related skills</th>
<th>Not taught</th>
<th>Taught in optional courses</th>
<th>Taught in required courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to find sources and story ideas on social media</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>90.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to promote stories on social media</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>85.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography/Videography</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>90.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to engage effectively with people on social media</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>85.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo editing</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>85.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online design and layout</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data visualization</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Engine Optimization</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile-specific photo/audio/video</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile-specific reporting (breaking news, etc.)</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis in a spreadsheet</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>85.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcasting</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>90.00%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social media engagement analysis</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorting data in a spreadsheet</td>
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<td>70.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print-based design and layout</td>
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<td>60.00%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HTML/CSS</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Online traffic analysis</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis in SQL</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>360-degree photography/videography</td>
<td>37.00%</td>
<td>63.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some coding in either Python or R</td>
<td>55.00%</td>
<td>45.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drone photography/videography</td>
<td>73.00%</td>
<td>27.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of augmented or virtual reality</td>
<td>94.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9: Journalism educators were asked which technology-related are taught in their programs. Response options were ‘not taught,’ ‘taught in optional courses’ or ‘taught in required courses.’
Perspectives on social media

These results (Figure 2) highlight some important factors in the technology component of a journalism education. One of those factors relates to social media. Educators readily acknowledge the importance of social media for students. As illustrated, at least 85 per cent of respondents indicated that social media-based engagement, promotion and research was taught in required courses.

Survey respondents were also asked about how important it is for journalism graduates to be active on and proficient with social media. Sixty per cent indicated (Figure 3) it was extremely important, 35 per cent indicated it was very important and 5 per cent indicated it was moderately important. Notably, no respondents indicated that it was either of little importance or unimportant.

These findings track closely with the results of a 2018 study in which I examined technology-oriented tasks that recent graduates are expected to perform in Canadian newsrooms. In one survey, newsroom leaders in Canada were asked how frequently they expected recent journalism graduates to perform various technology-oriented tasks as part of their regular work. (The survey was conducted in early 2018. In all, 119 newsroom leaders were contacted by email and invited to participate in the survey. A total of 67 took the survey, a response rate of just over 56 per cent.)

Of the tasks that respondents indicated they expected young journalists to perform very frequently or frequently, those related to social media were at the top of the list.
Figure 11: In a 2018 survey of newsroom leaders in Canada (n=67), respondents were asked how frequently they expected young journalists to perform certain technology-related tasks. Responses were given on a Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently).

As part of that same study, recent graduates from a large Canadian journalism program were asked a similar question. (This survey was also conducted in the spring, 2018 and had 114 responses with a 32 per cent response rate.) As with the responses from newsroom leaders, the recent graduates indicated that they performed tasks involving social media more frequently than the other technology-related tasks.
Other researchers have identified the importance of social media for journalism work. Guo et al. (2019) found that “advanced audience engagement skills are emerging as a high priority for media employers” (15). In their longitudinal study of job postings in the U.S., Wenger et al. (2018) found that social media was one of the top ten attributes specified in job descriptions, appearing in 47 per cent of them, ahead of posting to the web and video and photo skills (Ibid., 24).

In my 2018 survey of newsroom leaders, respondents were asked how important it is for a job candidate to have an active social media feed. Nearly 20 per cent of respondents indicated that it is extremely important, just over 25 per cent indicated that it was very important, and nearly 50 per cent indicated that it was somewhat important.

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**Figure 12:** In 2018, students who had graduated from a large university-based journalism program in the previous three years and who were doing journalism and/or communications work \( n=114 \) were asked about the frequency with which they performed various technology-oriented tasks. Responses were given on a Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently).

**Figure 13:** In a 2018 survey, newsroom leaders in Canada \( n=67 \) were asked how important it is for prospective job candidates to have an active social media feed. Responses were provided on a Likert scale from 1 (unimportant) to 5 (extremely important).
The apparent demand for social media expertise presents a couple of important challenges for journalism educators. For one, virtually all of the Canadian journalism educators who participated in the interviews reported being less optimistic about social media in general, with many indicating they were now using it less themselves than they had in the past. Of the 21 journalism educators interviewed, 19 reported that their attitude towards social media had become more negative in the last year or so.

There were a variety of reasons for that change cited. Of the 21 interview respondents, five specifically referenced the prevalence of ‘fake news’ on social media platforms. The Harvard Institute of Politics (2017) found that young Americans believe nearly half of the news appearing in their Facebook feeds is fake news. It’s not clear whether these results would be the same for Canadian students, but it suggests that the prevalence and awareness of fake news could be having a broader delegitimizing affect on young people’s perception of news in general. Given the extent to which journalism students rely on social media for news (see Appendix A), it is perhaps not surprising that Canadian journalism educators are concerned about the effect.

Of the 21 journalism educators interviewed, another five specifically mentioned the issue of abuse they say is prevalent on social media platforms. Some educators reported that their students had been subject to trolling or other kinds of online abuse. One educator, who reported cutting back on personal and professional use of social media, noted that female and racialized students in particular were being subjected to various kinds of abuse. “I can’t justify forcing them to have these interactions,” the educator said. “We’re not in the field any more but we should step back and question whether this is a good direction.”

Another five interview respondents specifically noted that they were uncomfortable with the promotional aspects of social media. “I think a lot of people are working on their brands,” said one educator. “I find that’s an anathema to journalism. You see a melding of the journalism and the promotion side of journalism — probably to the detriment of good journalism.”

Another educator observed that “newsrooms are looking at social media from a promotional point of view, getting traffic and clicks, etc.”

And another said: “Likely as a result of shrinking newsrooms, news organizations are expecting journalism graduates to emerge from their programs as full-formed journalists. Social media is one of those focal points.”

Other educators observed that social media may be incompatible with journalism values in other ways. One warned that social media gives young journalists a distorted view of reality while another noted that social media encourages lazy journalism practices. New York Times opinion columnist Farhad Manjoo (2019) described some of the concerns rather colourfully when he wrote that “Twitter isn’t just ruining the media’s image. It’s also skewing our journalism. Everything about Twitter’s interface encourages a mind-set antithetical to journalistic inquiry: It prizes image over substance and cheap dunks over reasoned debate, all the while severely abridging the temporal scope of the press.”

Journalism educators in Canada therefore find themselves in a kind of conundrum when it comes to social media. On the one hand, they are fully aware of its perceived importance for job seekers. On the other hand, they feel that social media is in many respects actually detrimental to the practice of journalism and to the education of journalism students.
**Tech-savvy students?**

This study also highlights a further challenge that relates to social media, but which is also more broadly relevant to helping students develop more innovative expertise: journalism students are not particularly adept at using the social media platforms for ‘professional’ journalism purposes. One interview respondent recalled that students engaged in a live Tweeting assignment approached it as a personal, opinion-based story. Another noted that many students did not know how to use hashtags. While many professional journalists may have trouble digesting that observation, this relates to a broader concern among journalism educators, namely that contrary to what might be presumed about the current ‘digital native’ generation, most interview respondents have found that their students are not particularly adept with technology in general. “I laugh when I hear people talk about how tech savvy they are,” said one educator.

This was not the view of Dianne Lynch (2007) who wrote in Nieman Reports that “[T]hese are the kids who grew up online, whose childhoods evolved in a virtual universe as interactive and age-blind as it was dynamic and immediate.” As a result, she wrote, journalism educators “need to stop teaching software (except, perhaps, to each other). Our students will come to us knowing it, or knowing they can learn it when they need to.”

Whether this was an accurate characterization of the skill levels of journalism students at the time, other researchers since have cast doubt on this idea. Hirst and Treadwell (2011) found, for example, that journalism students “are not professionally competent using media production technologies.” They wrote that “in our experience many students are ‘instrumental learners’ focused on grades, assignments and outcomes; if something is not in the syllabus, does not attract marks or requires extra-curricular work; then it is an imposition” (450).

In another study that was focused on using social media, Bor (2014) concluded that “[b]ased on the present analysis, it appears that millennial students still require some instruction on using web-based platforms, and the importance of mastering technical skills in the classroom is enhanced by industry requests for technologically savvy job applicants who possess an array of multimedia skills such as posting content to the web” (252). Bor also concluded that “although students had prior experience using social media to consume information and to communicate with family and friends, they felt inadequate in using social media in a professional capacity and to produce news” (Ibid.).

Whether or not this is a fair characterization of the current generation of students in general, journalism students could also be self-selecting in a way that makes it a challenge for them to learn certain technologies. Past research has explored the motivations students have for studying journalism. Becker et al. (1987) found that in the U.S., “[t]he most highly endorsed item is that students chose journalism as a major because they felt it was an exciting occupation. The only other reason receiving majority endorsement was that journalism was chosen because it provided opportunities to write” (32).

In examining hitherto previous research, Carpenter et al. (2015) found that “the motivations of those seeking a career in journalism fall generally into three categories: intrinsic motivations related to personal creativity; motivations related to the importance of journalism in society; and motivations related to the practice of journalism as an exciting profession” (61).
We found similar patterns in Canada. In 2015 a colleague and I surveyed journalism students at Carleton University and Ryerson University (n=616), the two largest journalism programs in Canada (Bosley, 2018). In that survey students reported being strongly motivated to study journalism by the pleasure of writing, the ability to be creative, the chance to meet different people and other social aspects of the profession (Figure 7).

Figure 14: Journalism students at Carleton University and Ryerson University (n=616) were asked to rate different factors that had motivated them to study journalism. Responses were given on a Likert scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (extremely important).

Whether or not Canadian journalism educators have been reviewing the literature on student motivations, they are keenly aware that most students are attracted to journalism because they like to write. When asked to assess the level of interest that journalism students have in learning new technologies, this was a typical response: “Very mixed. Some are very keen and others just want to write stories.” Another said: “It really varies. Students come in because they love writing or see themselves as good writers and anything that pulls them away from writing is not viewed positively.”

In the survey portion of this study, journalism educators were asked to indicate what kind of challenge different factors posed in teaching journalism students how to work effectively with technology. Thirty-five per cent of respondents indicated that the variety of skill levels was a large or very large challenge (Figure 8), while another 50 per cent indicated that it was a moderate challenge. No respondents indicated that this was not a challenge at all.
Please indicate whether you feel the following factors present challenges in teaching journalism students to work effectively with technology:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Not a challenge</th>
<th>Minor challenge</th>
<th>Moderate challenge</th>
<th>Large/Very large challenge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student apprehension towards math</td>
<td>26.80%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>48.00%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands on faculty to learn new skills</td>
<td>66.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology instruction risks crowding out core journalism education (writing, research, ethics, etc.)</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide variety of skill levels among students</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>55.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cycle of technological obsolescence</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space in the curriculum</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ technological skills tend to be overrated</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of overloading students with technology</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sense that students don’t enroll in journalism programs to work a lot with technology</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student apathy towards technology</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited demand for many skills among news organizations</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating technology-oriented learning activities</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited demand for many skills in other communications industries</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making technology specifically applicable to journalism practice</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>55.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading technology-oriented assignments</td>
<td>25.80%</td>
<td>55.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15: Journalism educators were asked which factors they believed present challenges in teaching technology to students. Responses were given on a Likert scale from 1 (not a challenge) to 5 (very large challenge). Responses 4 (large challenge) and 5 (very large challenge) were combined here to simplify the visual ordering of factors.

However, this was just one area that respondents identified as highly challenging. Sixty per cent of respondents indicated that students’ apprehension towards math was a large or very large challenge, while 55 per cent indicated that the demands on faculty to learn new skills posed a similarly large challenge. Another 45 per cent of respondents indicated that technology instruction risks crowding out core journalism skills.

A combination of factors here might help explain why coding, for example, is not a common part of Canadian journalism curricula. Interview respondents were asked whether they think it is feasible to teach code to journalism students. Of the 21 respondents, fourteen indicated that it is not. Some pointed to the fact that this would put an excessive burden on an already squeezed curriculum. “We’re already asking journalists to do so much,” said one educator. “We water down the craft of journalism when we focus on so many digital skills.” “We just don’t have space in the curriculum for that,” said another. “Our curriculum is so full, it’s not realistic.”

Some also suggested that coding is something that students who are so inclined could learn on their own through services such as LinkedIn Learning (formerly Lynda.com) or Codecademy. Such an
expectation might not be unrealistic, at least for a small segment of journalism students. In an examination of the New York Times interactive news technology department, Cindy Royal (2012) discovered that most of the developers described their skill acquisition as “self-taught.”

Of the fourteen educators in this study who thought coding was an unrealistic addition to journalism education, three noted specifically that they believed coding is not necessary to be a successful journalist.

“If you talk to more of the successful journalists, they are not doing it,” one educator said. “The smaller places are just trying to keep up with the daily grind. I’m sure there are a few good jobs out there that use this stuff but most won’t need it. Requiring this would be an unjust barrier for those who would otherwise be great journalists.”

Another educator ventured that even when ‘coding’ appears on a job posting, that shouldn’t be taken at face value. “The people who are saying they need this are people who doesn’t know what it does,” they said. And another noted: “Sometimes I think news organizations don’t know what they want. Do they know what coding is? They think they want it.”

However, there was a much stronger consensus that skills related to data journalism are important and valuable for students. As noted in the list of technology-related skills they felt it was important for students to be comfortable with (Figure 1), ‘collect and organize data in a spreadsheet’ and ‘analyze data with spreadsheet functions’ both had an average Likert-scale value higher than 4 (or “very important”).

As illustrated above (Figure 2), 70 per cent of survey respondents indicated that data visualization was taught in a required course, while 55 per cent indicated that data analysis in a spreadsheet was taught in a required course. (However, nearly 60 per cent of respondents indicated that the more advanced skill of data analysis in SQL was not taught at all.)

In the 2018 survey of newsroom leaders referenced above (Figure 5), tasks associated with handling and analyzing data are not the technology-oriented ones that newsroom leaders in Canada said they expected young journalists to perform very frequently. However, in that study newsroom leaders were also asked what kind of technology-oriented tasks they would perform more or less, in an ideal world. Nearly 70 per cent of respondents indicated that they would use database more often, and nearly 62 per cent indicated they would use data visualization more often.
Journalism program graduates who have some facility with data could therefore expect that these skills would be highly valued in newsrooms, even though in reality they might expect to spend a lot more time doing social-media related work.

And while educators who teach Canadian journalism students how to sort and analyze data in a spreadsheet might face all the challenges illustrated above (Figure 8), in particular a generally negative attitude towards math but possibly others as well, one educator in this study suggested that spending time on spreadsheet work offered an additional benefit. “Even Excel formulas give you at least a taste of computer code,” they said.

Another educator also suggested that skills related to data could be more enduring. “Platforms change but the ability to analyze relational databases and finding what’s important” will remain relevant, they said. Another referred to data skills as “more durable.”

As illustrated above (Figure 8), the cycle of technological obsolescence was identified as a large challenge by 35 per cent of survey respondents, and a moderate challenge by another 40 per cent.

Some journalism educators suggest that one way to address this is to try to focus on how computers and networks actually work, as opposed to how a particular tool functions. Many educators acknowledged that whatever tools students learn now will likely be different or obsolete in a few years or less.
In a study that’s only a few years old, for example, a researcher examining highly desired newsroom skills in Hong Kong (Du, 2014) identified software or tools such as Flash, Soundslides and Dreamweaver. These packages have little or no relevance in 2019. Adobe announced (The Guardian, 2017) that it will retire Flash by the end of 2020, roughly a decade after Apple announced it would not support the technology on iPhones. Soundslides was discontinued on Dec. 8, 2018 and the availability of content management systems such as WordPress have arguably made Dreamweaver of questionable value to journalism graduates.

In order to help address the issue of technological obsolescence, many Canadian journalism educators stress that the important thing is, to the extent possible, conveying to students the underlying mechanics of different technologies rather than the functions of a particular tool or piece of software.

“We need to get students to understand what’s possible, even if they don’t learn specific tools and skills,” said one educator.

“I think more about the underlying skills not the particular tools or software,” said another. Addressing the specific issue of videography, another respondent noted that “as long as students understand the principles of good video [exposure, white balance, etc.], the particular camera doesn’t matter so much.”

When the iconic Nikon F camera was introduced in 1959, users would be expected to learn at least the basics of shutter speed, aperture and exposure in order to produce high quality photographs. Smartphone cameras in 2019 require no such expertise. Have sophisticated smartphones and simple mobile apps made things too simple? And could this have any connection with what Canadian journalism educators perceive as a relatively low level of technical expertise on the part of their students? This would be a useful area for further research.

**Teaching approaches**

While journalism educators in Canada (and undoubtedly elsewhere) face major challenges in helping their student develop innovative as well as traditional expertise, they have also developed methods that they have found help meet these challenges.

For example, many educators reported that lecturing has limited utility. “I can hold attention for 30-40 minutes and then they have to be doing things,” said one educator.

“Understanding their own learning styles [is important] and aiming for hands-on, production-based learning,” said another. “Lecturing doesn’t work very well.”

“I’m moving more and more away from lecturing and towards a workshopping and teaching hospital model,” said another educator.

“I think about what they can do in small groups and hands-on,” said another. Other educators pointed out that assignments and learning activities need to be focused around actual works of journalism. “[You need to] actually have a story as the output,” said one educator.
Another educator said that it’s important to have very clear and precise requirements. “They need very specific direction for the outcome, i.e. a story that has ‘these three’ elements.”

Another educator who focuses on data skills said that working with what they called ‘demonstration data’ doesn’t work very well. “I make sure I have journalistically interesting data with a good story at the end of it.”

Some educators have also developed lessons to deal with some of the less savoury features of social media. As an illustration of how things have changed in just a couple years, a study done on social media use in journalism education (Kothari et al., 2016) reported on four different uses of social media in journalism education in U.S. universities: news sharing; crowd sourcing ideas; identifying sources; and promoting student stories.

Today, some Canadian journalism educators incorporate digital wellness strategies into their courses. One educator works with students to help them understand what it means to be ‘public’ on social media and how to create a private life. Another educator has created lessons on digital wellness, which helps prepare students for some of the negative aspects to being in a prominent position on social media. Another educator spends time with students analyzing examples of attacks against journalists on social media. This educator reported that students had more respect for journalists after this exercise but were also scared by the prospect.

This is yet more instruction that must be squeezed into an already squeezed curriculum. As illustrated above (Figure 8), space in the curriculum was cited as a large challenge by 30 per cent of survey respondents and a moderate challenge by another 40 per cent. The even larger concern is the pressure this puts on journalism faculty. The demands by faculty to constantly learn new skills was cited as a large/very large challenge by 55 per cent of survey respondents, and a moderate challenge by another 30 per cent.

This has long been a factor for journalism educators. A study more than 15 years ago (Voakes et al., 2002) found that “[a]mong the most frequently cited causes of stress in faculty-life, such as time pressures, teaching load, committee work, lack of a personal life and red tape, also appeared the phrase ‘keeping up with information technology.’ More than two-thirds of the sample reported experiencing some or a great deal of stress from keeping up with information technology. In fact, of the 17 ‘stressor’ items in that study, only four emerged as more stressful than ‘keeping up with information technology’” (318). This study was not intended to quantify this factor but it is clearly an issue for educators.

The focus on social media, both in news work and journalism education, is also a concern for reasons that extend beyond those raised by educators in the interviews. Roughly six months before the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Emily Bell warned (Bell, 2016) that news publishers have lost control over distribution to large technology companies. She argued that the mobile revolution had helped facilitate this process, in part because of the way that people rely on their smartphones and apps for information. “This is a high-risk strategy: You lose control over your relationship with your readers and viewers, your revenue, and even the path your stories take to reach their destination,” she said.
“With billions of users and hundreds of thousands of articles, pictures, and videos arriving online every day, social platforms have to employ algorithms to try and sort through the important and recent and popular and decide who ought to see what. And we have no option but to trust them to do this.”

This warning has been brought into sharp relief after the many revelations about social media just since Bell wrote her piece.

Nechushtai (2018) conceptualizes another danger as “infrastructural capture,” which he describes as “circumstances in which a scrutinizing body is incapable of operating sustainably without the physical or digital resources and services provided by the businesses it oversees and is therefore dependent on them” (1043).

In other words, how do the new power dynamics of news distribution affect the way in which news organizations actually cover large technology firms?

“The potential for infrastructural capture could serve as an argument for supporting news organizations in building their own tools and formats, enabling them to maintain their important historical achievements: editorial, financial, legal, and operational independence. Infrastructural independence would empower news outlets to truly scrutinize organizations of considerable global power” (1054).

Many in the media might agree that this is a worthy goal, although the decimation of advertising revenues in Canada (Public Policy Forum, 2017) and elsewhere has left few, if any, news organizations in a strong enough financial position to take on significant technological development. As is well known, the vast majority of online advertising revenues in Canada go to Google and Facebook (Ibid., 32).

This is an especially poignant consideration at the moment in Canada and elsewhere. At the International Grand Committee on Big Data, Privacy and Democracy in Ottawa on May 28, a former Facebook adviser urged governments around the world to shut down social media platforms until they can be reformed (CBC, 2019). With a federal election coming in Canada this fall, many are concerned about Facebook users facing a deluge of misinformation, propaganda and possible meddling by foreign actors. Practical considerations aside, would a government shutdown of Facebook be tantamount to shutting down the news media’s main distribution system? And what are journalism educators expected to squeeze into the curriculum in order to help students understand some of the practical and conceptual risks here?

**Conclusion**

Though perhaps not surprising given what Vox (2018) called “Facebook’s very bad year,” it was not anticipated that there would be such a strong consensus among journalism educators that many aspects of social media, at least in its current forms, are actually detrimental to journalism. While some educators are responding with additional lessons to help mitigate some of these factors, adding more instruction puts yet more strain on an already full curriculum. But social media is just part of the issue. Journalism educators face significant challenges in the digital era. The range of skills expected of journalism graduates appears to be in a state of regular change and expansion, putting pressure on journalism faculty to identify relevant and important
technology areas, learn how to use them for journalistic purposes and create lessons, learning activities and forms of assessment. In Canada, journalism educators are focusing in particular, albeit reluctantly, on social media, on areas related to producing more visual work (photography, videography, design and layout) and on areas related to data (analysis and visualization). The priority areas around making journalism more visual echoes the final report of the New York Times 2020 Group (New York Times, 2017), which said that one of their top priorities was to make their ‘report’ more visual.

Many journalism educators indicated that one of the most useful things that journalism graduates can do with technology is tell stories in different and compelling kinds of ways. As noted above, those educators who teach data journalism believe that helping students develop those skills will enable them to be better journalists and tell new and different kinds of stories, since they will at least have a basic understanding of how to interpret the reams of data that are produced each day by governments, agencies, academics and others.

Other technology areas, such as how to customize a content management system or create an animation if Flash, are further removed from the actual practice of gathering, analyzing and disseminating information. When technology is more closely aligned with those practices, perhaps in ways that actually enhance those practices, it may be easier to see it as a welcome addition to a journalism curriculum, rather than another bright shiny bauble competing for space. There was broad consensus that helping students become proficient in these areas requires workshop-based instruction in groups as small as possible, though this may present challenges for those educators who teach at university-based programs, where larger classes are expected.

Canadian journalism educators are also trying to convey to students that learning how to use a particular tool is not the primary objective. Rather, educators are hoping to instill in students a sense of how technology works more broadly, with the expectation that students will need to continue learning things on their own if and when work trends shift or technology becomes obsolete. If you know how to calculate percentages and means in Excel, it makes little difference whether you do that with Google Sheets or SPSS.

I would like to conclude with a personal reflection. I share the concern of my colleagues about many aspects to social media. Like many of my peers in Canada, I have cut back on my use of the platforms. Yet I also acknowledge that social media is the primary driver of traffic to our main student publication. While not quite a contradiction, this is awkward at best. My larger concern is whether the need to function so publicly on social media platforms will become a deterrent for students to follow a career path in journalism. Our graduates already face considerable obstacles. It’s also well established that not all students who enrol in our programs do so with the intention of pursuing a career in journalism. As part of my 2015 study of journalism students at Carleton University and Ryerson University (Bosley, 2018), I found that students’ reported desire to pursue a career in journalism dropped off steadily through the four years of the program. As we are inundated almost daily with headlines about trolling, abuse, fake news and propaganda on social media, what will happen to the desire to become a journalist once students learn the extent to which they will be expected to be a part of that mix? Perhaps this will have no impact. Perhaps it would even be an incentive. Perhaps further research will prove my concern unfounded.
About the Author

Aneurin Bosley is an assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. Mr. Bosley joined Carleton after 14 years as an editor at the Toronto Star. Much of that time was spent in digital, where Mr. Bosley worked extensively with interactive technologies. Mr. Bosley has a Master of Journalism from Carleton and an Master of Arts in philosophy from the University of Ottawa. Before joining the Toronto Star, Mr. Bosley was the editor of The Internet Business Journal and a technology columnist on CBC Radio One in Ottawa. Mr. Bosley was also writer and co-producer for Paul Kane Interactive, a digital exhibit that was installed at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.

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Appendix A

News consumption habits of Canadian journalism students

In 2018 I surveyed journalism students at Carleton University and Ryerson University, Canada’s two largest journalism programs. There were 315 respondents, a response rate of roughly 28 per cent. Students in all years of the program were invited to participate. One of the questions asked respondents which sources they typically get news from. While the most commonly cited source for news was news websites, Twitter and Facebook were the second and third most commonly cited source.

![Figure 10. Students in the journalism programs at Carleton University and Ryerson University (n=315) were asked about their sources for news. Responses were given on a Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (several times per day).](image-url)
Can Chatbots Teach Copy Editing? A Comparison of Student Reporters’ Copy Editing Performance When Using a Chatbot Style Guide and a Traditional Stylebook

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Abstract:
Researchers in a large private university in the Western United States looked at whether participants performed better on a copyediting test using a chatbot or a traditional stylebook. Researchers found no significant difference in test scores among the ninety-six participants, half of whom used the bot and the other the stylebook. However, surveys and qualitative interviews indicate participants who used the bot found it comfortable and easy to use, although they also reported a slightly higher rate of failure to find the answer they wanted. Participants who had used the bot in a real-life situation appreciated its convenience and personalization.

Introduction:
Today’s journalists are being asked to do more with less. As newsroom employment in the United States has declined, especially at newspapers (Grieco, 2018), reporters and editors face a proliferating list of tasks, from tweeting to writing newsletters to picking up the coverage of laid off colleagues, all while being expected to keep the same high-quality standards their once-flush organizations demand. Meanwhile, the role of the copy editor, which often serves to enforce these standards, is being reduced (American Society of News Editors, 2015), even at a newspaper as prominent and comparatively well-off as The New York Times (Ember, 2017).

Journalism schools suffer from a similar problem: A rapidly evolving media landscape means there are more skills to teach students, packed into the same four years. The basic “tool kit” required for journalists grows larger every day. “Mastering newsgathering and storytelling techniques in all media formats [multi-skilling] as well as integrating digital network technologies, and a new producer-consumer relationship have become the biggest challenges in journalism in recent years” (Rottwilm, 2014, p. 13). Journalism educators have been arguing about the optimal balance between theory and practice for more than a century, but in the last two decades the demand for curriculum revisions has become even more urgent in the face of technological changes that have upended industry practice and standards (Folkerts, 2014). Most American journalism programs have incorporated “converged” media skills into their departments (Kraeplin & Criado, 2005), which necessitates difficult choices of which courses to curtail or drop. The authors of this paper teach at an institution that eliminated a required course in copy editing several years ago in favor of a cross-disciplinary reporting course team taught by instructors from different disciplines. Yet,
given the proliferation of online platforms, novice journalists can expect to write and publish content with little or no editing or guidance.

It is, therefore, vital for journalism students to learn copy editing and work it into their routines. To assist students in this effort, one of the authors of this paper created a text-based copy editing chatbot designed to make the process of learning and practicing copy editing more intuitive and accessible. Called Amy the Stylebot, the chatbot runs on the communication platform Slack and is used by reporters and editors in the co-curricular newsroom of a large private university in the Western United States. The bot has a cartoon avatar and uses keyword detection and machine learning to respond to students’ questions with pre-programmed responses written in conversational language. The responses were all written by professors, including the author of this paper who created the chatbot, based on several copy editing resources, including AP Style, which is the standard at many American journalism schools and news organizations. Unlike many animated conversational agents, Amy the Stylebot does not run off a language corpus input and is not an “intelligent” bot.

By analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, this study examines the effects of Amy the Stylebot on student learning through the students’ execution of editing tests and their impressions of the chatbot after using it. Specifically, the research questions explored were:

RQ1: Did students perform better on editing tests using the chatbot or an AP Stylebook?

RQ2: How do student reporters experience using a chatbot to access information in a newsroom?

Literature Review

Many students enter college with inadequate writing skills. In a recent survey of 1,000 educators in journalism and mass communication programs, most educators reported their students were only moderately proficient in writing (Lingwell, 2010). Yet that same study also found faculty divided about the best methods to teach writing and reported their institutions lacked adequate ways to assess the success of teaching methods (Lingwell, 2010). Teaching students to improve their writing skills is both difficult and labor intensive, as it demands frequent, timely and useful feedback (Kellogg & Raulerson, 2007). Technology can help ease that burden (Kellogg & Raulerson, 2007; Law & Baer, 2017). A 2003 report from a group of education professionals in the United States called for a “revolution” to bring sustained attention to writing instruction. It recommended increased investment and research into the use of technology as a teaching tool, including as an aid in conveying the basics of copy editing (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003). Providing automated, on-demand guidance on writing mechanics allows for instructors — or in the case of a newsroom, editors — to focus on higher-level skills such as editorial content. There is a clear need for a continued focus on improving writing instruction, as well as additional research into best practices surrounding the use of technology in that instruction.

Since the chatbot in the present study is primarily a reference tool, it is also helpful to look at some of the research around how and why people look for information. In a longitudinal study of college students, Warwick et al. (2009) found that students are often reluctant to use new methods when finding information and will often follow a policy of “satisficing” to find an acceptable level of
knowledge within the least amount of time. Connaway, Dickey, and Radford (2011) analyzed results from more than 300 surveys of faculty and students in the Midwestern United States over a period of three years to examine their information-seeking behavior. The authors point to the centrality of convenience for participants, who valued accessibility, ease of access, and speed when it came to finding information. Brandtzæg and Følstad (2017), in an online survey of chatbot users, reported that their primary motivation for using chatbots was speed and efficiency.

Chatbots — that is, computer-based programs that interact with humans in a conversational way — are having a moment. Although the technology has been around since the 1960s (Weizenbaum, 1966), interest in chatbots has blossomed in recent years, driven by technological advances, the prominence of virtual assistants, and the ubiquity of using short, text-based messages to communicate (Dale, 2016). Increasingly, educators are introducing chatbots and more fully functional artificial intelligence assistants into the learning process. These tools have the potential to offer more personalized instruction, increase student engagement and provide feedback, grading and logistical support, offloading those tasks from human teachers (Gill, 2019; Singh, 2018). These virtual aids can have their own personas, deliver information in ways that mimic human conversation or interaction, and vary from text-based chat interfaces (Pereira, 2016) to embodied conversational agents (ECAs) that feature on-screen characters that speak and move like humans or animals (Beun, de Vos, & Witteman, 2003; Lester et al., 1997; van Mulken, Andre, & Muller, 1998). They can assist students with math (Knill et al., 2004), languages (Abu Shawar & Atwell, 2007; Fryer & Carpenter, 2006; Fryer et al., 2017), and health education (Winkler & Söllner, 2018).

Several studies have demonstrated participants have a positive view of interacting with chatbots (Hasler, Tuchman, & Friedman, 2013; Hill, Ford, & Ferreras, 2015; Abu Shawar, Atwell, & Roberts, 2005; Brandtzæg & Følstad, 2017). One that has close parallel to the chatbot being examined in this study was assessed by Abu Shawar, Atwell, and Roberts (2005). It was called FAQchat, and, like Amy the Stylebot, it was a bot used to access reference material. The researchers found that people preferred using FAQchat to Google when accessing information found on a list of frequently asked questions. In a study of a different chatbot, Abu Shawar and Atwell (2007) found that people enjoyed using it to practice a foreign language, even when the chatbot provided only limited functional assistance. Pereira (2016) did not get significant quantitative results when testing a chatbot that gave quizzes to 20 students, but qualitative interviews suggested that most students found the chatbot useful in engaging them in the subject matter, and 94% said they would like to use chatbots for other subjects.

Students’ enthusiasm for chatbots was further observed by Hill, Ford, and Farreras (2015), who compared conversations between humans with conversations between humans and chatbots and found that people feel comfortable and confident communicating with a chatbot, sending more messages to the chatbot that are shorter in length than those sent to other people. Analyzing a comparison between bots and human interviewers conducting surveys in a Second Life environment, Hasler, Tuchman, and Friedman (2013) found human agents received far more negative responses than bots. In introducing an Intelligent Tutoring System chatbot to students, Kerlyl, Hall, and Bull (2007) found that most of them enjoyed interacting with the chatbot, with none responding that they did not enjoy it. Furthermore, Jia (2004) found that when people chatted with a chatbot to practice a foreign language, they liked to chat with it as they would a friend, engaging the bot in subjects beyond its stated scope. Fryer and Carpenter (2006) state that students responding to a questionnaire after using a chatbot said they feel more comfortable talking to a
chatbot than to a teacher, although in a later study Fryer et al. (2017) found that participants’ interest in using bots to practice language skills waned over time when compared with a human partner.

Because people often enjoy using them, chatbots have the potential to increase motivation (Fryer et al., 2017), which is a key driver of learning (Eccles, Wigfield, & Scheiefele, 1998). Benotti, Martínez, and Schapachnik (2014) found using chatbots increased engagement among a group of 47 high school students learning computer science in Argentina. In a study of 30 primary school children in the United Kingdom, Kerly, Ellis, and Bull (2008) found that a chatbot helped students reflect on their knowledge and improved their self-assessment. Abbasi and Hameedullah (2014) compared knowledge retention and learning outcomes among two groups of university students in Pakistan. Thirty-six students used a search engine and another group of the same size used a customized bot. The researchers found the group that used the bot outperformed those using the search engine on both measures.

In a meta-analysis, Winkler and Söllner (2018) looked at 80 studies published on chatbots and learning and concluded that research indicates that chatbots can have a positive impact on affective, cognitive, and metacognitive learning outcomes for participants, although these outcomes vary with learner characteristics and chatbot variables such as design, quality, and use conditions.

Unlike much of the research cited above, which focused on chatbots that are text-based, there is a significant body of research focusing on more fully capable embodied conversational agents, or ECAs. Studies indicate that a persona manifested as an ECA can aid learning and memory (Beun, de Vos, & Witteman, 2003; Lester et al., 1997) and can have a positive effect on learners even when there is little measurable knowledge-based benefit (van Mulken, Andre, & Muller, 1998). However, it is still unclear exactly what causes these effects. Lester et al. (1997) argue that ECAs create a “persona effect” by increasing participants’ enjoyment of their interaction, thus increasing motivation, but Moreno et al. (2002) point out that some ECAs actually provoke annoyance among users, and that the exact mechanisms which constitute an effective ECA remain unclear.

When assessing whether an embodied agent’s effect on learning came from its content or its media characteristics, Person (2003) found that the content of the message matters more than the animated agent associated with it. In a meta-analysis of pedagogical agents, which are learning assistants with an onscreen presence, Schroeder, Adesope, and Gilbert (2013) found that such aids have a “small but positive effect on learning” (p. 20). The present research examines a chatbot that interacts with users only through text, although it also has a persona and an avatar. It is unclear how much applicability the research on ECA and pedagogical agents have for a text-based chatbot such as Amy the Stylebot, although they do share some common characteristics. As such, as Winkler and Söllner (2018) state, more research is needed to identify how and why chatbots can be useful in learning.

**Method**

The researchers used an existing editing test process in their institution’s student newsroom to evaluate the copy editing chatbot, gathering quantitative data by comparing the copy editing scores of students using Amy the Stylebot as a reference tool to those using the AP Stylebook. To gather qualitative data, the researchers asked students who took the editing test to fill out a survey upon
completion of the test, and one author later conducted interviews with students who work in the newsroom and have used Amy in the course of performing their newsroom duties.

Researchers collected two batches of quantitative data, one from 45 editing tests conducted in the fall semester of the 2018-2019 academic year, and one from 51 tests conducted in the spring semester, totaling 96 tests. All the participants were undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Southern California, a large private university in the Western United States, who were interested in leadership positions at the school’s co-curricular student newsroom. They were part of a pool of students who applied for editing roles in the newsroom and were not further screened to participate in the study. They were of varying backgrounds and copy editing skill levels; they did not have to be enrolled in a journalism or copy editing class to take the editing test or participate in the study.

The content of the test varied in each semester, though it was the same for all test takers in a given semester and were comparable in difficulty across semesters. Study participants were not given a pre-test. Participants were randomly assigned to use either Amy the Stylebot as a reference tool during the test or a physical copy of the AP Stylebook. They received instruction to use one tool or the other as part of the test instructions, and those assigned to use the book were provided a copy.

A proctor who was not part of the research team wrote the test and developed the scoring system. One of this paper’s authors then selected answers to the test that were strictly based on copy editing ability and coded the answer key accordingly. Once the tests had been scored by the test proctors, the authors of this paper compiled the copy editing scores given to each participant by the first scorer based on the coded answer key. Then each researcher compiled her own copy editing score by looking at the test itself and comparing it with the coded answer key. If there was discrepancy between the first two scores, the other researcher would determine her own score using the same procedure. If two scores were the same, that was the final copy editing score assigned to a participant. If three different scores resulted, the researchers took an average of the three scores to determine the final score. Those were the scores used in the analysis detailed in the results section and are shown in table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference tool</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chatbot</td>
<td>16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
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<table>
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<th>AP Stylebook</th>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>11</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
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<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey

Upon completion of the editing test, 92 participants completed a survey. Just as with the test score data, all the participants were students at a large private Western university interested in leadership positions at the school’s co-curricular student newsroom, and were of varying backgrounds and copy editing skill levels.

The survey contained 12 questions (see appendix A). It began by asking participants which reference material they were assigned to use during the test – bot or book – and included questions such as, “How often did you search for an answer using Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook?” and “How comfortable did you feel using Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook?” Participants were also asked whether they would recommend the tool to others. The survey contained an open-ended question.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six students who had used Amy the Stylebot during the course of their work in the student newsroom. Participants answered questions about the usefulness of the chatbot, how they felt while using it, circumstances in which it was most helpful, and wider application for the bot. Those interviews, along with open survey responses, were reviewed and coded for common themes.

Results

Independent samples \( t \) tests were conducted on each round of editing test scores. In the first round of tests, there were 23 participants who used the chatbot during the test and 22 who used the AP Stylebook (see table 1). The scores in each batch were tested for outliers, and one score was removed, leaving 23 scores from the bot and 21 from the book. The independent samples \( t \) test did not find significant results between participants who used the bot and participants who used the book \((p = .201)\), though the mean for participants who used the book \((M = 16.67, SD = 3.29)\) was slightly higher than for those who used the chatbot \((M = 15.30, SD = 3.64)\).

In the second round of tests, there were 27 participants who used the chatbot and 24 who used the book (see table 1). The scores were tested for outliers, and one score was removed, leaving 27 scores from the bot and 23 from the book. The independent samples \( t \) test did not find significant results between participants who used the chatbot and participants who used the book \((p = .593)\), though the mean for participants who used the chatbot \((M = 12.78, SD = 2.90)\) was slightly higher than for those who used the book \((M = 12.30, SD = 3.32)\).

Of the 92 total survey respondents, 49 used the AP Stylebook and 40 used Amy the Stylebot. Three participants responded that they did not know which tool they used. Relevant survey results follow.
How often did you search for an answer using Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amy # (n= 40)</th>
<th>Amy percentage</th>
<th>Book # (n = 49)</th>
<th>Book percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than five times</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between five and 10 times</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 times</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How often did you search for an answer using Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook without success?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amy # (n= 40)</th>
<th>Amy percentage</th>
<th>Book # (n = 49)</th>
<th>Book percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than five times</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between five and 10 times</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 times</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the course of finding the answer you wanted or failing to find that answer, how often did you learn new information that you WEREN’T looking for? (In other words, you “stumbled across” information?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amy # (n= 40)</th>
<th>Amy percentage</th>
<th>Book # (n = 49)</th>
<th>Book percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than five times</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between five and 10 times</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 times</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### How comfortable did you feel using Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amy # (n= 40)</th>
<th>Amy percentage</th>
<th>Book # (n = 49)</th>
<th>Book percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uncomfortable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat uncomfortable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither comfortable or uncomfortable</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very comfortable</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How easy was it to use Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook to find answers on the test?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amy # (n= 40)</th>
<th>Amy percentage</th>
<th>Book # (n = 49)</th>
<th>Book percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat easy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What would improve your experience using Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amy # (n= 40)</th>
<th>Amy percentage</th>
<th>Book # (n = 49)</th>
<th>Book percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't know</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More instructions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Would you recommend this tool to others to help with copy editing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amy # (n= 40)</th>
<th>Amy percentage</th>
<th>Book # (n = 49)</th>
<th>Book percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Frequency of usage:** 58% of chatbot users reported using the tool five times or more during the test, while 39% of book users reported doing so. Only 3% of chatbot users said they never used the tool, as opposed to 8% of stylebook users. More than half of stylebook users (53%) said they used the tool fewer than five times, as opposed to 40% of chatbot users.

**Failure to find an answer:** Twice as many users of the AP Stylebook (37%) said they never experienced the inability to find an answer, as opposed to chatbot users (18%). Meanwhile, 63% of chatbot users said they could not find an answer in fewer than five instances, as opposed to 53% of stylebook users. Twenty percent of chatbot users said they were unsuccessful between five and ten times, as opposed to 10% of stylebook users.

**“Stumbling upon” information:** Twice as many users of the chatbot (22%) said they “never” stumbled upon information during the test in comparison with the stylebook (10%). However, similar percentages of chatbot users (63%) and stylebook users (65%) said this happened fewer than five times. Fifteen percent of chatbot users said this happened between five and ten times, as opposed to 20% of stylebook users. No chatbot users said they “stumbled upon” information more than ten times, in comparison with four percent of stylebook users.

**Ease of use:** Twice as many chatbot users (45%) as book users (22%) said the tool was very easy to use, though about the same number of users of each tool found them very easy or somewhat easy to use, with 88% of participants who used the chatbot selecting one of those two answers and 85% of participants who used the book doing so. About the same number of chatbot users (13%) as stylebook users (14%) said the tool was moderately difficult to use, while no participants reported that either tool was “very difficult” to use.

**Comfort:** 58% of chatbot users said they felt very comfortable using the tool, as opposed to 40% of book users. Thirty percent of chatbot users said they were neither comfortable nor uncomfortable using the tool, as opposed to 39% of stylebook users. Thirteen percent of chatbot users said they were uncomfortable or somewhat uncomfortable using the tool, as opposed to 20% of stylebook users.

**User experience:** 20% of chatbot users said more instruction would improve the experience of using the chatbot, as opposed to 2% of stylebook users. About the same number of chatbot users (33%) as book users (31%) said more time would have improved their experience. About an equal number of participants who used the chatbot (83%) and the stylebook (84%) said they would recommend the tool to others.

**Other reference tools:** Participants were not prevented from using Google during the editing tests, and the survey results indicate that participants who used the AP Stylebook were more likely to seek answers from the search engine (53%) than those who used Amy the Stylebot (48%).

**Interview and Open Comments**

Of the 10 respondents who included open comments in the survey, four were enthusiastic about using the chatbot, describing the bot as “great,” “very helpful,” and two saying they “liked Amy!” Three survey participants noted that the tool was easy to use, although two also noted some difficulties. Additional open comments from survey respondents follow.
“I didn't understand how to use it at first, but Amy the stylebot was pretty self-explanatory and easy to use.”
Survey Chatbot User 4

“I was just surprised to find out I would have to use Amy, as I had never used this tech before. I found it very easy, however.”
Survey Chatbot User 5

“It was very easy to use and straight to the point with relevant examples.”
Survey Chatbot User 9

“There were a few times that it couldn't understand or answer my questions.”
Survey Chatbot User 8

“It would be nice to know what format of questions to ask her to receive answers.”
Survey Chatbot User 7

Seven survey respondents who used the AP Stylebook included additional comments in the open comment section. Two noted drawbacks with the book, including cost and difficulty of use, though two also praised it.

“Using the AP online stylebook is a lot easier than using the book, and that was the main resource I used when NOT using the physical book.”
Survey Stylebook User 11

“The book is a little frustrating and I think I’ll try using the stylebot more in the future.”
Survey Stylebook User 12

“The book was easy to use and pretty comprehensive.”
Survey Stylebook User 13

“I am still in the process of learning rules from the AP Stylebook, especially because I wasn’t trained in my major.”
Survey Stylebook User 14

“The problem with the stylebook is that it's a little heavy and clunky. I don't like online access either, because once you stop paying, you lose the ability to look things up.”
Survey Stylebook User 15

“The A.P. Style Book is like the Bible - you know most of it in the general sense, but it never hurts to crack it open and read it again.”
Survey Stylebook User 16

“I did not use Amy the Stylebot for this exam. I also rarely used the AP stylebook — I looked up one entry.”
Survey Stylebook User 17

For the semi-structured interviews with students who had used Amy the Stylebot in a real-life environment in the newsroom, their primary comments centered on convenience, personalization, and ease of use. Since Amy the Stylebot is integrated into the newsroom communication tool Slack, users noted that it offered an additional element of convenience.
“It’s quicker and also it’s no extra effort. You don’t have to make the extra effort to open another window. It’s quicker (than Google or AP stylebook). I already have Slack open.”
- User 4, experienced student editor

“Before I would go online and just Google AP style. Using Amy is more direct, instead of having to type in to the search engine bar and most of the time it had the answers.”
- User 1, experienced student editor

“If it was in an app I already had open, that was easier than navigating to the website and logging in [to the AP stylebook online.]”
- User 3, experienced student editor

“We’re on Slack all the time anyway so it’s super easy to just send one more message. You can type in anything as a keyword - like height or measurement, whereas in the book you have to be super specific…I used to use the book, and you have to buy a new one every year which is expensive.”
- User 6, experienced student editor

Experienced student users also expressed positive feelings toward the chatbot.

“I used it literally every day I am a big fan of Amy!”
- User 6, experienced student editor

“I used Amy a lot. For my job interviews, when I had to submit a writing sample I would use it.”
- User 1, experienced student editor

Some users appreciated the level of customization that the bot could offer, with information tailored specifically to their organization, and developers who could further customize it.

“I think it’s more handy for specific questions that wouldn’t be in the book, like campus building names.”
- User 5, moderately experienced student reporter

“Amy is now customized to our news organization.”
- User 4, experienced student editor

“I like that answers are more tailored to [campus] students.”
- User 2, moderately experienced student editor

“I liked how we could tell [bot developers] when we couldn’t find something and they would fix it.”
- User 1, experienced student editor

“Definitely a pro was you could customize it for us. It was also great to be able to say oh we have a policy for that and it was written down. For example, we used ridesharing but AP style doesn’t. So I could tell people go ahead and type it into Amy and you can find it. We were able to build up the institutional knowledge and update it frequently.”
- User 6, experienced student editor

Some participants noted that the bot could be more useful to less experienced users, although not all agreed with that sentiment.
“Being a new editor...it’s super helpful that you have that quick of a resource.”
- User 2, moderately experienced student editor

“I should have assigned my reporters to use it, but I didn’t think of that.”
- User 1, experienced student editor

“I feel like I used it a lot more when I was a sophomore.”
- User 4, experienced student editor

“There are certain things I now know, but you are always going to have style questions. I still use it a lot!”
User 6, experienced student editor

Some users also noted Amy’s limitations in comparison with the more traditional stylebook.

“There’s an effort to make it more conversational, but it’s harder to see all the info you need when it’s displayed in the conversation format... [also]. I felt impatient sometimes... if you are searching using Google, you expect to work a little harder. It’s MORE disappointing if you can’t find it using a bot... Amy didn’t have the full level of info so the book ended up being more effective. So I used the [online] stylebook more”
- User 3, experienced student editor

“Many times when I ask Amy the information is not in. ... I don’t know how we can make Amy powerful and large enough to be helpful.”
- User 4, experienced student editor

“I prefer the book. I trust the book because I can see it. It feels safer!”
User 5, moderately experienced student reporter

Discussion

While study participants communicated enthusiasm for Amy the Stylebot, the chatbot did not appear to significantly improve their performance on an editing test of AP style. For example, survey results indicate most participants enjoyed using the chatbot and found it comfortable and easy to use, but the participants who used it did not score significantly higher on the editing tests in either round of data collection. This is consistent with much of the research, which suggests chatbots’ affective benefits don’t necessarily correspond to improved learning outcomes (Abu Shawar & Atwell, 2007; Abu Shawar, Atwell, & Roberts, 2005; Fryer & Carpenter, 2006; Fryer et al., 2017; Jia, 2004; Kerlyl, Hall, & Bull, 2007; Pereira, 2016).

Participants sought out the chatbot more often than they did the AP Stylebook, and more found it very easy and comfortable to use. This is important, since Connaway, Dickey, and Radford (2011) found people place a high importance on ease of use and access when seeking information.

Moreover, while this study’s design takes a bit of a dichotomous approach by setting up a contrast between chatbot and physical book, it is flexible enough to account for the practical reality that many students use Google as a reference tool, as they were allowed to do per the instructions on the editing tests. Survey and interview participants both report using Google to find answers to copy editing questions, either during the editing test or during routine newsroom tasks. While Google is certainly a powerful tool, survey respondents who were chatbot users reported using
Google less frequently than did those who were book users. Similarly, interview participants reported a preference for the chatbot, consistent with the results of Abu Shawar, Atwell, and Roberts’ (2005) study on FAQchat, which users preferred to a search engine to get specific information. Creating a tool that is easier and more convenient for can offer clear benefits to users, provided the tool is offered with adequate instruction and relevance.

For more experienced students who used Amy the Stylebot frequently, the greatest benefit came from convenience — being able to access a tool within a communication system in which they were already participating — and personalization. Since Amy the Stylebot operates within a particular newsroom, it could offer tailored guidance for situations not found in other, more generic applications like search engines. Again, convenience is an important factor in determining when and how people look for information (Connaway, Dickey, & Radford, 2011; Warwick et al., 2009).

For journalism educators struggling to teach what appears to be an endlessly expanding list of competencies to chronically underprepared students, bots offer an opportunity. They can deliver targeted feedback and information in a format that is familiar, engaging, and accessible for learners. Although chatbots are not a new technology, they are more popular and easier to produce than ever. They offer exciting possibilities to provide personalized support for journalism students and student newsrooms. Scholars and practitioners of journalism education should embrace these possibilities by identifying learner needs and studying how to create and refine and bots to help address those needs in the most effective ways.

**Limitations and Future Research**

While the researchers are mainly interested in the real-world, practical implications of a tool such as Amy the Stylebot, the research design limited their ability to isolate the variables. Since participants were taking the editing tests for reasons beyond this research, they were not given a pre-test, nor was extensive demographic information collected. Therefore, participants’ existing copy editing abilities were varied, so their differing scores cannot be solely attributed to the reference material tool they were assigned, although each data sample was corrected for outlier scores. Additionally, it is possible that some study participants do not speak English as their first language. Since this data was not collected, the current research also did not account for differences in skill level because of familiarity with English, or for usage difference among men and women, for example. Additionally, the study design assumed that participants would take advantage of the copy editing tool provided. However, the survey results revealed that this happened less often than anticipated. In fact, some participants did not use the study aid at all.

Future research on Amy the Stylebot would also help answer some questions left outstanding by prior research and the current study. For example, prior research is not conclusive on what, exactly, it is about text-based chatbots and more fully functional embodied conversational agents that might improve learned-based or affective outcomes (Moreno et al., 2002; Winkler & Söllner, 2018). While the present study indicates students enjoy using chatbots, it does not investigate exactly why students prefer chatbots. Is it merely convenience, or do a chatbot’s human-like qualities matter? If so, do they need to be expressed as a lifelike character with a voice and facial expressions, or does conversational phrasing in a text-based format suffice? Further investigation of a bare-bones chatbot such as Amy the Stylebot, as well as more attention to different types of learners, would help answer questions about whether findings about more advanced ECAs apply to more types of
chatbots and would help chatbot creators determine how much time and effort to put into developing various aspects of the tool.

**Disclosures**

Davis co-created Amy the Stylebot. While this research was underway, USC assigned her a licensing agent for the technology. She is not involved in marketing the bot and is currently not earning any money from it.

**About the Authors**

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**References**


Appendix A

1. Which tool did you use for your test?
   a. Amy the Stylebot
   b. AP Stylebook
   c. I’m not sure

2. How often did you search for an answer using Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook?
   a. Never
   b. Fewer than five times
   c. Between five and ten times
   d. More than ten times

3. Did you Google or otherwise use the internet to try to find answers to copy editing questions?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. How often did you search for an answer using Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook without success?
   a. Never
   b. Fewer than five times
   c. Between five and ten times
   d. More than ten times

5. In the course of finding the answer you wanted or failing to find that answer, how often did you learn new information that you WEREN’T looking for? (In other words, you “stumbled across” information?)
   a. Never
   b. Fewer than five times
   c. Between five and ten times
   d. More than ten times

6. How comfortable did you feel using Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook?
   a. I was uncomfortable using it
   b. I was somewhat uncomfortable using it
   c. I was neither comfortable or uncomfortable using it
   d. I was very comfortable using it

7. How easy was it to use Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook to find answers on the test?
   a. It was very easy
   b. It was somewhat easy
   c. It was moderately difficult
   d. It was very difficult

8. List the questions you asked Amy the Stylebot or looked up in the AP Stylebook.
9. What would improve your experience using Amy the Stylebot or AP Stylebook?
   a. I needed more instructions in how to use this tool
   b. I needed more time to learn how to use this tool
   c. I don’t know
   d. Other

10. Would you recommend this tool to others to help with copyediting?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Maybe

11. Please tell us about your educational background.
    a. First-year undergraduate studying journalism
    b. First-year undergraduate NOT studying journalism
    c. Second-year undergraduate studying journalism
    d. Second-year undergraduate NOT studying journalism
    e. Third-year undergraduate studying journalism
    f. Third-year undergraduate NOT studying journalism
    g. Fourth-year undergraduate studying journalism
    h. Fourth-year undergraduate NOT studying journalism
    i. Master’s student studying journalism
    j. Master’s student NOT studying journalism
    k. Other (doctoral student, postgrad, etc.)

12. Anything else you'd like to say about using the AP Stylebook or Amy the Stylebot?
Facebook as a Video Production and Exhibition Platform Used by Journalism Students: A Case Study of Rede Teia (Brazil)

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Abstract

This case study aims to investigate how to use Facebook Live to broadcast and publish TV news produced by journalism students, using common practices in the journalist’s routine. The use of Facebook Live as a teaching tool in Journalism to produce reports as newsrooms do will be discussed. The methodology of Teaching Through Projects was used in this coverage to make the students work independently, but the project had three stages: planning, coverage and evaluation performed in class, with a teacher as a guide. Third-year students of the Journalism course planned and covered the events of International Women’s Day, on March 8, 2019. Gender theories that discuss Feminist Stand Point served as the basis for coverage.

Keywords: Audiovisual Journalism; Facebook Live; Teaching Through Projects; Feminist Standpoint; International Women's Day.

Television Journalism Practices

Until a few years ago, only professional television broadcasters or large producers managed to perform live news broadcasts by virtue of the manner in which technology permitted this type of communication and, also, because costs were very high and the equipment complex. Moreover, only experienced professionals were able to operate the equipment, deal with technical issues, lead the large teams required to operate the equipment and present content with quality information. The issues mentioned can be found in television production manuals and books dealing with television and TV journalism by authors such as: Williams (1974), Watts (1990), Leal Junior (19970), Bonasio (2002), Brandão (2010), Lopes (2012), Santos (2016) and also in introduction to journalism books such as Rudin & Ibbotson (2008). The authors discuss and analyze processes, formats, equipment, objectives, among other specificities of television journalism in Brazil, in Europe or in North America.

To experience and practice television journalism has always been reserved for a few specialists and professionals who worked in the sector. Students seldom had broad access to television newsrooms before they graduated from university. But for a few exceptions who managed to do their internships in broadcasters and producers. However, with the advent of portable video transmission equipment, and mainly with the advent of smartphones, the situation changed considerably.

Media companies have adapted their systems to establish innovative news production and broadcasting processes. Many of them rapidly incorporated the use of smartphones, initially to
investigate news or record images and sounds. With the advances of technology, equipment
developed for usage by the average person has been increasingly adopted by broadcasters.

Universities have also made use of such equipment in journalism practice labs. It may even be said
that some university journalism teams started experimenting with mobile phones before some
professional broadcasters. In the case of Universidade Positivo, journalism students have been
performing journalism activities with smartphones since 2014. The first experiment conducted with
3rd year students, in the television class, had the aim of producing an audiovisual report solely with
a mobile phone. The reports were shown in a daily television news lab produced by the course and
published in YouTube.

If smartphones have fostered transformation from the point of view of production, Facebook Live,
when it emerged (in August 2015, initially for selected users), transformed the way in which live
video broadcasts are carried out around the world. This transformation was rapidly incorporated
by communication outlets. On 6 April 2016, the tool was offered to all users. Journalism companies
quickly started testing the tool because of the ease of carrying out live broadcasts.

The tool was also rapidly adopted by young people, given that Facebook, according to Patrício and
Gonçalvez (2010, p. 02), is one of the social networks most used around the world for students to
communicate.

The Internet in general and Web 2.0 technologies in particular are part of the daily
lives of our students and, increasingly, teachers seek to keep up with them using Web
technologies and tools in interactive activities with content and with learning process
partners.

If teachers in general are stimulated to use the web and Facebook to teach and support teaching
methodologies, in the case of Journalism courses it is impossible to omit new technologies from
the course content. More than a need, it has become an obligation among teaching institutions
concerned with showing students the transformations of the job market and of journalism itself.

In the case of Brazil, in 2013, the Ministry of Education, the body that regulates and oversees
graduate course, defined new and obligatory rules for the journalism programs, the so-called
National Curricular Guidelines for the graduate course in Journalism. The determination came
about as a result of the work of a highly qualified team of Journalism teachers who concluded their
report in 2009 pointing to ways of improving the quality of the qualification of the future
journalists. Universities had until 2016 to implement the changes required by the new rules in their
teaching programs.

1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTPzu7aUcSc
The majority of these rules aims to introduce young students to the new practices and platforms available to journalism as a way of improving the course syllabus and better prepare future professionals. Journalism courses of Brazilian universities began to view the new platforms as facilitators in the application of new technologies to their laboratories. This is the case of Rede Teia, laboratory of the journalism course at Universidade Positivo, which is the subject of this article and which will be explained in detail.

The usage of social media is part of the daily routine of Brazilians. There are over one hundred million Facebook users in the country. In July 2018, there were 127 million monthly users in Brazil, 2.2 billion users worldwide\(^4\), according to the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD, 2018)\(^5\). Many of them are university students.

The aim of this research is to investigate how it is possible to use Facebook Live to broadcast and publish videos produced by journalism students, applying common practices in the journalism routine. The main issue to be discussed is: how can the teaching of Journalism use the Facebook Live platform to cover stories in the same manner as in newsrooms?

This issue must be discussed as it is necessary to analyze how technological changes revolutionize journalistic practices and transform the job market, as well as how the teaching of journalism can make the best use of the free platforms available in order to refresh students’ skills.

**Methodology**

The case study method is used because it examines in a particular manner the phenomena of modern life. Bonoma (1985) views this methodology as a teaching resources. Good (1969) considers it to be a type of quantitative methodology, whereas Sousa (1997) explains that the case study is a descriptive (hyper-descriptive) method to explore designated units such as communities and organizations, but also individual and occasional peculiarities. In theory, he presents three levels of study: the productions scenario (equipment, materials); broadcasting and consumption. In this case study, the three levels must be analyzed.

The focus of this paper will be on the Rede Teia page in Facebook\(^6\), created in 2012, as a Video Production Lab. Most of the publications are based on videos produced in the audiovisual subjects. The program currently includes the following: Audiovisual Recording and Editing, Video Editing Techniques, Television Journalism, Contemporary Practices of Audiovisual Journalism and Documentaries. Initially, a YouTube channel was created in 2010, and it was used to upload videos that had already been recorded. In 2012, with the creation of a page in Facebook, it also started being used to upload videos. With the possibility of performing live broadcasts through Facebook Live, we now have another way of publishing assignments produced by students.

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\(^6\) [https://www.facebook.com/RedeTeia/](https://www.facebook.com/RedeTeia/)
This case study focuses on an assignment given as an assessment of the subject Contemporary Practices of Audiovisual Journalism, to third-year students of the Journalism course: coverage of the events of International Women’s Day, on March 8, 2019.

Methods Used in the Project Carried Out in the Subject

In 2019, the Journalism, Advertising, Fashion Design, Graphic Design, Product Design and Photography courses that make up the Communication and Design School (ECOD), in addition to the Law course, provided varied programming to celebrate the International Women’s Day, named “Mulheres que Ocupam”.

The event started with a roundtable discussion with the participation of federal judge Tani Wurster, who talked about female imprisonment, the prosecutor of the Jury Court, Ticiane Pereira, who talked about femicide and the Doctor of Laws, Eneida Desiree Salgado, creator of the course Introduction to Political Training for Women. A second roundtable brought students and graduates to present academic assignments whose practical and theoretical research focused on women.

The night students covered the Women’s March through the streets of downtown Curitiba, which started at noon and went on until night, attracting coverage by the city’s professional journalists.

The practical and evaluative exercise uses the methodology of Teaching Through Projects, through which the students learn during the production process, because they can question, raise doubts and research independently, under the guidance of the professor at the various stages of the process.

Therefore, the role of the teacher ceases to be that of conveying information – which revolves around the teacher’s activities –, to creating learning situations that focus on the relationships that are established in this process, the professor being responsible for making the necessary interventions so that the students can find the sense, the meaning of what they are learning, based on the relationships established in these situations. (Santos, 2017, pp. 1458-1459)

The stages of the project start with a meeting during the class in order to discuss how the coverage is going to be carried out, the so-called planning. The second stage is the coverage of the event. And the third stage is the evaluation. Aberje, the Brazilian Association of Business Communication, affirms that live streaming requires 3-stage planning: “before”, “during” and “after” the event. The stage named “before” by Aberje served as a base for the planning class and caters for the following considerations:

– Disclose the broadcast in advance in social networks. Facebook recommends that this be done the day before, adequate time for people to make plans and sufficiently close to the event so that people do not forget it;

– Check the broadcasting conditions – Wi-Fi signal strength or quality of the cable connection, on-site lighting, ambient noise situation, condition of the camera, computer and smartphone batteries;

– Have backups: directional microphones, some lighting or an alternative space that does not require lighting and a device with 4G connection (in the latter case, bear in mind that 4G video transmission represents considerable battery and data consumption);
– Prepare complementary or background content and interactive actions in advance;

– Define how users will be able to share the transmission with their networks. (Aberje, 2018)

The stages denominated “during” by Aberje were also discussed in the same planning class, as a way of organizing the production in such a way that all the necessary measures for the event could be carried out in advance. This class took place one week prior to the event and the texts were made available to the students in the academic portal. According to Aberje, the measures are:

– Have introductory texts available to publish at the beginning of the broadcast. A good description can be an invitation that will attract many users to your transmission;

– Invite users to interact and share with their networks. Repeat the invitations at regular intervals during the transmission;

– Mention the names of the users who asked questions when replying;

– The recommended length of the transmission of a live streaming video is much longer than that of a normal video. While a recorded video is published with reduced length, 2 to 3 minutes, live streaming requires more time so that people become involved, to be in place. Facebook recommends transmissions of 10 to 90 minutes. Try to start with a predetermined length. This does not prevent the video from being longer than planned, but it will prevent gaps in the transmission that may cause the loss of spectators;

– If there is room for interaction, deploy someone to manage the conversations and disclosure of content;

– Make a conclusion informing whether the recording will be available and where. (Aberje, 2018)

Of the abovementioned recommendations, the issue of length was discussed in the classroom and the team concluded that very long transmissions would not make sense in this coverage, whose purpose was to give a voice to the women invited to the morning event, as well as to the organizers of the march invited to the evening event. The duration of each video was defined as free, each student having the power to decide how long the interview or the transmission should take, according to the relevance of the content.

The stage called “After”, was carried out in the class following the coverage of the event (as classes take place weekly, the whole practice lasted 3 weeks). The evaluation, according to Aberje, must be performed by means of a report regarding the transmission assessing the behavior of the audience and presenting the positive and negative aspects of the transmission. Their advice is that the report be shared with all concerned.

**What is Feminist Standpoint?**

The method recommended by Aberje worked well to discuss the use of technology and to organize the technical issues, given that the content issues were decided on the basis of the discussion of theoretical concepts. Besides the issues of journalistic ethics, newsworthiness and the
representativeness of source, the standpoint concept (Feminist Standpoint) was presented to the students as part of the theoretical discussions.

Feminist Standpoint is a widely used concept, mainly by feminists, and which has been gaining strength in academic research. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay Can the Subaltern Speak? Presents the theory that the individual whose voice cannot be heard is considered to be the subaltern. The voice of this subaltern is interceded by the voice of another individual who would have the role of claiming something on the other’s behalf. The subaltern woman would face an even more difficult situation than the subaltern man. “If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.” (Spivak, 2010, p. 67).

Authors such as bell hooks (1984), Linda Alcoff (1991-1992) and Patricia Hill Collins (2000) also discuss the standpoint of black women in society from the point of view of the discourse. According to Alcoff, to speak for the other, even if for other women, is to have an arrogant, vain, unethical attitude and can be considered to be a politically illegitimate act. On the other hand, she states that mainly intellectual and academic researchers may have good intentions when speaking for another, but even so: “In particular, the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged persons has actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for.” (Alcoff, 1991-1992, p. 07).

In Brazil, there are authors who deal with the concept of standpoint going beyond the woman’s standpoint. Marcia Franz Amaral (2005) uses this concept as a methodological instrument in order to describe the discourse of an individual group or the representation of its social position. Therefore, some Brazilian authors discuss the voice given to specific groups who have unique representation needs.

Djamila Ribeiro questions the fact that standpoint is mistaken for representativeness. In her view, the concept deals with social standpoint that gives everyone the right to speak, while respecting an ethical stance and understanding the social hierarchy. A white man can theorize about transgender and transvestite individuals, but from his standpoint, without claiming to represent this group: “The black transvestite woman speaks from her social standpoint as does the cisgender white man” (Ribeiro, 2017, p. 83-84). Thus, all individuals have their standpoint, but each from his or her social location (Ribeiro, 2017, p. 86).

**Practical Activity: Planning Meeting (Before Coverage)**

This conceptualization was presented to students in the classroom, followed by the planning meeting. At the end of the class, some students suggested that only the female students should act as reporters and presenters in the coverage of the March 8 events, giving them their standpoint. The majority agreed with the suggestion, but some people were unsure about not allowing male students to speak in the video. The decision was not unanimous.

Each team was responsible for choosing one source to be interviewed. Based on their choice, students were advised to research the subject to be dealt with in the interview and to prepare the questions to be answered by the interviewee. A folder in Google Drive was used to update
information on the interviewers, interviewees, the guidelines that each student would present in their live participation. The event hashtag had to be used in every post.

Part of this meeting was dedicated to discussing the technical issues too. A list of guidelines was created (based on the aforementioned Aberje tips), among others: reminding the teams to have a directional microphone at hand in order to record cell phone audio, to choose the best quality cell phone in terms of image recording, to check if their data package is sufficient to perform the transmission, to enable the cell phone camera auto-rotate setting to prevent the device from turning the screen when the cell phone is being used in the vertical position and to use the cell phone in the horizontal position for live streaming. The sign-off to be used was also discussed and it was decided that, at the end of each transmission, the reporter should state his or her name and that he or she was speaking live for Rede Teia.

As suggested by the professor, the class was advised to use a cell phone stabilizer (available for loan from the institution’s TV lab). By using this equipment, the intention was also to improve the quality of the image, mainly in interviews as it stabilizes the cell phone camera movements. Students took this equipment home in order to practice how to use it and to download the necessary applications.

The students were further advised to wear a T-shirt with the Universidade Positivo and Rede Teia logos used in coverages to identify everyone as reporters of the journalism course. This was decided by the course advisory board, for whenever there are large coverages.

**Practical activity: coverage**

On March 7, 2019, eve of the coverage, a Facebook post was made on Rede Teia’s page (facebook.com/redeteia) to inform the public that following day there would be special coverage of the international day of women’s struggle. This strategy was part of the planning and had the intention of disclosing the coverage. It was posted by the professor in charge who is also one of the administrators of the page.

On the morning of March 8, the students were added as editors of the page to enable them to broadcast live. Whenever they were ready to start broadcasting, they were added as editors to be able to start live transmission. The first transmission was carried out at 08:25 and the last one at 20:45, with a total of 28 live transmissions during March 8.

**Morning Live transmissions:**

In the morning, the students attended speeches in order to understand the subject dealt with in each of them, and then interviewed the guest speakers. Six interviews were broadcast, in addition to two live transmissions of excerpts of the speeches, and a bulletin with information about the schedule. Two posts were also made with photos of the round-table discussions. The last live transmission in the morning was made at 11:57.
In the first live transmission, an interview with the Advertising course coordinator, the interviewing student used the microphone of the cell phone ear headset and the volume audio was very low, as if there was no microphone. The issue broached in the question was the relevance of the event to graduate students.

The second live transmission was an excerpt of a speech delivered by a researcher who founded the group Politics Of By and For Women about the lack of female participation in elective office in Brazil. The image keeps trying to find the correct framing and is quite shaky. The quality of the audio is reasonable. The third live transmission is a news bulletin produced by a student inviting the members of the public to the event and to participate through Facebook and Instagram by sending photographs and using the hashtag #mulheresqueocupam.

The fourth live transmission is an excerpt of the speech delivered by the public prosecutor of the Jury Court speaking about femicide. The framing was reasonable and the audio satisfactory. The fifth live transmission was an interview with the same prosecutor, after the end of her speech. The cell phone was used in the vertical position and the audio recorded was the ambient sound (practically inaudible). The sixth one was an interview with a federal judge, and which also had audio glitches.

The seventh publication was an interview with a Doctor of Laws but it was not done live due to problems with the WiFi network, and the team had to record the interview and subsequently post it. The eighth live transmission was an interview with a newly graduated journalist who worked with the issue of women in the press. The ninth one was also an interview with two students who dealt with a topic related to the women’s issues.
Afternoon Live Transmissions:

In the afternoon, transmissions started at 13h22, with the gathering for the March and activities conducted by Universidade Positivo, with the customization of T-shirt with the hashtag of the event and the exhibition about quilombola women. Overall, there were eight interviews and three news bulletins in the afternoon.

The first interview dealt with a poetry competition by female poets known as “slam das minas” (girls’ slam), a type of battle between women who recite poems seeking their standpoint. The cell phone did not rotate and the live transmission remained horizontal. The second one was an interview with the winner of the competition. The third one was an interview about the immigration of women by Cáritas, a human rights organization. The fourth one was an interview with a Venezuelan immigrant who took refuge in Brazil.
The fifth live transmission was a news bulletin with information about the number of women murdered in Brazil. The reporter also makes a call to the public to go to the place to customize T-shirts. The sixth one was an interview with the organizers of the march, about the making of the posters with phrases that comprise women’s claims, the microphone was faulty and voices were cut off.

The seventh live transmission was an interview with the professor who organized the customization of the T-shirts in order to foster a sense of belonging among students. The eighth live transmission was of the planning of the march, showing the route of the protest march. The ninth live
transmission was also a news bulletin, once again inviting members of the public to send photographs to the Rede Teia pages by using the event hashtags.

The tenth one was about the exhibition, at Universidade Positivo, about women who live in quilombola communities, including an interview with one of the women photographed. The eleventh one was a survey with a student about how women feel about being given flowers as a women’s day gift. As this was an indoor live transmission, in the same location as the photographic exhibition, difficulties with the lighting were encountered, the interview was poorly lit and with shadows.

**Evening live transmissions:**

In the evening period, the coverage focused on the March 8th March through the streets of Curitiba. Altogether, eight interviews were conducted during the coverage of the march in the evening period, in addition to an event closing bulletin and the publication of a feature text about the events that took place in the morning.

The first interview, broadcast at 18h35, was with a representative of the march dealing with labor issues, and as there was a problem with the 3G network, the interview was recorded and published immediately afterwards. The microphone did not work and the audio was very low and with a lot of noise from the protesters themselves. In the second transmission, the microphone worked and, although the noise of the protesters remained very clear, the speech of the interviewee who spoke about harassment, was clear.

The third one was an interview about how the Brazilian pension reform will affect women, with one of the representatives of the march. The fourth one deals with the participation of black women
in the protest and with prejudice in an interview with one of the representatives. The next live transmission was an interview regarding femicide with the same interviewee as in the previous one.

The sixth one dealt with violence against women. One of the women responsible for security during the march was the interviewee. The seventh one showed the closing event of the march, a gathering in a square in Curitiba.

The last two publications were interviews that were recorded and subsequently published. The first one was about children who participated in the march alongside their mothers. The other one was an interview with a female participant discussing what motivated women to participate in the march.

Practical activity: assessment meeting (after the coverage)

At the assessment meeting of the coverage, all the videos were watched in class and discussed with the students. Issues that had been planned were the focus of the analyses, both content and technique were assessed by the classes.

Among the technical problems identified, the main ones were the difficulties encountered with the use of the microphone to record the audio with quality and the oddness of the use of the stabilizer. Several interviews recorded the (noisy) ambient sound because the microphone was not properly connected. Some images were shaky because the stabilizer, new to all students, was not being correctly used.

The WiFi network was also an issue that gave rise to problems, such that one of the interviews had to be recorded in the live format to be posted subsequently because the WiFi failed at the time of the transmission. Regarding the setting of the interviews, not all students sought to use places that contained informative objects in framing. Internal lighting and external lighting at night were problems that were not overcome.

The signing off of reporters was another issue that was raised during the assessment as not everyone remembered to sign off as had been planned. There was even a student who sent kisses at the end of the transmission. With regard to the text, remembering to introduce the interviewees by their names, surnames and occupation also posed a difficulty for some students.

Among the problems detected in the content, not all students remembered to write captions to be used with the live transmissions (as had been arranged at the planning meeting) and had to do it quickly. Some also forgot to use the event’s hashtags: #mulheresqueocupam and #semserobjeto.

Some students did not find interviewees and ended up producing information bulletins. Some conducted interviews but had not planned questions for the interviewees and had to improvise, realizing that they did not obtain the best answers.

The analysis with regard to the involvement and number of views of the live transmissions was based on the following data: the most viewed video was the interview with the winner of the slam competition, with 747 views and 1220 people reached. The second one was the interview with the Doctor of Laws: 286 views and 592 people reached, followed by a publication about violence
against women, with 285 views and 726 people reached and by the interview about femicide with the prosecutor of the Jury Court which obtained 259 views and reached 509 people. Five other videos had between one and two hundred views: the interview with the Venezuelan refugee (166 views, 379 people reached), the interview the newly graduated journalist about women in the press (146 views, 322 people reached), the excerpt of the speech by the Jury Court prosecutor (130 views, 368 people reached), the interview with the mother who took her child to the march (105 views, 244 people reached) and the interview with the advertising course coordinator who presented the event (104 views, 220 people reached). All the others had less than one hundred views.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the practical exercises performed in the subject, it is possible to consider that the methodology of Teaching Through Projects allows the student to, rather than being a bystander, participate in the production of knowledge. Instead of acting as a mere consumer, the student participates in the construction of the answers to everyday challenges. This methodology transfers the learning focus from the teacher to the student.

In this project, the teacher acted as a guide, helping the student to make decisions to solve the real problems that arose. An example of this were the difficulties faced to start broadcasting when the WiFi networked failed, the two options were: let the interviewee go and lose the interview or record the interview to publish it when the network stabilized. The professor’s guidance influenced the students leading them to understand that technology has to be used for the benefit of the coverage. Therefore, the second option was the best solution.

The use of Facebook to publish content undoubtedly renders the practice of live journalism much easier among students. Knowing how to behave when you are speaking live, testing the framing that works, choosing the setting, paying attention to the audio, were the activities that students had to take into account and making the wrong decisions led to a transmission with technical problems. The mistakes made and discussed in class will certainly serve to ensure that subsequent transmissions will have fewer flaws.

Performing the coverage of a real event, with real people and situations, definitely stimulates the students to understand the daily routine of journalists. It enables them to understand the difficulties encountered in news production routine, nut also motivates them to want to learn. Skills such as decision-making, leadership and improvisation were used in this activity and will serve to make students seek to improve future transmissions made at university or in the job market.

If one of the challenges of the journalism profession is to qualify students to work in the everchanging job market, due to technological advances, professors also need to be motivated to donate their time, beyond the classroom or the assignment or test correction. They will need to get involved in activities which, at that stage of the project, require total dedication.
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References


Snap Judgement: How Legacy Media’s Use of Snapchat Discover Informs Journalism Education

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Abstract

One of the later entries into news-via-social media is Snapchat, and after being slow-out-of-the-gate with early forms of social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc), most news organizations wasted no time in jumping onto the Snapchat platform, at least as Snapchat allowed. At first, they simply enlisted reporters and photographers to post individual Snaps, but eventually they saw the benefit of producing material specifically for Snapchat Discover. Content analysis methods expand as media platforms change, and this research is an attempt to assess what various news organizations are doing with the app. Some are posting daily, and some are promoting longer investigative pieces. Some repurpose material from their websites and their own mobile apps, and some come up with new pieces just for this platform. Snapchat research includes an additional challenge since it is intentionally ephemeral. This content analysis defines a set of Snap-genres produced by news organizations and featured on Snapchat Discover. Legacy news organizations (The Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, CNN, NBC) are side-by-side with born-digital news (NowThis, Vice) and all are called on to produce micro stories, videos, and interactives to keep the audience engaged.

Keywords: Snapchat, social media, journalism, social media news, online news

Introduction

Long gone are the days of a 3pm deadline for a 5 o’clock television news show, or the 11pm deadline for a morning newspaper. Today not only must journalists produce for their legacy media platform, they must also produce for a variety of social media platforms. In addition, consumers continue to shift away from traditional information sources, instead turning toward news delivered through social media (Shearer, 2018). From Teletext to websites to mobile devices, Facebook to Instagram to Snapchat, media organizations must add to their production capabilities as each new platform comes along. In the earlier years of the Internet, this was a rather simple move. The text from a newspaper story was adapted to text online. Even as broadcasters came on the scene, scripts and screengrabs went directly to the stations’ websites. Today some of those practices persist on social media platforms, but now media organizations are producing news pieces specifically for Instagram/Facebook Stories and Snapchat Discover.

While the traditional conventions of journalism — ethical reporting, trustworthy sourcing, and solid storytelling — continue to drive news organizations and therefore, journalism education, how does traditional practice translate to the production and teaching of news for these ephemeral platforms? In the broadest sense this small study adds to the work of those who have explored innovation in tradition-bound businesses (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Rogers, 1995). There has been ample opportunity for newspapers, radio stations and television stations to grow beyond the
traditional forms of news coverage, but the extent to which they have taken full advantage of the capabilities of some newer platforms remains elusive. At its best, journalism’s traditional approaches to storytelling showcase the talents of the photojournalist who captures the perfect moment or the radio reporter who chooses the key sound bite. But how do we incorporate these mainstays into production for newer platforms when it comes to journalism education? One step is assessing what news producers are doing on these channels in order to see the foundational skills that transfer. Newsrooms and journalism classrooms are quick to jump onto bandwagons in order to stay relevant to their audiences—a wise preservation move—but we must also see the fundamentals in the midst of the glitz. In terms of educational initiatives, this work speaks somewhat to that of Deb Halpern Wenger and others on the hiring needs of both legacy and born-digital news organizations (Martin, Wenger, South, & Otto, 2004; D. H. Wenger & Owens, 2012; D. Wenger & Owens, 2013). By breaking down and analyzing the elements of stories in these newer forms, it is possible to better serve newsrooms and our students.

This research also offers a methodological approach to content analysis specifically designed to look at these short and often ephemeral stories produced by legacy and born-digital news organizations. Earlier studies have concentrated primarily on the presence or absence of various types of multimedia presentations or interactivity within multimedia presentations (Bergland, 2008; Seelig, 2008a). Few have examined the specific content types and formats (e.g., text, still images, audio, animation), contained within these stories. A goal of this methodological exploration is to provide tools for further study of specific news organizations’ social media “stories” footprint, or for longitudinal studies of specific ephemeral social media. This research also produces some practical information for news media organizations seeking to maximize social media capabilities. Given the evidence that the news audience is increasingly consuming information via mobile devices, are news organizations fully exploiting these news platforms? If they are embracing these new storytelling practices, in what ways is it present in their “story channels” (Purcell, 2010)? The study of Snapchat, a mobile messaging application, and specifically its “Discovery” feed provides a small window into the moves news producers are making in order to keep a wider band of audience engaged in their reporting.

Literature Review

In the newer journal Digital Journalism Studies, the editors note that journalism “not only symptomatically reflects, but also pragmatically adapts to and influences the changing media environment” (Burgess & Hurcombe, 2019). As journalism moved from print and airwaves, to home computers connected by broadband, and then to mobile devices, it was widely presumed that storytelling would take advantage of the tools offered by new distribution methods (Gates, 2002; Gitner, 2009). Legacy media—newspapers, radio and television—are expected to produce what they have always produced—a publication delivered to the doorstep or a news report at five o’clock—but they must also have a web presence and a social media presence (Lewis & Molyneux, 2018; Wardle, 2015). Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have taught the audience that not only can they read about an event, but they can see it and hear it and often interact with it in some way via their mobile device. This chance to experience a story in a new way is often called multimedia storytelling. From the late 1990s through about 2009 journalism scholars attempted to define multimedia, to quantify its use, and to measure its impact on content producers and audience (Steensen, 2011). Lewis and Molyneux (2018) note that multimedia, followed by personalization,
apps, paywalls, iPads, and lately virtual and augmented reality are hailed as the saviors of journalism.

*Stories and snapchat discover*

In more recent research, the “story function” is touted as saving the day for news organizations. Whether legacy or born-digital, reporting must happen in more places than broadcast, print, or even a website. Snapchat was the first of the social media platforms to offer this choice to users, with Instagram and Facebook offering their own options within a few years. The story function was initially defined by Snapchat as a longer form of the ephemeral “snap”, as well as a way for users to keep a running dialogue of the day. The appeal was the disappearing act, since unlike the heavily curated photos on Instagram or the running timeline of Facebook, users could trust that no future employer or parent would see their stream later (Frier, 2017). Three years after its founding in 2012, Snapchat introduced Discover to provide a daily feed of stories from brands like ESPN, CNN, Vice and National Geographic. *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* entered the Snapchat Discover channel line-up somewhat later (Benton, 2015; Crook, 2015). Instagram and Facebook added this story function in August of 2016 and March of 2017 respectively, and like Snapchat (which is mobile-only). Facebook’s story feature clearly mimics Snapchat, but so far media organizations are only producing specific material for Snapchat and Instagram stories.

*Accessing news via social media*

According to Pew Research Center’s most recent look at media and society, about two-thirds of American adults get a portion of their news via social media (Matsa & Shearer, 2018). Convenience is the most common reason for this pattern, since news consumers say they want to be where their friends are, and their friends are on social media. The fact that they experience some connection with the news of the day appears to be almost an afterthought. While Reddit and Twitter have the highest portion of users exposed to news, Snapchat excels statistically with younger users. Seventy-five percent of the site’s news consumers are between ages 18-29. Clearly news organizations want these users and along with the clicks on advertising, and are thus producing material for Snapchat Discover that appeals to this demographic. Initially news organizations and other channels tried to simply edit down their long-form television offerings and send them to Snapchat Discover, but the data showed this content didn’t perform well. When they started producing specifically for the younger audience, and in a manner that mimicked the content users were creating themselves, the numbers improved (Wallenstein, 2017).

*Training journalists for new platforms*

The launch of Snapchat Discover with brands like National Geographic, Vice, ESPN; and later additions of *The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, CNN* and NBC, likely added to the social-media-as-journalism buzz amongst journalism educators (D. H. Wenger, 2005; D. H. Wenger & Owens, 2012; D. Wenger & Owens, 2013). Back in the early part of the new century, educators knew journalism was changing and it was the responsibility of journalism programs to not only teach the basics of AP Style and advanced writing and reporting skills, but to make sure students were prepared to work on websites (D. H. Wenger, 2005). Today they must be adept at every type of social media, from Twitter to Facebook, from Reddit to Youtube, and now in “stories” as they exist on Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook. Most news organizations now require social
media skills and news managers look for those who can create visual stories, analyze trends, and utilize the “live” features of most platforms.

**Framework for research question**

Pablo Boczkowski’s (2004) theory suggests that a news organization’s past practices heavily influence its current path in online journalism. The acceptance of technologies and workflows from the past still influence everything from entrance into news-via-website, to the social media practices of today such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat. Dahlgren (1996) also suggests that even in cyberspace, media have a set of “institutionally structured features” (p.63) and that these “forms and processes organize the work done within a particular medium” (p.63). In other words, legacy news media will likely bring these forms and processes to their online production of information, such as multimedia presentations. There are several case studies of organizational change during the transition to online journalism. However, they are primarily broad attempts to identify the meaning of convergence and its impact on newsworkers (Johnsen, 2004; Lawson-Borders, 2006; Robinson, 2007; Singer, 2004, 2008). Boczkows (2005), Dahlgren (1996), and Deuze (2004) draw the clearest connections between organizational structures and their effect on multimedia. These studies certainly extend to production for social media (Gottfried & Shearer, 2017; Hermida, 2012; Lee, 2018; Santana & Hopp, 2016) and most have found that legacy news organizations tend to reproduce their existing journalistic practices.

Legacy media’s transition to distribution on the Web brought many hopes for new and different ways of producing a story. However, most studies of this transition looked at a single media type and suggest that the old ways of doing media production still have the upper hand in the movement toward convergence. (Bergland, 2008; Seelig, 2008). Work with multimedia on legacy news websites led to a methodological approach to content analysis specifically designed for these presentations (M. E. Achterman, 2012). Today that methodology can be used to look at what is happening in the social media of both legacy and born-digital news organizations. This research began as a test of methodology for capturing Snapchat’s news content, but ultimately answered some questions around the production choices for these channels.

**RQ:** Do legacy media practices influence Snapchat Discover processes and presentations?
Methodology

The content analysis portion of this study was divided into three phases. We offer a brief overview of each phase and then describe them all in more detail following the process.

**PHASE I (2017)** - Snapchat Discover observations and establishment of operational definitions.
This phase of the project consisted of:
1. Informally observing a variety of legacy media and born-digital news Snaps on Discover to develop a sense of the presentation techniques most common to these news organizations.
2. Establishing lists of common content modes, formats and characteristics of stories on Snapchat Discover.
3. Formalizing definitions and variables for the pilot study.
4. Setting up a coding scheme for the pilot study.

**PHASE II** - Pilot study.
This phase of the project consisted of:
1. Testing sampling methods for suitability and deciding that no sampling was necessary in this phase. We analyzed all units.
2. Establishing a collection process for capturing the proposed Snapchat Discover Channels.
3. Training two research assistants on collection and capture process for assistance with this step.
5. Coding all presentations found on these Snaps to test variables.
6. Analyzing data collected in pilot.

The results of this portion of the study were presented at VisCom 31, with the participating students in attendance (M.E. Achterman, 2017). Due to student graduations, this work was shelved for over a year.

**PHASE III** – Formal content analysis (2019).
This phase of the project consisted of:
1. Adjusting collection methods and variables to be coded.
2. Selecting the organizations for study. The New York Times and The Economist stopped producing for Snapchat Discover, so NowThis and NBC were added. This decision was made in part to add another “born-digital” channel, and in part to add another traditional broadcast channel.
3. Adjusting the capture procedure to accommodate each organization’s Snaps. The team learned to account for repeating material in each channel.
4. Selecting a three-week time period for capturing presentations from these news organizations’ Snaps.
5. Examining the use of a systematic probability sample to capture presentations from Snaps, but deciding on analysis of all units (n=584).
6. Coding presentations.
Snapchat discover observations and establishment of operational definitions

Since this research is a continuation of a project started in an undergraduate journalism course, we will describe the initial move to do this study. The students in the class and the small team of researchers, were motivated by The New York Times entry onto the Snapchat Discover platform (Minsberg, 2017) and by the their interest in the many new platforms for journalism. The students started by observing and defining the types of visual, aural and textual components present in the various work produced for Snapchat Discover. The team first monitored Snapchat Discover for legacy media channels and chose to focus on just one born-digital site to examine the differences (Digital Preservation Coalition, 2012). Through these observations and discussions, we defined 14 variables that could be used to study the various stories told on the Snapchat Discover channels. It was at this stage that we determined the unit of analysis needed to be defined as each 10-second piece of the “snap” – as indicated by the loop of material and the requirement to tap to get to the next segment. Since each of these has different attributes it was necessary to break things down to a minute detail. Some characteristics of these Snaps fell into some more common categories; did the Snap have a music background, what category of news was covered, and how many images were present in the Snap? Most, however, needed new descriptions and definitions in order to capture what was happening in these mini-stories. We included categories such as “story type” and interactivity that have been analyzed in other studies (Lin & Jeffres, 2001), but we will limit the operational definitions in this paper to those specific to examining the unique features of Snapchat Discover. Ultimately, we feel the primary benefit of this study comes in the methodological inventiveness rather than the basic findings.

1. We observed that the stories have different options for a user, in that they may simply let the Snap play (and eventually loop) and then tap to go to the next part. They may also choose to interact in a way that will take them to a longer story or to more video. There is also a newer feature that does not require the tap of the screen to continue the play of the Snap. We named these variables (Snap Type):
   a. **Snap Top**: The Snap does not require an action except to tap to the next part or to the next story.
   b. **Snap Bottom-Read**: The Snap contains an opportunity to read further information by tapping a “read” button on the bottom of the page.
   c. **Snap Bottom-Watch**: The Snap contains an opportunity to read further information by tapping a “watch” button on the bottom of the page.
   d. **Snap Bottom-Other**: The Snap contains an opportunity to participate in a quiz, poll, chat, or to make a comment—or it does not fit in other categories.
   e. **Snap Play-through**: Will play through whole “show” without clicking (ex: “Staytuned”). This is similar to a mini newscast.

2. The stories varied from a simple text block on the screen, to elaborate infographics, to edited video. We broke these down in order to determine the most common formats and ask whether they were more or less complex.
   a. **Text only**: The Snap is only text on a background (we did not code for color of typeface or background)
   b. **Video only**: The Snap is only video playing. It may be edited or raw.
3. The treatment of images (both still and video) was of note because of the wide variation of movement contained in these Snaps. A move in on an image or choosing to use an animation has influence on the users’ perception (Keith, 2014; Lester, 1991). We also counted the number of images used in a Snap. Our variables are:

   a. **Animation**: A cartoon, drawing or any stylized image.
   b. **Still Ken Burns**: A push-in, pull-back, pan-over on a still image.
   c. **Video Ken Burns**: A push-in, pull-back, pan-over on video.
   d. **Combination of still & video**: Using both stills and videos in the same Snap.
   e. **Still no move**: Still stand-alone.
   f. **Video no move**: Video stand-alone.

4. Another notable quality on the various Snaps was the use of text, including the amount of text and whether it was accompanied by a headline. The other variable was the animation of the text, and while we did not code for the type of transition (fade, fly-in, etc) we did note when it was in use.

5. The team also coded for type of audio (music, sound effects, sound bites).

6. Some Snaps are what we termed “franchise” — a repeating feature or person regularly appearing on the news organization’s channel.

7. Material on Snapchat Discover also took many forms in terms of the number of “parts” to a story. Some are single Snaps, while others are multi-part stories divided into several Snaps. The team coded these to get a sense of news organizations’ attempt to make a story longer through the use of a series.

Captures of the six organization’s Snapchat Discover channel feeds were recorded three times per day (a spread to capture AM, midday and PM updates) from January 31, 2019 through February 18, 2019. The iOS app, GoRecord will capture a mobile screen in real time and save a video file in Mp4 format, allowing each researcher to record a day-part and upload to a common drive. One variable was coded as “update” and as the team noted a rerun of the same material, this was recorded. Accounting for a few missed recordings and miscues by coders, approximately 1000...
snaps were recorded over the 19 days of capture. The final total of unique snaps was 584. We coded all of this non-repeated material rather than taking a sample.¹

**Results of Content Analysis**

The content analysis of Snapchat Discover gathered the formats and characteristics of the Snaps produced by legacy and born-digital news organizations. In reporting these comparisons and relationships between variables I have chosen to avoid using inferential statistical tests. This decision stems from a current lack of intercoder reliability, as well as the inability to compare back to the 2017 data due to news organizations’ decisions to drop Snapchat Discover or significantly change their production. The inquiry is, however, framed in terms of a hypothesis because the literature suggested that I would find what I have termed a “legacy effect”—a legacy media organization’s reliance on its long-established information production practices (M. E. Achterman, 2012). I have taken care to be conservative in the interpretation of these results, looking for consistencies or inconsistencies with the hypothesis and suggestion of general trends. The interpretation of this content analysis attempts to see legacy media’s predisposition to historical practices even in social media.

The results of the Snap Type and Snap Format were the most revealing of the results in answering the research question of whether there is a “legacy media effect” in news organizations’ productions for Snapchat Discover. The first, Snap Type, shows a distinct favoritism by *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* in use of the Snap bottom-read type which encourages users to click through on the Snap in order to read more on the story (Figure 1). This opens the full story as it appears on the news organization’s website, while not navigating the user away from Snapchat. There are often different headlines between the Snap bottom-read and the web story: “The driver had passed background check,” on Snapchat and “An alleged war criminal is on trial. He might have been your Uber or Lyft driver” on washingtonpost.com on one day in May. The *Post’s* web story also offers a link to a CNN video piece. *The Wall Street Journal*, on the other hand, displays the same headline on wsj.com and Snapchat Discover.

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¹ One student-worker did not come through on a set of data, so we are not reporting intercoder reliability at this time.
Also notable on the Snap Type was the Snap play-through choice for the two traditional broadcasters. CNN and NBC both mimic their television story telling in presenting a Snap that doesn’t require the user to tap the screen to advance the story. In fact, the NBC Snaps—titled “StayTuned”, are hosted by a rotating cast of young presenters who use voice-over of NBC video to produce a short TV-like report of the day’s news headlines. These segments average about five
to six topics per “show” and notably the advertisements are not skippable as they are on other Snapchat Discover channels. NowThis and Vice, both born-digital sites, stick with the quick click of the Snap top to keep users moving through their stories. NowThis also significantly out numbers the other news organizations on the total number of stories (by separate topic) posted over our collection days.

Snap Format analysis also reveals several similarities between traditional media types. We included the “video play-through” to parallel the “snap play-through” on this variable and the results were the same. CNN and NBC now employ this technique that has the look and feel of a quick-cut broadcast story (Figure 2). The observation of what was happening visually in each Snap was motivated partially by research conducted with television graphics and cognitive load (Fox et al., 2004), since at this time there is limited, or no research focusing on social media graphics and retention of news stories. We found that straight text stories were relatively rare, but animated text flying in over or under a photo or video is used by most news organizations. NowThis has the most consistent template for presenting stories in this way, with The Washington Post also showing a heavier use of this technique.
The animation of text was documented as a simple present/not-present which revealed interesting practices. *The Wall Street Journal*, arguably the more production-conservative of the news organizations, did not animate text as much as the others. Vice and NowThis favored this practice and in the case of NowThis, nearly all of their stories contained animated text. NBC also featured text/headlines coming in from all angles.
The other variable measuring text behavior was “text display” (Figure 4) which considered whether the text on the story was presented as a headline, a block of text, or a combination of the two. We also accounted for plain images or video as “no-text”, however these were rare. As indicated earlier, news organizations reveal their roots with traditional broadcasters using more headlines and traditional print entities opting for more readable blocks of text. Another finding related to text display is NowThis’ comparison to Snap Type (Figure 1).
The headline+block occurrence seems to be related to the Snap-top occurrence, and combined with the sheer number of snaps, we might guess that NowThis is interested in simply giving users a large amount of information in a short time. It can be observed that NowThis has a more predictable production template, making this volume of material easier to produce.

The last element studied was the use of audio in Snapchat Discover channels. One note of change was the use of sound on the Wall Street Journal posts between 2017 and this analysis in 2019. In the earlier pilot study the coders were confused, thinking the audio had not been recorded at all. However, as they played through they realized the advertising pieces contained audio, but the Snaps from WSJ did not (M.E. Achterman, 2017). This practice changed in the following year and when we coded in 2019, audio was present for the Wall Street Journal, as it was on the other news organizations’ Snaps.
The only truly distinguishable differences in the use of audio were again with the traditional broadcasters. CNN and NBC both used more sound bites over video and still images, with NBC showing their current use of a short show hosted by an anchor-like figure. These were traditional voice overs with music under—commonly used in headline news on cable channels. The traditional print organizations used music-only, again leaning more on users to read and watch for further information.

**Discussion for Journalism Educators**

This small study on Snapchat is indicative of the changes in storytelling practice within major news organizations in the United States. With the addition of “Our Stories” alongside Snapchat Discover, there is more call for graduates with a variety of skills to meet the demand in both legacy and born-digital media. Snapchat Discover stories require storytelling tools of a more traditional nature—video, audio, photo, headlines—while the newer “Our Stories” calls for more of a curator (Flynn, 2019; Moses, 2018). Perhaps this is the wire-copy editor of the future.

It is clear that we will continue to teach journalism students to develop a large toolbox of skills for reporting and storytelling—photography, videography, writing, data visualization, audio production. Industry research points to mobile devices dominating news consumption. The key is developing young journalists who can tell a story well on a variety of platforms. The story functions on Snapchat Discover, Instagram and Facebook are becoming one-stop-shops for news consumers and as educators we must adapt to small screens and quick stories. Teaching writing, journalism ethics, and basic visual communication will always be the foundation journalism education. This research questions whether we teach our students to tell stories on platforms where making a “story” is a constant in their lives and the lives of their peers. Our study’s data shows the necessity of paying attention to specific features of these stories, in the same way we’ve taught, “use the
tool that fits the story” when it comes to integration of multimedia on news websites. We might now say, “use the Snap or graphics that fits the story.” Does it need video, or does a photo tell it better? Will a quiz engage the user? Will the user click for further reading or watching? In asking these questions alongside the theory and writing that are the core of journalism programs, students will think beyond their personal practices on Snapchat and Instagram and begin to offer their employers another set of tools. It is clear from this research (and much in the past) that legacy media is still slow to get out of print and broadcast culture. Current journalism students and new graduates are positioned to move these organizations along, while still speaking the language of solid storytelling and well-ingrained ethics.

Even 15 years ago Deuze (2004) asserted that teaching tradition media tools in journalism programs would not be enough to keep up with the constant change of “new media.” In 2017 Ercan conducted interviews with students in journalism studies at Turkish University, while the group was small, the interactions were revealing. Ercan summarized the findings, “The most important conclusion that can be derived from the answers of students is that the journalism education today is not compatible with the changing world and the actual practice of journalism” (Ercan, 2018). In a speech to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in 2012, Eric Newton challenged educators to teach “Teach open, collaborative methods. No longer must students be lone wolf reporters or cogs in a company wheel. In small, integrated teams of designers, entrepreneurs, programmers and journalists, students learned to rapidly prototype news projects and ideas” (Newton, 2012). The development of projects and entrepreneurial thinking should prepare students for the changing media job landscape. It might not be on Snapchat, given their loss of market share lately, but the story function is rising in popularity on Instagram and was recently introduced on Facebook (Feldman, 2019). The postings of jobs specific story production for Snapchat and Instagram are now more common in news organizations (Flynn, 2016; Holmes, 2018; Ifeanyi, 2015).

**Conclusion**

**Methodology**

One of the primary goals of this research was to establish and test a method for capturing and analyzing stories on Snapchat Discover, though this methodology could easily be developed further to capture and compare the stories function on Instagram or Facebook. This study expanded on previous conventions of textual content analysis and web analysis by offering procedures to collect and analyze short story formats on mobile apps (Burnett & Marshall, 2003; Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2016). By analyzing the Snapchat Discover stories of legacy and born-digital news media feeds we can identify patterns in the way news organizations are using traditional mass communication tools—text, still images, audio, and graphics—to create these presentations. Even in naming Snap types we established the start of a standard for analysis.

**Key findings**

While the findings in this study are not generalizable, they do begin to answer the research question of whether legacy media stick to production and thinking of the past. By most indications in our analysis, the answer is yes, but it is interesting to note that the born-digital media follow some of the same trends. In general, the Snapchat Discover channels of traditional broadcasters look and
feel like television presentations; the traditional print media still encourages users to click through to read more. Additionally, they are all exploring what it means to use music.

Through offering information on a variety of platform, some not yet conceived, the legacy media and their born-digital offspring continue to try to rise above the noise of personal status updates and check-ins. They will use the talents of journalists to sift and sort and analyze, and then produce a story that not only meets the needs of the audience, but uses all the newest platforms to their full extent. There is hope in the passion of journalism students and young producers of this new content as they look ahead for creative ways to engage an ever-distracted audience in the news of the day.

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References


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Experimenting with How Facebook’s Algorithm Works. Feedback on a Case Study with Journalism Students

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Abstract

This paper presents reflective feedback on a teaching experiment conducted over three consecutive years by the authors together with students pursuing a Master’s degree in journalism. The experiment brought together students and teachers from three universities belonging to the same international network of journalism schools (ARPPEJ, Association internationale de recherche sur les pratiques et la pédagogie du journalisme). Together, we investigated the way the algorithm of the social network Facebook organizes the distribution of news reports on its “News Feed.” This experiment tried to reflect some of the challenges that journalism schools are currently facing in their attempt to grasp the specific nature of digital journalism (Witschge et al., 2016; Eldridge & Franklin, 2018).

Rethinking the Boundaries Between Pedagogy, Academic Research, and Journalistic Practices

The debate between the theoretical or practical orientation of journalism studies is not a new one (Folkerts, 2014). The tension between educating journalists to become players in the democratic game and training them to work effectively in a media company is at the heart of sometimes radical positions taken by academic and professional circles (cf. Windschuttle, 1998 vs Bacon, 1998). While the movement tends to “academicize” journalism (Hermann, 2015), several attempts have been made to overcome this opposition by seeking convergence (Greenberg, 2007): ethnographic journalism (Hermann, 2015), community-oriented journalism (Mensing, 2010), or journalism school hack initiatives (Lynch, 2015).

As both teachers and researchers, we do of course attach particular importance to the fact that academic research and teaching should inform each other so as to remain relevant and innovative. And since we are training future journalists, we also know that the theoretical and analytical knowledge we can provide them with is more likely to be appropriated, discussed, and deepened
by the students if they can link it to concrete circumstances. Journalism students are often looking for a kind of technical training that would enable them to always report accurate facts in the ever-growing range of situations today’s journalists have to deal with. Yet we believe that a good journalism program cannot limit itself to providing a toolbox, even if we were to teach the most advanced digital tools.

This approach is in line with Quinn’s perspective, which, as early as 1999, called for a rethinking of journalism teaching in the information age. He advocated integrating “better critical thinking” with an “ability to cope in a fast-changing environment” and encouraging students “to work collaboratively” and “to adopt a global perspective” (Quinn, 1999). Thirty years later, this perspective is more relevant than ever and informs the pedagogical models of many journalism training courses.

What we try to do is to develop an educational approach to journalism that will encompass the variety of issues encountered in journalism. Technical skills would only be sufficient if journalism were a matter of technical reproduction. However, the production of news is also a matter of financial resources, working conditions, ethics and relations between different fields, including political and economic fields. It is because news and news media are considered a key element of democracy that our teaching programs try to combine theoretical and practical approaches (de Burgh, 2003). We favor the “learning by doing” methodology, thanks to which our students can tackle the issues of news-making both individually and collectively.

In September 2017, when we launched the ARPPEJ network bringing together our three journalism schools, the first educational issue we wanted to work on together was social networking sites and their journalistic challenges. We are all involved in academic research programs on the digital transformation of the news media, in which social networking platforms play an increasingly important role, and we share the conviction that they should find a corresponding place in our teaching programs. Obviously, they were already being studied in different courses dealing with the economics of news media, the professional practices of journalists, and online editorial strategies. But what about the daily routines of social networking sites? How could we make our students question the ways their feeds function? How could they experience the fact that the algorithms are not neutral instruments? How could we help them demonstrate not only that social networking sites are new ways of interaction, news circulation, and advertising, but that they also raise political questions even in the seemingly simple act of liking a friend’s post?

The Implementation of the Experiment

To answer these questions by adopting an active teaching method, we set up an experiment, the third edition of which we carried out this year. In 2017 only AJM conducted it; UCLouvain and MJMN (Metz) took part in the 2018 and 2019 editions. We also chose to explore the Facebook algorithm in 2017 and 2018 and the Instagram algorithm in 2019.

While the implementation methods have changed slightly over the years, the basic principle has remained the same. Here is a description:
Individually or in groups (depending on the year), students create accounts on the chosen platform, specifically for experimentation purposes. Each account has a profile associated with it. In the 2017 edition, we placed the experiment in the context of the French presidential election campaign. Each profile had to correspond to the political persuasion and ideas of one of the six main presidential candidates. Over the next two years, we defined profiles that were not associated with a specific event, but were highly thematic or polarized. For example, I am only interested in local information, or buzz or sport or content marked on the right, etc.

In parallel, all accounts subscribed to the same list of about fifty media (in the broad sense, including traditional media, buzz media, and even a few sites that could be classified as producing “fake news” or highly biased content). This list would thus form the basis of the news feed of each account and would enable us to compare the influence of the traces, behaviors and activities associated with the account on the content that the algorithm offered the user.

Once this framework had been created, the experiment could be carried out for a period of 4 to 6 weeks (the longer the experiment, the more interesting the results that can be observed and the more interpretations can be confirmed as to how the algorithm works). On a daily basis, students activated their accounts by performing classic actions on social networking sites: likes, shares, comments, status, etc., always ensuring a high degree of consistency with the defined profile (as close as possible to predefined ideal-type profiles). Following a common protocol and a predetermined schedule of actions, the profiles tested different hypotheses about the way Facebook’s algorithm sorts, selects, and publishes news media content for its users. For example: is buzz media content favored by the algorithm, to the detriment of more “serious” content? Is the importance of a like equivalent to that of a comment or a share?

Day by day, the students recorded their actions in their notebooks, including screenshots, discussions, and personal thoughts about the progress of the experiment. There were regular get-togethers during courses to share and discuss individual or group observations, share interpretation leads, etc. At the end of the experiment, feedback sessions were organized with all the students, allowing teachers and students to compare their own experiment and to compile a stronger report on how the algorithm works in practice. Students’ changing attitudes towards the algorithm were compared with a selection of texts from the literature, ranging from scientific pieces to news reports (e.g. Facebook’s communication about the changes to its algorithm in early 2018) and position papers from various actors in the digital news ecosystem.

Collaborative Work on Algorithms: Benefits and Limitations

It quickly became apparent that we could try to conduct the experiment using a “learning by doing” approach. If our students could observe, with a structured protocol, that certain actions on social networking sites (or outside them when it is about online traces) lead to certain modifications of the feed’s structure and what they can read and view, we could then discuss with them the concepts of “filter bubble” and “echo chambers” or the dissemination of disinformation on another level.

It also seemed important to us to roll out this experiment within the emerging framework of ARPEPEJ, because we have different and complementary backgrounds in research and teaching, and possibly because we felt stronger working as a group of four than alone against a giant like
Facebook. Working together had two further advantages: our experiment would be conducted by no fewer than 36 students and would cover three different countries. This sizeable number enabled us to identify trends in the functioning of the algorithm more easily and to formulate subtler hypotheses in the experiment. The international research field also allowed us to differentiate our hypotheses or to compare the results from France, Belgium, and Switzerland, the latter being two tinier markets in terms of news media outlets and number of social networking site members.

Talking about international collaboration immediately raises a key question, even though it does not concern the substance of the exchanges: that of the difficult temporal coordination of actions. Four researchers would always manage to communicate via email, use one cloud-based collaboration tool or another, and organize online video meetings. It was far more difficult to find the right moment for the experiment itself. Our three Master’s programs have very different schedules and it was not easy to find enough weeks during which all of the students and teachers could focus on the experiment. For example, each school allows internships at different times of the year, and has other different milestones such as research theses, intensive weeks with professionals, end-of-year assignments, etc. The period chosen was more of a compromise than an ideal, and it had an impact on some of the students: those who were close to the submission deadline for their end-of-year assignment were less involved in the experiment, especially during the first year, where it was presented as an additional, ungraded exercise, while others worked on the experiment and were graded on it during a less busy period.

The other major difficulty of this experiment is that it was conducted without any allocated budget, and mostly in addition to the other usual tasks of the staff. It would have been necessary to monitor the students’ work on almost a daily basis in order to be able to follow the blocked accounts, the changes in the research hypotheses, and any momentary drop in students’ motivation. Furthermore, there was not enough time at the end of the project for all of the students to pool their findings and draw collective conclusions. Each school did it for itself and only the teachers really discussed the findings. These limitations in the collaborative work were nonetheless partly compensated by the fact that every institution recorded its material and its principal results in shared documents, in order to leave them open to further analysis.

**Exploring the Work of Algorithms: Ethical Issues**

Since the exploration of Facebook’s algorithm was based on daily activities (liking, sharing and commenting on new items), it was necessary to decide from the outset whether this exploration would be done with real accounts, i.e. those of the students taking the course, or with experimental accounts. This question raises a number of ethical considerations that we would like to briefly discuss. Of course, many other ethical aspects related to the exploration of algorithms in journalism education could be addressed, such as the often unfavorable position of media outlets in relation to GAFA, or the critical issue of fact-checking and criticism of content disseminated through social networks, which was one of the reasons why this experiment was set up. Due to space limitations and because the management of experimental accounts goes to the heart of the tools used in this context, we will limit the discussion to this issue.

The experimental protocol assigns particular profiles to the students, ranging from the most moderate to the most extreme (for example, the first experiment, conducted during the 2017 French
presidential election campaign, focused on the four principal candidates, one of whom was the leader of the French far-right party). In this context, it did not seem acceptable to ask students to proceed with the experiment using their real Facebook account. The implications would have been potentially numerous and problematic for those who had to interact with the accounts and pages of parties and candidates that did not reflect their political views. Even without any distortion between the real personality and the actions requested by the protocol, it was not our intention to ask students to reveal, implicitly or explicitly, their preferences and political leanings on topics debated in a period of high polarization (a presidential campaign in this case). Protecting students’ real identities and opinions was therefore considered as a prerequisite, and a necessary means of focusing on Facebook’s algorithm and not on the political debate.

The decision to work with experimental profiles led us to ask students to create these accounts. This preliminary step raised different questions, three of which are discussed below:

1. What criteria should be used to create experimental accounts dedicated to our experiment?

2. On the basis of what criteria should a student be assigned a profile?

3. How can we make sure that the experimental accounts operated by students are realistic and credible enough, in order to assess whether “real” accounts would have been comparable and would have had similar interactions with the algorithm?

1. The teaching team established a series of users’ ideal-type profiles according to different areas of interest and preferences. In order to ensure a high level of comparability, only the areas of interest differentiated the experimental profiles, as well as the gender variable (aiming at equality between the number of women and men). The choice to work with “fake” accounts was therefore very well defined and prepared. During the first edition of the experiment, each group of students had to follow and support one of the four main candidates in the 2017 French presidential election. During the second edition (in 2018), which involved more students and was not focused on a single upcoming event, the list of areas of interest was extended to a larger number of profiles usually encountered on social media. Other parameters, such as the profile picture, were left to the students’ discretion, with some instructions and advice to avoid accounts suggesting that they were bots (being perceived as an anonymous account, in this regard, was problematic). These instructions for the creation of accounts seemed essential to us: without such guidelines, the possibilities would have been so vast that the profiles could have caused some technical problems (blockages by Facebook happen frequently), problems of comparability (a key parameter in our protocol), but also ethical problems: how far can we go when creating experimental accounts and virtual characters? How far can we go in defining “extreme profiles” (conspiracy, supremacists or extremists)? Could we create profiles presented as minors, or profiles that were openly violent towards some minorities or ideas?

How can we make sure that the creation of virtual profiles does not become a game, and does not encourage behavior that students would otherwise find unacceptable, in a digital environment where anonymity and the use of fake identities pose persistent and potentially serious problems, particularly for journalists and people involved in the production of verified and confirmed information? To avoid opening up a Pandora’s box, the profiles were therefore defined beforehand and the teaching team checked their parameters before launching the experiment.
2. The assignment of standard profiles to groups of students is potentially a second point that can be problematic. Some profiles inspire students more than others; some students recognize themselves more in some profiles and distance themselves more from others. As we wished to avoid personal preferences playing a role in the choice of profiles to be embodied, there was a possibility of imposing attributes. However (and fortunately), this option was not necessary: the students were able to choose their profile freely as long as the distribution was done in a concerted way and did not create any difficulty such as a refusal to embody this or that profile. This is undoubtedly the advantage of experimental profiles: they allow students to project themselves into profiles that are not their own without causing any identification problems. The protocol of any experiment based on borrowing virtual profiles should nevertheless anticipate scenarios such as refusals or reluctance, especially if the purpose of the experiment is precisely to test what happens with a wide range of profiles, from the most moderate to the most radical. These potential problems should therefore be dealt with and discussed with the students. So far, we have not encountered any major problems related to the allocation of experimental accounts.

3. Finally, the third issue relating to the creation of experimental accounts concerns the credibility of the profiles and the protocol. Credibility is mainly based on the notion of likelihood (Marion, 2018), that is to say something that seems true and real without necessarily being so: do the characteristics of the accounts come close enough to those of real accounts? Are they also plausible in the eyes of Facebook, which has stepped up efforts to track down fake accounts? The technical difficulties sometimes encountered (mainly to finalize the creation of experimental accounts), as well as some analyses performed by students after the experiment, demonstrate, if necessary, that no experimental account can encompass the depth and complexity of a “real” person. This naturally raises questions about the validity and relevance of the observations collected during the experiment. The interpretation of the data therefore focused as closely as possible on this aspect, as well as on other elements limiting the scope of the results, such as time limitations. With regard to the schedule of actions fixed by the common protocol, the question of likelihood faces the same limitations as those of the profiles: the students performed a whole series of actions that are among the most common and elementary on Facebook (comment, share and like). The pace at which these actions were planned was also very probable. Nevertheless, the problem remains: considering the complexity and unpredictability of a real person’s actions, we cannot claim that the gap between a virtual and a real profile is closed. That said, interactions between the experimental accounts and the algorithm do not prevent students from observing things that are potentially relevant to real accounts. Moreover, students could compare the development of their experimental account with everything they had already observed informally on their real account. However, the ethical dimension of this experiment involves keeping in mind that those differences probably remain and that they must be discussed and incorporated as much as possible into the different phases of the experiment.

These issues relating to the use of experimental accounts raise more fundamental questions about the conditions under which to use hidden or fabricated identities to explore what “real people” do (on social networks, for example). In our case, virtual accounts were both necessary and problematic. What is often discussed in academic research and, of course, in journalistic training, could help students heighten their sensitivity to the consequences of using another identity. The ethical practical implications can be discussed at all stages of the experiment: the way it is devised and set up, the way it is presented and justified to students, the way it is implemented, and, finally, the way in which the results are analyzed and discussed. These questions also confront students
with their ability to measure the effects and consequences of this parameter on the pedagogical project as a whole. The notebooks used by the students, as well as the work evaluated in this project, do not indicate a developed reflexivity about the issue of anonymity. However, more generally, in journalistic practices and professional ethics, the question of anonymity (for instance with sources and with vulnerable people) and the journalist’s identity (undercover practices etc.) has long been the subject of reflection and formalization by researchers, regulatory authorities, and practitioners. It would be useful to address these well-established rules and guidelines for the social media ecosystem, where journalism students spend a lot of time, and where rules and practices about anonymity are far less developed than in the field. In this sense, the exploration of Facebook’s algorithm has also been a way to explore ethical considerations about the role and resources of the researcher – and future journalists.

Technical Limitations and Future Prospects

Will it be feasible to replicate this kind of experiment in the near future? And, if so, to what extent? The 2018 experiment faced several limitations. It has become increasingly difficult to create a Facebook profile using a fake identity without it being blocked. Moreover, even the private browsing setting proves to be insufficient in preventing Facebook from uncovering the researcher’s identity.

Many of the dedicated accounts that the students created were subject to security checks, either during the upstream preparation or during the experiment. Several groups of students were asked to add a phone number or to provide a genuine profile picture showing the profile owner’s face. Some of these checks seem to be the result of many different computers being used to manage the same account. Some of them led to a blocked account or a probable link between the experimental profile and the student’s own profile.

This is consistent with what Facebook has stated on several occasions. In the wake of fake news and data collection scandals, Facebook has been tightening up security, tracking down fake accounts and shutting them down. We have reason to suspect that the creation of accounts for this kind of experiment will only become harder. Speaking at the DLD (Digital-Life-Design) conference in Munich in January 2019, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg said the company is now blocking one million fake accounts a day.

These limitations led the teaching staff to adapt the protocol of the 2019 experiment. Instagram was selected as an alternative platform for the study of the impact of a social network algorithm on news consumption. Four main reasons prompted this choice:

- **Profile creation**

  Having more than one Instagram profile is very common. Instagram does not distinguish between private accounts and pages, a distinction that Facebook relies on to differentiate individuals and organizations or brands. It is possible to manage a personal and a professional profile or even multiple personal profiles. Using Instagram allowed us to create experimental profiles without running the risk of those accounts being shut down.
• **Account management**

Instagram makes it easy and convenient to manage multiple profiles from its app. The downside is that creating and managing a second profile from your mobile phone makes it impossible to activate the private browsing setting. It gives away your real identity, a variable that has to be considered when analyzing the collected data.

• **Students’ interest**

Discussions with students made it clear that an Instagram experiment was relevant: they tend to use it more frequently than Facebook, and for different purposes: some students told us that Instagram was their favorite social network, which means that they use it on a near-daily basis for interactions with friends, a role that Facebook tends to play less and less.

• **New questions**

The high number of influencers, stories and brand pages on Instagram led to renewed questioning about news content visibility and the dissemination of information. This was even more justified, as, after two years of experiments on Facebook’s algorithm, and due to growing concerns about disinformation, we clearly felt that it was becoming more difficult to teach students something new. Exploring a new social media outlet was therefore a relevant way to link students’ habits, evidence from the first two experiments, and the research question of the influence of algorithms.

Another change was also made: students worked independently, each managing one Instagram account. This meant that we could avoid connections from multiple devices, which might have raised concerns. In the end, the first experiment with Instagram went ahead without any major technical problems, which was clearly what we were looking for when we decided to work on this social network. Students’ observations highlighted some mechanisms in the structuring of the stories, depending on their user profile and the way they engage with friends and content. Many of them concluded that there is consistency between their profile and how Instagram organizes the content. Sponsored content, the roles of hashtags, and the influence of friends versus media pages were also discussed in more or less the same way as during the two first experiments on Facebook. Since the scientific literature on Instagram’s ecosystem is far less developed than it is for Facebook, it was more difficult, for both students and teachers, to interpret and contextualize the data collected.

In considering possible future steps for this kind of teaching experiment, we are also confronted with the following question: Could we – and should we – consider formal and predefined collaboration with Facebook to conduct an experiment like the one we discussed?
If Facebook were to accept collaboration, it would certainly facilitate the set-up phase and free us from most of the practical problems we faced. Some insight and feedback from Facebook could be very illuminating for future journalists. It would, however, raise other concerns. The focus of our experiment is the role of algorithms and their impact on news distribution and visibility. Facebook remains very secretive about the way its algorithm works, so we would never know for certain that they had not interfered with the experiment. Convincing Facebook staff that our experiment has added value for them would also be very complicated since the opacity of the algorithm is part of its DNA. In other words, developing a sure and transparent partnership with such a big player is, in our view, very unlikely.

Another way to reduce the risk of technical issues would be to manage one profile per institution only, and to access it from a fixed device and location. Students could work in shifts to upload content to the profile and take specific actions. This could even be done over the course of a year (or two) with the same group of students. If applied properly, this protocol would have advantages in terms of comparability and realism (thanks to a long-term perspective).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this three-year collaboration on the role and influence of algorithms offers a tailor-made framework within which to discuss the role of journalism schools in dealing with players such as social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.), which journalists use more and more without precisely knowing how they actually work. The question that arises is that of the pedagogical strategy to adopt towards platforms whose opacity seems to be part of their very DNA.

In this paper, we have shown how a “learning by doing” approach can help students acknowledge the crucial importance of algorithms through a dedicated experiment. Before the start of this experiment, most of them only had a vague idea of how social media construct a certain view on the most important news items. Learning by doing mostly means learning by oneself, in a very practical way. Autonomy (following the protocol and accounting for the reality observed) and collaboration (sharing, nuancing, and presenting collective results) were at the heart of the skills used by the students.

We have also discussed the absolute necessity of careful preparation: being as clear as possible about the objectives and the hypotheses we wanted to test; testing the accounts and the protocol; organizing the mentoring, the follow-up, and the feedback; providing a theoretical framework in order to enrich practices with the literature (and vice versa); and incorporating such an experiment into the broader context of a Master’s degree in journalism: All these elements shape the way this kind of experiment can make sense to students. In many ways, the reflexivity and awareness about some questions (see the ethical challenges, for instance) could have been improved, or better anticipated. Technical limitations and the unavoidable variation in levels of commitment among students made it difficult to reliably compare results. And, of course, the fact that we were not able to establish any kind of collaboration with Facebook or Instagram reinforces the impression that we were working in the dark to some extent.

Finally, however, what a journalism school should teach its students is precisely how to deal with the unpredictable, the untold and the hidden faces of reality. In this context, algorithms are a very
challenging exercise. Is journalism not about finding and telling the truth, and is journalism education not about how we can discover the truth, with what kind of tools, methods, and values? In this context, we have shown our students how we, their teachers, organize a methodical and accountable exploration of an opaque reality. We have explained how we prepare a concrete research project, how we define it, and how we evaluate the results. Lastly, we have discussed it with our students, and their feedback, in turn, highlighted many limitations that we did not fully anticipate. Exploring Facebook’s algorithm was not just about improving their criticism and awareness, despite the fact this seems very necessary for future journalists. It was, above all, a way to bring research skills and concerns to the heart of a journalistic training program, and to realize, once again, that academic research and advanced education, in journalism, share very comparable challenges, methods, and constraints.

About the Authors

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References


Journalism Education at State Universities in the Arab Region: The Search for Identity

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ABSTRACT

Journalism education has always been a key feature of higher education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) ever since the launch of the first journalism program in Egypt in the 1930s. It is true that up to the late 1980s, journalism students at Arab state universities had been fairly exposed to Western-style journalism curricula embracing technical and professional skills such as news writing, editing, investigative reporting, interviewing, photojournalism, electronic news gathering, public opinion, research, professional ethics and editorial writing. But the gap between what they had learned in the classroom and what they came to encounter in the real world turned out to be quite mind-boggling. Journalism curricula were perceived as both falling out of sync with digital transformations and lacking in academic freedom. Based on the analysis of curricular journalism offerings at 10 MENA state universities, the writer finds out a majority of those programs having little relevance for emerging international journalism models; lagging behind in terms of digital features; heavily focused on media-centered contents to the exclusion of other liberal arts education subjects and lacking connections with the industry. Based on that, the writer sees an identity crisis brewing in journalism education programs at state universities in the region.

Introduction

Since the introduction of the first Arab World’s journalism program at Cairo University in the mid 1930s, journalism education in the MENA region has become a key component of higher education, especially at state universities. In the post-colonial era, higher education was conceived as a key feature of centralized developmental thinking in which the state played a leading role in defining national agendas for socio-economic transformation. As such, much of post-colonial journalism curricula were informed by varied state conceptions of media functions as vehicles of political mobilization, cultural fulfillment and socio-economic development. It is true that up to the late 1980s, journalism students at Arab state universities had been fairly exposed to Western-style journalism curricula that embraced technical and professional skills such as news writing, editing, investigative reporting, interviewing, photojournalism, electronic news gathering, public opinion, professional ethics and editorial writing. But for graduating journalists, the gap between what they had learned in the classroom and what they encountered in the real world seemed to have been quite mind-boggling. There are two facets to this challenge: First, journalism curricula were perceived as ‘too theoretical and less relevant to industry practices’ in the MENA region (Tahat, Self and Tahat, 2017, El Nawawy, 2007 and Allam & Amin, 2017). Second, journalism education showed symptoms of lacking academic freedom across the MENA region where universities operate in full alignment with state ideological orientations and policies.

In the 1990s, a new phase of journalism education marked by more liberal social, political and economic outlooks and induced by greater digital technological developments, was dawning on the
MENA region. The introduction of private satellite television, the proliferation of Web-based communications, and the rise of progressive social and political orientations, were all bound to impact the quality of journalism education. But despite the dramatic proliferation of journalism and mass communication programs at Arab universities (state and private); curricula continue to reflect features more relevant to legacy and new digital media practices and the boundaries of academic freedom remained largely unchanged. Around the world, journalism education models such as those evolved by UNESCO and the U.S.-based Accrediting Council for Education of Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) have served as eye openers for MENA media educators. For the first time in the region’s history, online journalism was making a shy appearance on the region’s journalism education map by exposing students to new ideas about citizen journalism, cyber empowerment, digital storytelling, and virtual public spheres. In significant ways, Arab state universities became part of the global discussions of the future of journalism as a career and an academic pursuit with numerous seminars and publications addressing that issue (University of Sharjah, 2005, Tahat, Self, Tahat, 2017; Nashmi, Alkazemi, Wanta, 2017, American University of Sharjah, 2014).

This paper draws on curricular analysis of journalism education programs hosted by 10 state universities in the MENA region to determine their topical content, course credit distributions, digital features and relevance for journalism curriculum models developed by both UNESCO and ACEJMC. The writer sees journalism and mass communication education, like other sectors, being disrupted by transitions in digital media technologies and professional practices. As an intrinsically market-driven sector, journalism education is always bound to be impacted by evolving professional practices in the market where emphasis is shifting from legacy media methods towards digital storytelling, mobile journalism, multimedia, multi-platform production, social analytics as well as citizen journalism. But journalism education is also a function of the quality of academic freedom and the political, legal and cultural milieus in which graduates are expected to work. The more open and liberal those milieus get, the more able are educators to integrate ideals of free and responsible communication into journalism curricula. In the Arab World, however, the writer sees an identity crisis in journalism education induced by slow adoption of digital/networked media components in journalism and media curricula and by restrictive academic and legal orientations pertaining to media at universities and beyond. The writer argues that in order for journalism education in the MENA region to achieve its declared goals of preparing professional communicators for the 21st Century, it should be able to properly address the challenges of digital integration and professional development.

Global and Regional Discussions of Journalism Education

Around the world, journalism education has received growing attention within broader debates relating to political democratization, cultural revivalism, technological innovations and professionalization. Deuze (2006) argues that although media systems and journalistic cultures may differ widely, the changes and challenges facing journalism education around the world are largely similar, and thus would benefit from a “global” approach. He conceptually classified key literature and findings from journalism education studies in different parts of the world into 10 categories, starting with philosophical notions of motivation and mission and ending with more “down-to-earth” concepts like curriculum and pedagogy. Berger and Foote (2017) notes that journalism education at universities has been under considerable pressure to change and update itself, especially in the area of converged media. This reality presents, according to Berger and
Foote (2007) a good opportunity to assess the unique value that institutions of higher education bring to the cause of better-educated, empowered journalists. In his study of journalism education around the world, Sterling (2009) identifies three trends: increasing specialization in teaching and research, a move toward international journalism, and greater emphasis on issues of gender and ethnic diversity. Simon (2014) points out that the rise of the Internet and social media has begun to undermine journalism’s traditional economic base and its historic watchdog role, posing a fundamental challenge to our understanding of what constitutes journalism (Simon, 2014).

Debates on the needed journalism education (especially its theory and practice features) in an environment of continuing technological and socio-political transitions and economic uncertainty have given rise to professional bodies concerned with academic and professional preparation. In the United States, the search for a model prescription of journalism education goes back to 1912 when a small group of journalism teachers decided to set up the American Association of Teachers of Journalism (AATJ) (Self, 2017). The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) became AATJ’s successor, with a focus on journalism and mass communication teaching and research. ACEJMC evolved accreditation standards for journalism programs based on liberal arts education traditions that limit journalism and mass communication courses to 48 credits to allow students’ maximum engagement with knowledge from other disciplines. Self (2017: 272) notes that the National Communication Association (NCA) was founded in 1914 with members hailing mainly from public speaking and rhetoric education sectors. In 1950, the International Communication Association (ICA) emerged from the NCA as the National Society for the Study of Communication, going independent in 1967, and taking its current name in 1969 (Self, 2017).

Efforts to evolve standards for journalism education have been noticed at national and international levels. Self (2017: 290) takes note of a 2005 initiative by the Carnegie and Knight Foundations ‘to advance the U.S. news business” emphasized three features: Curriculum enrichment, national reporting projects incubated and organized on an annual basis, and the Carnegie-Knight Task Force to provide journalism deans with an opportunity to speak out on issues affecting journalism education and the field of journalism. The Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) (affiliated with AEJMC) has made credible contributions to enhancing journalism education in the U.S. and globally. The number of U.S.-based ACEJMC-accredited Journalism and mass communication programs was put in 2018 at 112 while around eight programs have received such accreditation overseas, four of them are in the MENA region. ACEJMC specifies five indicators of success for programs: A minimum of 72 semester credit hours outside of the unit; a balance among theoretical and conceptual courses, professional skills courses and courses that integrate theory and skills; instruction, whether on-site or online, that is demanding, current and responsive to professional expectations of digital, technological and multimedia competencies; student-faculty classroom ratios that facilitate effective teaching and learning including a ratio in skills and laboratory sections that should not exceed 20-1 and opportunities for internship and other professional experiences outside the classroom that is supervised and evaluated.

UNESCO’s “model curriculum for journalism education” represents the first global initiative to evolve an international vision in this respect. In 2005, UNESCO convened a meeting of journalism educators in Paris to consider the broad outlines of a journalism curriculum that would be suitable for use in Developing Countries and emerging democracies (UNESCO, 2007). In 2007, according
Ayish, M.

In the MENA region, communication studies and media education in the Arab World have evolved in the shadows of Western theoretical and methodological orientations relating to mass communications. Ayish (2017) notes that since their inception, media education programs have been heavily informed in both conceptualization and methodology by four perspectives: modernization, dependency, globalization and empowerment. The genesis of viewing communication as a central component of modernization thinking dates back to the early American media encounters with the region in the immediate post-World War II period. In his review of Arab mass communication programs in the past four decades, Ayish (2017) identified courses such as ‘development communication,’ ‘propaganda,’ ‘media campaigns,’ ‘media effects,’ ‘media and social change,’ and ‘empirical mass media research methods.’ The dependency model inspired much of the region’s post-colonial journalism education in Nasser’s Egypt as well as in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria and Sudan who were taking a pro-Soviet and anti-Western stands at the UNESCO International Information and Communication Order debates. In the Arab world, globalization, with its economic, political, social and cultural facets, was bound to define intellectual and policy discussions, including those bearing on media and communications. Around those technological developments and cultural concerns, media education curricula were re-designed to embrace digital communications, cultural identity, clash of civilizations, marketing, advertising, public relations and online journalism. Finally, proponents of the empowerment perspective argue that information and communications technology could offset the existing power relations at local and global levels by giving more leverage to traditionally disadvantaged groups nations. Digital technologies, it is argued, could reduce traditionally peripheral groups’ dependency on traditional power structures and resources, including media and communications, by evolving their own channels and formats.

Media education in the MENA region has been addressed by numerous research works, mainly from a comparative perspective. In a study of the curricula of 95 journalism programs in 13 countries of the Middle East, Tahat, Self and Tahat (2017) noted about half of those programs were established within the last decade. They also found that those programs were theoretically oriented with little attention to practical concepts with internships not figuring high at most of the schools while admissions criteria remain poorly articulated with minimal industry engagement. Allam and Amin (2017) found that most of Egypt’s departments of journalism and mass communication offer the same curricula, with the exception of the American University in Cairo whose program draws on liberal arts traditions (:98). They argue that training tomorrow’s journalists in Egypt is going
to be affected by the status of democratization and the political environment in the country. According to both writers, the forces of globalization and the growth of information and communication technologies and social networking could have a massive impact on the training of journalists, opening up the media environment for all voices and paving the way for a more democratic public sphere. Nashmi et. al. (2018) analyzed structure, curricula, and faculty from 10 journalism and mass communication programs in five Arab countries. They classified media education in the Arab World into four typologies: Arab-oriented typology, Gulf Arab typology, private-American typology and strategic typology. Kamel and Alabbasi (1997) found that while journalism students, educators, and professionals thought journalism curricula in Egypt are too dense with theory, students also believe that such courses would not help them in their careers. Two decades later, Josephi (2010) explains the challenges of journalism education as either a publicly-funded university that’s disconnected from global standards and tends to the needs of political elites or a privately funded university that tends to the needs of economic elites. Melki (2009) identified three approaches to journalism education in Lebanon: Professional, artistic (creative) and theoretical.

The Political and Technological Context of Journalism Education in the MENA Region

Since media/education programs across the MENA region are normally conceptualized as driven by state/market/community needs and priorities, their outcomes are expected to enhance students’ mastery of technical tools and processes as well as their knowledge of social, cultural and political agendas in their communities. In the context of the current communications transitions, students are expected to professionally handle digital storytelling, visualization, social analytics and multi-platform content creation. By the same token, graduates are also expected to comply with dominant legal/social/political and ethical standards as spelled out in media laws, codes of ethics and socio-cultural regulations. In countries with more restrictive media systems, students are expected to function more as socially-compliant and less as critical communicators. They are envisioned as ‘constructive forces’ in the broad drive for nation-building, something that rhymes with Rugh’s models of developmental communications in the Arab World, especially his concepts of loyalist or mobilization press systems (2004). University education plays a key role in fostering values that echo patriotism, consensus, unity, collective will, visionary leadership, patriarchy and parochialism. This type of knowledge furnishes the intellectual foundation for future communicators as they come to use individually and socially empowering digital technologies in their journalistic work. And this is where tensions are most likely to surface between two contradictory mindsets, one is controlling and the other is liberating.

As elsewhere around the globe, the Arab World has experienced a huge digital information and communications revolution that seems to have created serious disruptions in traditional media channels. Recent data show the region making noticeable strides in the diffusion of Internet and social media technologies at institutional and social levels. The State of Social Media Report (MBRSG, 2017) notes that Facebook has 164 million active monthly users in the Arab world, up from 56 million Facebook users in 2013. Egypt remains the biggest national market for Facebook in the region, with 24 million daily users and nearly 37 million monthly mobile users. Saudi Arabia (KSA) has the highest annual growth rate of social media users anywhere in the world. Data from We Are Social and Hootsuite, revealed social media users in KSA grew by 32% vs. a worldwide
average of 13% (Jan 2017-Jan 2018) (Thottathil, 2018). Media and communications organizations in the region have also been at the forefront of early adopters of new digital features and practices that mark a significant departure from traditional journalistic practices. In the Gulf region, the introduction of high-tech digital tools in content creation and distribution has induced new trends in digital migration. Traditional media organizations have come to expand their cyber presence through highly sophisticated websites that harness the latest multimedia features. They have also demonstrated profound interest in harnessing social media platforms to connect with users and expand their reach in virtual space. A study by Ayish and Mellor (2015) showed pan-Arab media pushing quite hard in their strategies to achieve digital migration and glean the benefits of an expanding cyberspace. This digital transition, among other things, has prodded media organizations to embark on extensive training programs to enhance their staff competencies in the digital phase. They have also been keen on attracting young talents who seem more tuned to the digital wave than legacy media practitioners. Digital media users in the MENA region have been classified as young, passionate about their work, multi-tasking and hold more liberal views of themselves and the world (Strategy &, 2013).

While the digital media landscape in the Arab World heralds a new phase of liberating communications, political turbulences continue to negatively impact the region’s media landscape. The so-called Arab Spring marked a tragic phase in the MENA region’s recent history as it degenerated into bloody chaos in several countries such as Libya, Syria, Yemen and Iraq. The threat of terrorism gave reasons to states to tighten autocratic grips on power across the region as the only viable way to stand up to this challenge. In most of the Arab countries, democratization remained a hoax as the region continues to plunge into new upheavals. To address potential abuses of online communications, governments across the region have enacted strict regulations that many have seen as encroachments on free speech and press. Governments claim that, to stem off cyber communications threats to national security, political stability, cultural identity and social cohesion, they need to be regulated by the same legal terms applied to legacy media. This approach to digital and social media, among other things, has had profoundly chilling effect on the ability of individuals and organizations to fully tap into the real potential of the Web as an emancipatory tool. Cybermedia laws across the MENA region make it a crime to post or share information critical of state policies or political leaders and institutions.

**Methodology**

This paper draws on curricular analysis of journalism education programs hosted by 10 state universities in the MENA region to determine their topical content, course credit distributions, digital features and relevance for journalism curriculum models developed by both UNESCO and ACEJMC. Details on the 10 programs were obtained (as per requests or direct online access) during the month of March 2019. The following state universities were selected for journalism program analyses for reasons relating to accessibility and geographical representation:

1. United Arab Emirates University, UAE
2. Cairo University, Egypt
3. Baghdad University, Iraq
4. Yarmouk University- Jordan
5. University of Qusantina, Algeria
6. Sultan Qaboos University, Oman
Each journalism/media education curriculum has been coded for credit distributions across different knowledge areas as well as within the same program. The objective is to identify the type of knowledge students engage with in non-mass communication subjects and to understand the type of knowledge/skills students gain within the journalism/media programs. Data generated from both types of analysis is used in this paper to check levels of alignment with mass communication model curricula prescribed by both UNESCO and ACEJMC. The findings are also used in qualitative terms to explain how journalism/media curricula at MENA state universities negotiate the dilemma embedded in political authoritarianism and technological emancipation to evolve a unique identity for mass communication education. Identity here refers to the unique features of a journalism program that reflect indigenous or global social/cultural components; conservative or liberal intellectual outlooks, professional or politicized features and traditional or new digital technology elements. In view of curriculum models presented by both UNESCO and ACEJMC, the writer argues that journalism programs that promote a balanced combination of local/global engagement; conservative and liberal outlooks; professional features and digital media elements represent the ideal type for an aspired identity in media education in the MENA region. Journalism graduates with a local/global foundation are able to represent their communities and constructively engage with global issues. Graduates with an eclectic mix of indigenous cultural and liberal outlooks are more likely to promote world peace and harmony while students with credible professional training would apply sound journalistic standards in their careers. Given the expansion of new digital/networked technologies and the retreat of legacy media, graduates mastery of the new digital tools in their work represents a key feature of the suggested model.

Findings

The analysis of journalism/media education curricula at the 10 MENA state universities shows most of course offerings are based in journalism/mass communication programs while little is offered from cognate areas in the humanities and social sciences. Examples include Qusantina University in Algeria (56.40%), Yarmouk University (63.63%), Baghdad University (54.75%), UAE University (65%), King Abdul Azizi University (65.1%) and Khartoum University in Susan (74.41%) (Table 1). One implication of this heavy contribution of mass communication courses to the degree program is that journalism/media graduates miss out on knowledge in the humanities and social sciences and are consequently deprived of key critical and analytical competencies needed to prepare effective communicators. Graduates might be excellent as technical communicators with good knowledge of media processes and effects. But they may also lack critical and analytical skills that are normally obtained through liberal arts education. Qatar University stands out as having the only program with the majority of courses taken outside the mass communication program, namely in humanities and social sciences. This clear liberal arts education feature seems to be a function of QU’s mass communication program being accredited by the U.S.-based Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). The other programs have national accreditation statuses that seem to place no limit on the number of mass communication credits to be taken from and outside the programs.
Table (1) shows all 10 state university programs have some form of an internship opportunity for media/journalism students. In two universities (Qusantina and Khartoum), students are required to do graduation projects or capstone courses in conjunction with the industry. Although internships offer students ample opportunities to engage first-hand with industry working environments in the media sector, they do not seem, by themselves, to enable adequate acquisition of knowledge in the professional fields of journalism. A review of the 10 universities websites shows no compelling evidence of long-term collaborative relationships with media organizations to sustain a professional outlook of the programs. Some of those programs seem to limit their industry engagement to inviting professionals to the classroom or organizing field trips to media organizations to enable students to interact with media practitioners. But strategically structured relations with the industry through formal channels seem to be hugely lacking.

**Table (1) Journalism/Media Curricular Components**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Journalism %</th>
<th>Media %</th>
<th>Hum &amp;SS %</th>
<th>Math &amp; Sciences %</th>
<th>Internship %</th>
<th>A %</th>
<th>E/F %</th>
<th>Total Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain Uni.</td>
<td>20.93</td>
<td>25.58</td>
<td>46.51</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>93.02</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo Uni.</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>20.37</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>81.48</td>
<td>18.51</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar Uni.</td>
<td>19.04</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td>57.14</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>85.71</td>
<td>14.28</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ Uni</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE Uni</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qusantina Uni</td>
<td>28.20</td>
<td>28.20</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>10.25</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>84.61</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarmouk Uni</td>
<td>27.27</td>
<td>36.36</td>
<td>22.72</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>72.72</td>
<td>27.27</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad Uni</td>
<td>21.42</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>21.42</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>85.71</td>
<td>14.28</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. AB. Az. Uni</td>
<td>27.90</td>
<td>37.20</td>
<td>32.55</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>88.37</td>
<td>11.62</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khartom Uni</td>
<td>27.90</td>
<td>46.51</td>
<td>13.95</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>88.37</td>
<td>11.62</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (2) shows journalism/media education curricula focusing on text formats of news production in writing and reporting classes: (66.66%) in Bahrain; (63.63%) at Cairo University; (61.53%) at Baghdad University; (63.63%) at Qusantina University and UAE University (49.49%). The dominance of text formats in journalism/media curricula suggests a clear traditional journalism education feature where text production is the prime content format to which students are exposed to the exclusion of other multimedia formats. Photojournalism and layout/design is a common component in almost all 10 media/journalism programs covered by this study which again supports the previous finding about a print-oriented outlook that draws on text-formats in journalism training. Journalist, according to this model, can be prepared through intensive writing and some technical design/photography skills to create content for consumption by readers. On the other hand, most of the 10 programs analyzed by this study seem to lack credible features relating to
emerging digital journalism practices. It is true that journalism curricula incorporate some video courses; but those courses come under broadcasting modules designed to enable students’ engagement more with traditional TV broadcasting than with video as a multimedia component. Qatar University, UAE University and Yarmouk University have 1-2 courses relating to online journalism but all in all, the curricular landscape relating to the 10 programs do not seem to have credible digital/online media components, especially those relating to social media or blogging.

Table (2) Journalism Focal Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Writing %</th>
<th>Reporting %</th>
<th>Photography %</th>
<th>Investigative %</th>
<th>Design %</th>
<th>Video %</th>
<th>Online %</th>
<th>Social %</th>
<th>Total Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain Uni.</td>
<td>44.44</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo Uni.</td>
<td>36.36</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar Uni.</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Q Uni</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE Uni</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>16.16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16.16</td>
<td>16.16</td>
<td>16.16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qusantina Uni</td>
<td>27.27</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarmouk Uni</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad Uni</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khartom Uni</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16.16</td>
<td>16.16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

The analysis shows that though some variations exist among journalism and mass communication programs at the 10 Arab state universities, they share a few common elements relating to a traditional outlook and lacking digital/social media components. In some programs, traditional course topics reflecting media education curricula of the 1970s and 1980s such as news editing, psychological warfare, print media layout and design, continue to dominate the journalism curricular landscape with no digital or online components. Traditional course descriptions relating to news editing, broadcast production and photography define most of the programs. The allocation of modules/credits to media subjects also reflects traditional thinking about media education programs as heavily focused on mass communication subjects to the exclusion of cognate disciplines from humanities and social sciences. In some programs, students may take up to two thirds of undergraduate courses from the media program, leaving themselves limited access to knowledge in areas such as sociology, management, political science, psychology, history, philosophy, math and the sciences. While it may sound natural to see state universities striving to promote a special brand of journalism education that is structured around ‘loyalist’ or ‘mobilization’ models of media functions, the expansion of digital/networked technologies would
most likely push those journalism education programs to their limits, creating serious ruptures in their contents, methodologies and outcomes.

The analysis shows significant divergencies between the majority of journalism programs at MENA state universities on the one hand and curricular standards promoted by both UNESCO and ACEJMC. The ACEJMC model stresses a liberal arts education tradition in journalism education by enabling students to explore knowledge in a wide range of subjects that support their professional role as journalists. The value of journalism does not derive from its technological features but from its role as constructive force, a fourth estate, with a watch-dog function that only works properly in a free setting. UNESCO’s prescription of knowledge axes incorporating world and journalism’s intellectual challenges and professional standards seem to be well-accounted for in the 10 journalism programs. But UNESCO’s emphasis on competencies such as critical and evidence-based thinking and knowledge of knowledge of national and international political, economic, cultural, religious, and social institutions and current affairs and issues seems also to be poorly represented in most of the those programs addressed.

Digital media have already made impressive presence in the region’s social and institutional landscapes. State universities’ oblivion to the emerging digital communications landscape would most likely deprive a whole generation of graduates of proper exposure to new professional practices in the field. On the intellectual front, it would also keep them from engaging with the new model of communication as based on engagement, multimedia, accessibility, live analytics and user empowerment. It has been noticed that many of the recent graduates who received traditional media training at state universities were unable to successfully engage with the emerging digital landscape, and when they happen to use the Web as a communication platform, they would apply irrelevant traditional media practices and visions about message senders, contents and receivers. In many cases, graduates who were prepared in legacy journalism programs had to go through new training to catch up with and comprehend the key technical and intellectual features of the new technologies. They would come to realize that their role as message creators and senders is no longer defining the outcome of the communication process. In significant ways, audiences who are turning into active online users/communicators do have a significant role to play in determining the final impact of the message. Graduates would also come to realize that single skill-training is no longer relevant for a communication environment that requires multi-functioning and multi-tasking graduates who are able to handle multiple assignments such as writing, reporting, videotaping and editing, sound production and editing and other trans-media tasks.

But the problematic aspects of state universities’ journalism programs in the MENA region are not only about engaging with digital technologies and professional practices. They also relate to the type of intellectual knowledge students gain. As prescribed by both UNESCO and ACEJMC models, journalism education is intrinsically about preparing students intellectually to be able to handle issues and events in professionally-defined terms for the purpose of information and enlightenment. Data used in this study show that journalism programs at state universities seem to have a technical/vocational focus that seeks to prepare students as technicians or technology users more than as intellectual communicators with critical and analytical outlooks. Too much attention seems to be given to program components that emphasize news writing/editing/reporting style and techniques; audio visual production, photography, layout and design and empirical research standards. Based on my experience with several universities in the region, I have come to realize
that students seem highly passionate about handling camera work or digital audio-video editing or design assignments but less so when it comes to constructing storylines in text or multimedia formats. They are always able to generate compelling video or photographic shots, but are unable to produce intellectually coherent pieces of news text or visuals. By the same token, they are most likely to video shoot and edit a television interview but have problems moderating the interview or asking the right questions.

MENA state university Journalism programs lacking engagement with both emerging professional digital landscapes and liberal arts education traditions will continue to suffer from a critical identity crisis. A digital disconnect in journalism programs is not about missing out on technical engagement with the new communications technologies but rather with the unique mindset that promotes those technologies as highly empowering and emancipating. Graduates with no access to cyber-communications are more likely to fall captive to obsolete ideas of media functions that see the audience as a passive mass of persons who could be easily manipulated and controlled. As noted earlier, a synthesis of incongruent old communication ideas and new digital tools is most likely to fail and would never deliver the right results simply because technology is not just a tool but is rather a value-loaded system that defines how we behave and relate to each other. By the same token, journalism is not about the transmission of content to an audience; it is rather a social process that incorporates a whole set of values and methodologies to be harnessed when dealing with events and issues. Around the world, journalism has come in different models and shapes. But there is consensus about one common feature that gives life to sustainable journalistic practices: freedom. In the MENA region, fostering a liberal arts education tradition in journalism education programs should be paralleled by the institution of legal and ethical standards that support a critical and unfettered flow of information.

Conclusions

It is clear that state universities in the Arab World continue to house journalism programs that follow old models of media education incorporating heavy doses of mass communications courses to the exclusion of knowledge in cognate humanities and social sciences and digital/online media. The writer notes that this common feature in journalism programs has two serious implications: Graduates are prepared to practice journalism primarily as a technical/vocational rather than as an intellectual pursuit. The second implication is that by lacking proper exposure to the key features of digital/networked media, graduates are more likely to lose sight of the key features of social media and web-based communications as powerful tools of engagement. Both UNESCO and ACEJMC models of journalism education encompass a clear liberal arts education component viewed as necessary for enabling graduates to professionally handle their journalistic assignments in an a public sphere in critical and free fashions. Both models also show appreciation for digital media as marking a new phase of human empowerment that needs to be incorporated into journalism education.

About the Author

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Technological Breakthrough, Hybridization in News Formats in Brazilian Telejournalism and Confusion in the Classroom

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Abstract:

New broadcasting formats are emerging in Brazilian tele journalism. Many are not listed in the telejournalism manuals nor are referred to in surveys about newsmaking which took place in the country. It is then difficult to characterise the new genres in the classroom. For example, in Brazilian TV newsrooms it has become common to use a big screen to show images that illustrate what is being said. However, a sidebar, which would be, from the outset, an imageless telejournalistic genre is now illustrated with images. For Vizeu (2005), it means news without an image. Bistane and Bacellar (2005) define it as a short text without images, which the presenter reads live. Without a name to designate this new format for TV news, there is no definitions for the exemplified language, there for it will be addressed in the classroom simply as a concept of hybrid tele journalism, like many others. As is the case of hybridizations that occur with standup, which is traditionally used by editors when it is impossible to go live, so much so that in many places it is called a false live. Cruz-Neto (2009) defined it as a resource used when the reporter is there for the occurrence and records the information showed on camera, without extra images. The author is also categorical in stating that standup is not edited, and is broadcast the way it was recorded. Take a standup where the subject was the inauguration of a minister in Brazil. It is expected of the reporter to be accompanying the ceremony inside the auditorium where it is taking place, to narrate the information while on camera, or there may be a slight camera shift from the reporter to the fact when the reporter is speaking, a possibility described by Cruz-Neto (2009). However, it did not happen that way. After the news anchor’s introduction, we see a reporter in the foyer of an auditorium narrating the text. This lasted about twenty seconds. After that, as if by magic, (the magic of editing) the narration was covered by images from inside the auditorium, of the inauguration itself, and before finishing, the reporter goes silent for a sound bite from the speech of the recently inaugurated politician. In a first bibliographical survey, we discovered Professor Fabiana Siqueira’s thesis (2013), as she classifies the ways that news are presented, she did not address the formats above used, but called them hybrid. According to Siqueira (2013), the mesh of various formats to deliver information. Thus, there is a gap in communication research focused on tele journalism in Brazil. Finding proof of the existence of this gap is the motivation and justification for this research, which intends, as its main objective, to pursue how frequently hybridisations happen. The methodological path of the research will involve the selection, collection, observation and analysis of three editions of the three different local news shows of TV Globo Nordeste, a local broadcaster in Recife, a city located in the Northeast of Brazil. The editions will be chosen at random. In analysing each one, it will be possible to compare the classic formats with what is found. This makes it a descriptive research, according to Vergara (2004), and it might be specified also, regarding its objectives and according to Gil (2008), as exploratory, since it will allow for a better understanding of the studied phenomenon, a greater familiarity with
the theme. According to Marconi and Lakatos (2011) this is a qualitative research in nature and, finally, regarding the adopted procedures, a case study, according to Yin (2010). As a result, we expect to see how often hybridisations happen and what elements are incorporated into the classic formats.

**Key-words**: Telejornalism; News format; hybridization; education.

**Introduction**

Fresh news formats are emerging in Brazilian television journalism. Many are not listed in the journalistic manuals nor referred to in newsmaking surveys conducted in the country. It is then difficult to characterize these new genres in the classroom. The aim of this research is to prove that gaping existing.

This analysis has as general objective, to prove the existence of hybridization, developed by teacher Fabiana Siqueira (2013), in the local telejournalism and how often the hybridizations happen. In addition, there are still specific objectives: to present the types of hybridizations that are found, to observe if the students understand hybridization as a non-classic format of news; to highlight the confusion that hybridization can cause in the students' understanding of the content of telejournalism; and, in order to finish the specific objectives, this research intends to subsidize and be the starting point for a larger study that intends to categorize and name these new news formats in Brazilian television journalism.

The focus of this research is on three local TV news programs produced and exhibited live by TV Globo Nordeste. Headquartered in Recife (the capital of the state of Pernambuco is the third most populous city of the Brazilian Northest), it is one of the five TV stations that belongs to Rede Globo, which distributes the signal to 54 cities in the Metropolitan Region of Recife, and part of three other geopolitical microregions of the State, including the archipelago of Fernando de Noronha, reaching an estimated population of 5,288,050 inhabitants.

The first newscast remains for two hours in the broadcast program. It is called Bom Dia Pernambuco and airs from Monday to Friday from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. in the morning. Broadcast live from Recife, is the only news program of the station that airs for the 184 municipalities of the state, in chain with the affiliated broadcasters, TV Asa Branca (located in Caruaru, 135 km from Recife) e TV Grande Rio (based in Petrolina, 713 km from Recife) who contribute with news from their own regions. As we have already explained in our previous research, "pela nossa análise o factual domina o noticiário, seguido por pautas de Esportes e de Eventos que acontecem no Estado "¹ (Boaventura: 2017).

At noon, from Monday to Saturday, the NE1 begins, it is a 45-minute television news program that, together with the NE2 (broadcasted at around 7:00 pm, with an average duration of 15 minutes), is broadcast only to the people in the area of the TV Globo Nordeste. Both focus on the main news that happened that day in the region. As already explained in previous research,

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¹ Free Translation: “by our analysis news of the type breaking news dominate the news, followed by sports and events that happen in the State”
"percebe-se que os três telejornais têm o horário, o cenário e a linha editorial em conformidade com a padronização proposta pela Rede Globo para as praças e demais 117 afiliadas" (Boaventura: 2017).

The methodological paths of this work are the selection, collection, observation and analysis of the editions of the three local telejournal of TV Globo Nordeste. Editions that will be analyzed for a whole week and chosen randomly. When analyzing each one, it will be possible to compare the classical formats already conceptualized, with what is found.

In order to verify how much confusion the new’s hybridization of the news generates to journalism students, two students of the Journalism course of the Maurício de Nassau University Center, based in Recife (PE), were invited to watch and analyze the three telejournals produced and shown by TV Globo Nordeste. Both had already gone through the initial discipline of telejournalism and had the mission to reconstruct the mirrors of each edition, categorizing, mainly, the format of the news.

The student 1 was responsible for analyzing five editions of Bom Dia Pernambuco, corresponding to six hours, 37 minutes and 42 seconds. And the student 2 had the task of following six editions of the NE1, that is, four hours, 11 minutes and forty seconds, and other six editions of the NE2 which represented one hour, 55 minutes and 19 seconds. The period of editions selected to be analyzed was one week, between August 27 and September 1, 2018. Globo Play was used as an observation tool. This is a digital applicative where news are available in full after the original display, in real time. The sum of the 17 editions selected represents 12 hours, 44 minutes and 41 seconds of telejornals studied.

For analysis it was necessary to create a spreadsheet, to make a sort to propose for all the news that are displayed (which in Brazilian’s TV jargon is called 'pagination'), propose a title for each report (called 'retranca'). To point out the name of the reporter (when there was one) and to indicate: the format used, the time used by the newscaster host to call each item (called in Brazil 'head') beyond the news time in the air. All this simulates the real script created while the process of elaborating the television news. The students also identified when the format used was not exactly within the existing classical formats and there was difficulty understanding it, describing the hybridization created. After the students analyzed the formats, the TV news were watched again, now in the presence of the advisor who validated the data and confirmed if there was the hybridization indicated by the student.

It is according to Vergara (2004), a descriptive research that can also be classified, according to Gil (2008), as exploratory, since it will allow a better understanding of the phenomenon studied, providing greater familiarity with the topic. As for its nature, according to Marconi & Lakatos (2011), it is characterized as qualitative and, finally, regarding the adopted procedures, we face what Yin (2010) says is a case study. As a result, it is expected to see how often hybridizations happen and what elements are incorporated into the classic formats.

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2 Free Translation: “It can be observed that the three news programs have the time, the scenario and the editorial line according to the standardization proposed by Rede Globo for its own channels and for the other 117 affiliated stations”
Classical News’ Formats in Brazilian Telejournalism

Countless are the scientific papers and manual of telejournalisms that describe the news’ formats in brazilian telejournalism. Most brazilian studies are based on the publications about the journalistic genre, of the pioneer professor Luiz Beltrão, who were also worked by professor José Marques de Melo. “Os géneros jornalísticos correspondem a um sistema de organização do trabalho cotidiano de codificação das mensagens de atualidade, a partir das formas de expressão adotadas nas empresas e refletindo em certo sentido o consenso corporativo” (Marques de Melo, 2003, p.11).

From this explanation, and whereas for more than 10 years of daily work in TV newsrooms, we interpret news formats in television journalism as the way television journalists shape and signify the informations to be transmitted to viewers in order to audience involvement in the subject shown. The practice in television, as well as the studies on newsmaking, enable this author to identify seven different formats: that, in Portuguese, we identify what is called as Reportagem (in free translation: report); Ao vivo (in free translation: Live); Stand up, ou Boletim, também chamado de falso Ao vivo (in free translation: Stand up or False Live); Nota coberta (in free translation: Covered Note); Nota Pelada (in free translation: Naked Note); Entrevista de Estúdio (in free translation: Studio Interview); Audiotape (there is no free translation to this word).

The most classic of all, we consider it as a report. Preceded from a text (in Brazil called 'head') narrated by the newscaster host, it is built by three main elements: narration of the reporter (called off) covered by images or illustrations; the presence of the reporter on the scene (called Passagem) and the speech of the interviewees, (called voiced). At the end, the news host can come with some additional text called Nota-pé (in free translation: Footnote) to supplement, update or correct some information. “A matéria jornalística que fornece um relato ampliado de um acontecimento, mostrando suas causas, correlações e repercussões” (Rezende, 2005, p. 157).

The second concept, live is classified by Paternostro, (1999, p. 136) as the “transmissão de um acontecimento no exato momento em que ele ocorre”. Barbeiro & Lima (2005, p. 166) explains that link (the jargon that is also used to refer to live) “é a ligação entre dois ou mais pontos para a transmissão de sinais de imagem e som”. Without the possibility of making a link and with the information recorded, the news format employed by the reporter will be called Stand-up, that Paternostro (1999, p. 151) conceptualized as being “uma gravação no local do acontecimento para transmitir informações do fato” and Cruz-Neto (2008, p. 151) explains that the reporter is “com  

3. Free translation: "The journalistic genres correspond to a system of organization of daily work codifying current messages, based on the forms of expression adopted in companies and reflecting in a sense the corporate consensus"

4. Free Translation: “The reportage is the journalistic material that provides an expanded account of an event, showing its causes, correlations and repercussions”

5. Free Translation: "Transmission of an event at the very moment it occurs"

6. Free Translation: "Is the connection between two or more points for the transmission of image and sound signals"

7. Free Translation: "an on-the-spot recording of the event to convey fact information"
sua presença no vídeo, sem imagens”\textsuperscript{8}. By similarity, in many TV stations this format also called 'false live', but one can refer to the stand-up as 'bulletin' or 'flash'.\textsuperscript{9}.

The third concept, ‘nota’ (as already said, in free translation: Note). That for Marques de Melo (2003, p. 65) “Corresponde ao relato de acontecimentos que estão em processo de configuração e por isso é mais frequente no rádio e na televisão”\textsuperscript{10}. The Nota Pelada (in free translation: Naked Note) (also called a dry note or live note) is read live by the TV newscaster host during the transmission of the television news, he is all the time on the scene, without any use of images to illustrate what is being said. It is called a Nota coberta (in free translation: Covered Note) when the image of the presenter is literally covered by images that illustrate what is being said.

The observation of this researcher leads to the conclusion that the last two formats described (Nota Pelada - naked note - and Nota coberta - covered note) can be used for the reading an editorial, or for newscaster host specialized in weather or sports, who participates in the edition of the newscast or even only appears for the weather forecast information.

The Entrevista de Estúdio (in free translation: Studio Interview), as its name suggests, is when a personality - most of the time, for what he or she has to say - is invited to give information during the newscast in the studio itself. The concept of interview according to (Rezende, 2000; Paternostro, 1999) is linked to the interviewer's dialogue (who asks the questions) with the character or source of information (who answers them).

If we start with the most classic, we end up conceptualizing the less used one: the Audiotape, which for a long time was considered a technological breakthrough in newsrooms, is currently overtaken by other developments. “Indica a gravação de um texto de repórter, somente em forma de áudio, via telefone”\textsuperscript{11} (Barbeiros e Lima, 2005, p. 163). “Então coloca-se a foto do repórter no vídeo, gravada anteriormente, com um mapa mostrando a localização da cidade onde ele se encontra”\textsuperscript{12} (Cruz-Neto, 2008, p. 54). “É aplicado em casos extremos, quando não há tempo de enviar algumas imagens”\textsuperscript{13} (Siqueira, 2012, p. 184).

\section*{Technology in Telejournalism}

The technological breakthrough of digitalization that has made the audio tape obsolete so quickly in the last decade has led researcher Beatrice Becker to think on everything she wrote in her book Television and Telejournalism: Transitions: “é provável que daqui a 10 ou 20 anos as contradições e transformações que se identificam nestas reflexões aqui reunidas sobre TV e telejornalismo, na

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{8} Free Translation: "with his presence in the video, without images".
\item \textsuperscript{9} It is also important that although the format of Flash is very similar to the Stand-up and, as already explained, also to the one of the 'live' it became habitual to call flash the reporter's participation outside the telejornal, with information during the TV programming, as for 'breaking news' in an example.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Free Translation: "It corresponds to the report of events that are in the process of configuration and therefore is more frequent on the radio and television".
\item \textsuperscript{11} Free Translation: “Indicates the recording of a reporter's text, only in audio form, via telefone”.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Free Translation: “Then put the photo of the reporter in the video, recorded previously, with a map showing the location of the city where he is”.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Free Translation: “It is applied in extreme cases, when there is no time to send some images”.
\end{itemize}
segunda década do século XXI, possam estar obsoletas, mas também pode ser que não”\textsuperscript{14} (2016, p. 209).

The convergence culture, studied by Henry Jenkins (2009), where he says that there are innumerable media supports that mediate the flow of informational content that we consume daily, leads us to believe that TV will not die or be replaced by the internet, as already foreseen to the radio, with the arrival of the TV itself.

The most recent Brazilian Media Survey, of 2016, made with more than 15,000 interviews, was commissioned from the Brazilian Institute of Opinion and Statistics, by the Social Communication Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic to understand how the Brazilian is informed (BRASIL, 2016). And the result points out that television remains the first choice of information search. “Quase a metade dos brasileiros (49%) declarou usar a web para obter notícias (primeira e segunda menções), percentual abaixo da TV (89%), mas bem acima do rádio (30%), dos jornais (12%) e das revistas (1%)”\textsuperscript{15} (Brasil, 2016, p. 11).

All this to reach the concept of hypertelevision, proposed by Gordillo (2009, p. 13 as cited in Siqueira 2012, p. 173) “aborda três modelos que se completam: a televisão generalista; a multitemática (de diferentes plataformas) e a que é convergente com a telefonia móvel e internet”\textsuperscript{16}.

Confirmed with the historical survey published six years later by Porcello (2015, p. 146): “Hoje a TV está em diversas plataformas e nos mais variados dispositivos e até mesmo nos antigos aparelhos receptores de televisão ainda com imagens em preto e branco”\textsuperscript{17}.

And the technology also influences in the daily work mode of those involved in the elaboration of the television news. “Os profissionais ligados a produção de conteúdo televisivo também estão mudando e com isso estamos vivendo uma revolução nos meios de comunicação e na geração de notícias”\textsuperscript{18} (Silva, 2013). The possibilities brought about by technologies and the creative intelligence of the human being provide a new phenomenon that has been observed for some time. This is what Professor Fabiana Siqueira (2013) called hybrids, that is, the joining of various formats to display a new news format.

In his doctoral thesis, Siqueira classified the way the news is presented, but did not deal the formats used. Did not conceptualized, named or described the new formats. Thus, there is a gap in the communication research focused on telejournalism in Brazil.

\textsuperscript{14} Free Translation: “it is probable that in 10 or 20 years the contradictions and transformations identified in these reflections gathered on TV and television journalism in the second decade of the twenty-first century may be obsolete, but it may also be not”

\textsuperscript{15} Free Translation: “Almost half of Brazilians (49%) reported using the web for news (first and second mentions), percentage below TV (89%), but well above radio (30%), newspapers (12%) and magazines (1%)”

\textsuperscript{16} Free Translation: “encompasses three models that are completed: generalist television; the multi-thematic (of different platforms) and the one that is convergent with the mobile telephony and internet”.

\textsuperscript{17} Free Translation: “Today the TV is in diverse platforms and in the most varied devices and even in the old receivers of television still with images in black and white”.

\textsuperscript{18} Free Translation: “The professionals involved in the production of television content are also changing and with this we are experiencing a revolution in the media and the production of News”.

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Discussion and Results

When analyzing the news, it was necessary to reconstruct the script (in the journalistic jargon of Brazil, called "Espelho" - mirror) of each edition. Because it is a classification task and, although it seems to have a basic implementation pattern, the scripts probably do not coincide with the original (which are not made available by the broadcaster) view of the subjectivity of the task.

The five editions of the newscast 'Bom dia Pernambuco', corresponding to six hours, 37 minutes and 42 seconds, had five mirrors recreated, totaling 214 edit scripts\textsuperscript{19}.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Quantity of edit scripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday (08/27/18)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday (08/28/18)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday (08/29/18)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday (08/30/18)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday (08/31/18)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Already for the six editions of the news program 'NE1', that is, four hours, 11 minutes and forty seconds analyzed, it was possible to assign and create 227 edit scripts.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Quantity of edit scripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday (08/27/18)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday (08/28/18)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday (08/29/18)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday (08/30/18)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday (08/31/18)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday (01/09/18)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Much smaller number of pages were created for the six editions of the NE2, which represented one hour, 55 minutes and 19 seconds and 114 edit scripts.

\textsuperscript{19} Note that in Brazil there is a mixture with the jargon used with words in Portuguese and English, which can hinder understanding at this point and that is why it is necessary to explain: what is called 'Espelho' (Mirror, in free translation) is something like a summary with the order that the subjects will appear in the telejournaling news. While each item that will be displayed in the telejournal generates a script in this Espelho ('Mirror'), the term 'script' (used in English) is used for each edit script of these.
Table 3
Amount of edit script that were assigned to each of the NE2 editions that were analyzed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Quantity of edit scripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday (08/27/18)</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday (08/28/18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday (08/29/18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday (08/30/18)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday (08/31/18)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday (01/09/18)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graphics can help you better understand the representativeness with which hybrids of news formats appear on television news. Of the total of 555 pages created for the three news programs, 60 were of different interventions of the classic / known formats.

Graphics 1, 2 and 3
Number of hybridizations pointed out by the students in front of the whole television news item analyzed.

In each newscast it was possible to bring up and describe how the news formats were hybridized and the information displayed in a 'new' format that still cannot be named. Among the 24 cases highlighted in all studied editions of Bom Dia Pernambuco it was possible to verify (some of them occurred more than once) the following cases:

- Nota coberta (in free translation: Covered Note) narrated by a reporter;
- Images covering the reporter during an Ao vivo (in free translation: Live);
• Images covering a person being interviewed during an Ao vivo (in free translation: Live).
• Stand Up with the speech of the interviewees, (called voiced);
• Nota coberta (in free translation: Covered Note) who returns to the tv newscaster host to say a text (in Brazil called 'head') of a speech of the interviewees, (called voiced) from the same subject;
• The TV newscaster host say a text that is covered by images (in Brazil called 'head') while he is calling a reportage;
• Nota Pelada (in free translation: Naked Note) illustrated by images in the big screen behind the TV newscaster host.

Now analyzing the 28 hybridization occurrences in NE1, it was possible to find the following mixes in news formats:

• the tv newscaster host to say a text (in Brazil called 'head') covered by imagens;
• Images covering a person being interviewed during an Ao vivo (in free translation: Live);
• Images covering the reporter during an Ao vivo (in free translation: Live) and in the same live participation, the reporter says the text that attract the already recorded participation of two persons being interviewed on the same subject of the live. It looks like a reportage (with text in off) but live, covered with images and calling the voices;
• Nota coberta (in free translation: Covered Note) narrated by the tv newscaster host plus the voice of a person being interviewed (like if it were a reportage, but without the repórter);
• Nota coberta (in free translation: Covered Note) narrated by a reporter;
• Nota Pelada (in free translation: Naked Note) illustrated by images in the big screen behind the TV newscaster host;
• An additional text to supplement, update or correct some information called ‘Nota-pé’ (in free translation: Footnote) covered by images.
• Reporter participates of an ‘Ao vivo’ (in free translation: Live) only to says the ‘cabeça’ (head) that attracts the own report recorded before, as if he were the TV newscaster host;

At the end of the analysis, we verified that the hybridizations also occurred eight times in NE2, as described:

• Nota coberta (in free translation: Covered Note) narrated by a reporter;
• Nota coberta (in free translation: Covered Note) narrated by the tv newscaster host plus the voice of a person being interviewed (like if it were a reportage, but without the repórter);
• An additional text to supplement, update or correct some information called Nota-pé (in free translation: Footnote) covered by images.
• Stand-up covered by images;
The text (in Brazil called 'head') narrated by the newscaster host to introduce an Ao vivo (in free translation: Live) covered by images;

• The TV newscaster host say the texto of na Nota coberta (in free translation: Covered Note), then the TV newscaster host returns to call two interviews and then the TV newscaster host is back again to call one more interview. All together, with the narration or video presence of a reporter would form a report;

(In)Conclusions

As it was possible to verify, the analysis and the results point to the occurrence of hybridization in the three local TV news programs of TV Globo Nordeste. They occur more often, especially in the longest-running television shows, where there is an apparent need to hold the viewer's attention for a longer period of time.

It was also verified that in spite of low frequency, almost in all the verified editions it was possible to find hybridizations and to describe which elements that are incorporated to the classic formats. Although it was a little against the whole, during 60 moments/occurrences it was not possible for the students to identify the format used by the publishers to report the fact reported. There was doubt and confusion for part of the students.

The confusion occurred because in the 60 times when it was not possible to conclude which format was being shown, the mixture of classical elements happened, which can be concluded that it is configured as the creation of a new news format. New formats that are not yet named or studied.

About the Authors

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Digitization and Disruption: A Case Study about Journalism Education in
Campus Radio

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Abstract

Campus radio often serves as a starting point for a career in radio journalism due to the fact that it is a platform that allows students to gather first working experiences. Considering its centrality for practical training of young talents in radio, this study gives an overview of the situation of campus radio in the region of Bavaria in Germany. A qualitative content analysis of 44 experience reports written by students after completing their training within FriedaFM, the campus radio station at the University of Bamberg, three main educational goals of journalism education in campus radio could be identified.

Introduction

“That’s where you make all your mistakes. It's where I learned what I didn't wanna do in a radio station” (The Guardian, 2018). This is how BBC Radio 1’s new morning DJ Greg James summed up the benefits of student radio in a recent webchat hosted by The Guardian. Like Greg James, various popular radio hosts and broadcasting journalists started their career in a campus radio. Campus radio allows for next-generation journalists to develop a first understanding of the technical infrastructures as well as the journalistic processes and requirements in a radio station as well as it enables them to design radio reports.

In Germany, overall 35 radio stations with the focus on teaching radio journalism and educating young journalists within a campus radio station are currently on air - 13 of them in Bavaria alone in the year 2017 (Die Medienanstalten, 2017). For 2019 this number has risen and 15 campus radio projects are currently producing content. However, this variety of radio schooling projects differs in their financial, technical and educational settings. Consequently, differences in the organizational structure as well as in the composition of the programs can be observed.

Unfortunately, journalism education in the context of radio schooling projects in Germany has not been taken into consideration on a large scale in Communication Science so far (Holz, 2012). Communication research mostly treats campus radio as peripheral phenomenon in German media (Felling, 2002) or as an exceptional case apart community media particularly focusing on young audiences and the training of media literacy (Thüringer Landesmedienanstalt, 2010). The limited number of studies addressed variety of campus radio projects and provided introductions and
categorizations of these projects (Fischer, 1995; Fischer, 1996; Stawowy, 1998; Felling, 2002; Holz, 2012).

The purpose of the study at hand was therefore twofold: Firstly, we aimed to provide a first extensive overview of radio schooling projects currently operating in Bavaria. After giving a short overview of the emergence and the current situation of the campus radio projects, taking into account the impact of digitization, the immediate focus was on a identification of types of campus radio based on the aspects of technical transmission and institutional context. Secondly, we examined students’ perception of the chances and challenges within campus radio. Our case study focused on a radio project at the University of Bamberg called friedaFM, based on a qualitative content analysis of 44 student reports from the two recent semesters (2018 as well as 2019). The three central educational goals of campus radio curriculum that could be identified in this qualitative content analysis were: Firstly, providing an authentic insight into the working methods of a local radio station, secondly, introducing digital audio production technologies and, finally, raising awareness of the challenges issued by digitization and the changes in media usage in general - particularly streaming services and podcasts.

**Definition of Campus Radio**

What is campus radio? This seemingly trivial question requires a surprisingly complex answer as the term campus radio (often also called student or university radio) is used to describe a rather huge variety of broadcasting initiatives. In the following, a general definition of campus radio, addressing the aspects of infrastructural context, production, audiences, broadcast and technical transmission, is forwarded.

Considering the specific setting of campus radio, it is obvious that they are often connected to universities. Yet, this connection to the academia can be shaped very differently. A campus radio station is either institutionalized, meaning affiliated to a specific Institute or Department at the university, or there is a supporting association or an independent community in the context of the university organizing all campus radio activities (Kertscher, 2006). However, both approaches have in common that they are of a non-commercial nature (Stawowy, 1998). This connection to the university determines the autonomy of the campus radio: Being closely tied to an Institute or Department, mostly an Institute for Communication or Media Studies, the process of recruitment and the production of the radio reports takes place in the context of a seminar. In contrast, independent campus radios are free in their activities.

This brings us to one of the next defining aspects of campus radio: the recruitment of producers. Indeed, the producers, that is to say the journalists, presenters and hosts of the campus radio stations, are mostly students, either doing voluntary work or participating in the campus radio in the context of a seminar or university course they follow as mentioned above. The production is guided by experienced students or by university lecturers, often having practical experience themselves (Holz, 2012). The curriculum focuses on the training of those future journalists. The training facilitates the common journalistic competencies which have been discussed in detail in communication science (Donsbach, 1978; Weischenberg, 1992; Weischenberg, 1994; Weischenberg, 1995).
Furthermore, the initiatives also show a diversity concerning the audiences they address. In most cases, campus radio addresses members of universities and students. Frequently, young people in the local community constitute the target group (Kertscher, 2006). However, there barely exist any data clarifying the technical coverage and audience structure. So one might come to the conclusion that the process of production is more relevant than the reception of the program.

Let us now move on to the next defining aspect: The content the campus radio stations broadcast can be defined by a topical variety and is determined by the institutional context, interests and skills of the producers as well as the anticipated demand of the audiences. Very often, the campus radio stations do have an alternative self-conception which is expressed by the selection of rather alternative, non-mainstream music and marginalized topics in their coverage.

However, transmission of campus radios’ content is managed very heterogeneously, too (Schild, 2008). Observed from a general perspective, one can differentiate various technical approaches to the transmission: The program might be broadcasted independently, either by web, by terrestrial radio or by digital radio. In Germany two other options can be seen in addition: The campus radio stations cooperate with other local commercial radio stations. That means that commercial radio includes up to four hours of campus radio shows, more or less autonomously produced an campus radio production team, in their schedule.

Hence, this attempt to define campus radio once again underlines the diversity of campus radios’ broadcasting initiatives. To sum these considerations up, one can state that campus radio is characterized by an institutional proximity to universities, in most cases emphasized by its clear non-commercial nature expressed in its selection of alternative music and marginalized, mostly local, topics addressing a young, local audience. The inclusion of students in the process of production and the conjunction of journalism education and practical training lies at the center of most campus radio projects.

**Campus Radio in the region of Bavaria: A Typology**

Before examining FriedaFM as case study to fully understand the significance of campus radio for journalism education in general, it is important to develop a better understanding for the overall situation of campus radio in the region of Bavaria. In consequence, we will now take a closer look at the landscape of radio journalism education in this particular region: In 2017, in Bavaria 13 campus radio projects, consistently distributed within the region, were on air (Die Medienanstalten, 2017). For 2019 this number has risen to 15 campus radio projects (Bayerische Landeszentrale für Neue Medien, 2019): Rabbit Radio in Ansbach, Kanal C in Augsburg, FriedaFM as well as Uni-Vox in Bamberg, Radio Schallwerk in Bayreuth, Radio-Webwelle in Deggendorf, Radio Pegasus in Ingolstadt, Netradio Kulmbach in Kulmbach, macrophon.fm in Munich, Radio Fine Tune in Munich, Radio Funklust in Nuremberg-Erlangen, Radio Campus Crew in Passau, Radio Studentenfunk in Regensburg, Radio Main-Beat as well as Uni Radio in Wurzburg. Unfortunately, two of them, macrophon.fm in Munich as well as Radio Fine Tune in Munich, are currently not on air.

These numbers, published by the media regulatory authority within the German federal state of Bavaria (so-called “Bayerische Landeszentrale für Neue Medien”), are to be taken carefully since
not all campus radio projects report their activities to the media regulatory authority. However, according to the 12th Amendment to the Interstate Broadcasting Treaty with an entry into force on June 1, 2009, webradio stations do not require permission, but have to be announced by their operators. In addition to this, thorough research carried out by the authors of this study did not spot any other campus radio projects.

Besides those 15 radio projects, there are two radio journalism education initiatives organized by the media regulatory authority within the German federal state of Bavaria themselves. The difference is that those projects operate at a supra-regional level. This initiatives (so-called “Aus- und Fortbildungskanäle” or “AFK”, since 2018 renamed “Media School Bayern”) have been founded in 1994 and are on air since 1996. They are funded and organized by the media regulatory authority, a fact that is expressed in the shareholding structures, too. The media regulatory authority is holding a majority of shares (currently 63 percentage), other shareholders are commercial TV and radio companies at supra-regional level (e. g. ProSiebenSat.1 Entertainment, Sky Deutschland, Tele 5, Rock Antenne, Antenne Bayern) as well as local TV and radio companies. Broadcasting two radio programs (as well as a TV program which will not be considered any further at this point due to the focus of this study), these radio journalism education initiatives aim to train and educate future journalists for jobs in commercial or non-commercial broadcasting stations. The commitment of commercial TV and radio companies to this projects certainly highlights how important these radio training projects are for the recruitment of future radio journalists, radio hosts and radio technicians.

Having now developed a better understanding for the current situation of campus radio within the region of Bavaria, we will now approach Bavarian campus radio alongside two central categories: the organizational context as well the technical infrastructure. This two aspects were identified based on other studies dealing with the situation of campus radio (Fischer, 1996; Stawowy, 1998; Felling, 2002; Holz, 2012). Yet, these approaches had to be adapted to regional specifics that have been established above. Since most of the studies did not take into account the impact of digitization so far, this had to be considered, too. However, digitization mostly affected aspects of technical transmission of campus radio as will become clear later on.

Firstly, concerning their organizational context, academic and curricular as well as independent and student-based radio projects can be distinguished. The majority of radio education projects in Bavaria is located in an academic setting, mostly strongly tied to universities but often with great differences in financial support, allocation of infrastructure and integration in an academic curricular. A typical example for a campus radio that is strongly connected to the university is Rabbit Radio at the University of Applied Sciences in Ansbach. This project was founded by a lecturer, later on a professor, of the university and only students take part in the project. The production of the broadcast occurs in a seminar. The non-academic radio training projects are mostly students’ initiatives, often organized in the context of non-profit associations. An example for this approach can be found in the city of Bamberg: Radio Uni-Vox is a campus radio project that is organized by a non-commercial association of young locals.

Secondly, considering the transmission of the radio programs three approaches can be observed: Radio education projects in Bavaria that established and run own web radio stations, developed cooperations with professional and commercial radio stations or integrated their shows and content in the terrestrial program of “AFK”, the radio journalism education initiative of the media regulatory authority at a super-regional level that has been introduced above. Radio Funklust in the
city of Nuremberg-Erlangen for example, broadcasts an exceptional 24/7 webradio program. Whereas Rabbit Radio in the city of Ansbach is broadcasting its program every second Thursday from 20:00h to 22:00h on “AFK MAX”. Other projects, for instance Radio Pegasus in the city of Ingolstadt-Eichstaett, are being integrated in the program of the commercial radio station in their cities.

Taking these considerations about those two distinguishing features of campus, we were able to develop a typology of Bavarian campus radio. This typology can be seen in table 1 below.

Table 1: Typology of Campus Radio in the Region of Bavaria

This typology allows to narrow down and structure the heterogeneity of campus radio in Bavaria. The majority of campus radio projects, 10 of them, is closely tied to universities, whereas only three initiatives (Radio Campus Crew in Passau, Uni-Vox in Bamberg as well as Kanal C in Augsburg) are operating fully independent. As can been the most popular form of transmission of campus radio is webradio, chosen by six of the 13 campus radio stations (Radio Funklust in Nuremberg-Erlangen, Radio Mainbeat in Wurzburg, Radio Studentenfunk in Regensburg, Uni-Radio in Wurzburg, Radio Campus Crew in Passau and Radio Uni-Vox in Bamberg). Four other campus radios preferred to cooperate with local and commercial radio stations (Netradio Kulmbach in Kulmbach, Radio Pegasus in Ingolstadt-Eichstaett, Radio Schalltwerk in Bayreuth, Kanal C in Augsburg). Only three projects decided to rely on “AFK”, the radio journalism education initiatives organized by the media regulatory authority within the German federal state of Bavaria (Rabbit Radio in Ansbach, FriedaFM in Bamberg, Radio Funklust in Nuremberg-Erlangen). All of these are co-operating with “AFK MAX” in Nuremberg on the personal initiative of its current program director, Achim Kasch.

Qualitative Content Analysis of Students’ Reports

To examine students’ perception of the chances and challenges within the work of a campus radio station, we chose to approach the reports of students taking part in campus radio projects. There are various approaches for enhancing a better understanding of such qualitative data. As a qualitative content analysis allows for “qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort” based on a high “volume of qualitative material” and “attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002), this integrated view of text documents and their specific context was
chosen. Thus, to answer the research question posed in this study, a qualitative content analysis as firstly introduced by Philipp Mayring (Ulich, Haußer, Mayring et al., 1985), being further developed by him in the following years (Mayring, 2000), was conducted. The specific course of methodological action can be described as followed: The material provided are reports by 44 students of the University in Bamberg, who participated in FriedaFM in the recent two semesters (2018 as well as 2018/2019). These reports were gathered, digitized and anonymized. For our qualitative content analysis we combined a first analysis of the material (overview, condensation, summary) with a detailed analysis (elaboration of categories, identification of structures and hermeneutic interpretations). The categories alongside which we analysed students’ reports were based on our research questions as well as on a first monitoring of the data. Through a careful data preparation, coding process and interpretation three main educational goals of the training campus radio could be identified and will be discussed extensively in the following.

**Empirical Case Study: FriedaFM in Bamberg**

As of the winter semester 2015/2016, friedaFM has been part of the bachelor program in Communication Science at the University of Bamberg. Within the three practice-oriented modules, the radio curriculum consists of two classes: “friedaFM: Redaktion”, an introduction to radio journalism, and “friedaFM: Moderation”, a radio presentation course. The result is a two-hour program which is broadcast on Wednesdays from 18:00h to 20:00h by “AFK MAX” in Nuremberg. As with all practical modules in Communication Sciences at the University of Bamberg, classes are limited to 15 respectively ten participants to ensure each student has access to equipment and one-on-one tutoring throughout the semester. At the end of term each student has to hand in a portfolio consisting of work samples and a report as module examination which is credited with five ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). In their individual reports the students are covering (1) the tasks they performed during the semester, (2) what they have learned, (3) what they liked and (4) what they would change about the class. As mentioned before, 44 of these reports from the two most recent semesters formed the corpus for our qualitative content analysis.

One preliminary remark before discussing the results of the content analysis: Students are not required to undertake any pre-study internship before enrolling for the bachelor program in Communication Science. Therefore the practice-based modules are often their first hands-on experience in media relations or journalism. Lecture periods are also a limiting factor, restricting attendance times to 28 hours (14 weeks) during the winter semester and 24 hours (12 weeks) during the summer semester.

As far as the radio curriculum at the University of Bamberg is concerned, we were able to identify three central educational goals in our qualitative content analysis: (1) providing an authentic insight into the working methods of a local radio station, (2) introducing digital audio production technologies and (3) raising awareness of the challenges issued by the changes in media usage in general - especially streaming services and podcasts.

Firstly, in their reports almost all students have highlighted that both classes had given them an opportunity to look behind the scenes of a radio station: “[I have learned] how the editorial workflow is structured, what the various forms of presentation for radio are and what needs to be taken into account during production.” Another student commented that writing for the radio has been a
challenge, especially at the start of the semester - this student wrote about spending a lot of time shortening each text for the radio broadcast. Although the general consensus is that basic writing techniques like AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) and “how would you to tell it to a friend” have helped. The factor time, on the other hand, has proven to be controversial. While one set of students found the “temporal constraints were very helpful in learning to limit myself to the most relevant and necessary information”, the other half would have preferred later deadlines for their interviews, features or vox pops. Usually topics were set on Wednesday afternoons, to be handed in on Monday evening. Of course this aspect of a practical class at university does not replicate the constraints at a professional radio station, where such a task would have to be completed at least within a working day. Nonetheless several students agreed that because of the cooperation with “AFK MAX”, friedaFM is “the perfect platform to gather first work experiences.” One participant concluded: “With the knowledge and impressions I gained, I can imagine a future career in radio.”

Secondly, a huge number of students addressed the digital audio production technologies in their reports. The production facilities at the University of Bamberg include a state of the art radio studio with an additional recording booth, digital field recorders as well as a newsroom equipped with 15 personal computers for audio editing. To familiarize the participants of the radio classes with professional hard- and software, additional tutorials are scheduled at the beginning of each semester. Obviously most students have stressed that they had experienced a steep learning curve: “I also learned how to use Adobe Audition and improved my audio editing skills over the course of the semester.” Another student concluded: “First and foremost I have re-learned audio editing. I joined the class with a lot of half-knowledge on the topic, but it has brought me forward massively.” Gaining routine in the studio has especially been the predominant issue for students taking part in the seminar “FriedaFM: Moderation” - the class for presenters. One student DJ prefaced his report with an admission stating: “And now to one thing I did the most at FriedaFM: mistakes. My first words on-air will never be heard by anyone - I was so nervous, I had forgotten to turn on my microphone.” Accordingly “multitasking” has been the keyword in this particular set of portfolios, as a two-hour program requires constant, shifting attention between music, jingles, reports and presentation. “You have to operate the equipment while concentrating on your presentation - ideally not forgetting [to turn on] your microphone or missing the cue.” One particular student however has used the pre-production capabilities of the broadcast system to its fullest: “After linking all the songs, drop-ins, music beds and effects in the software, all I had to do [during the show] was to press two buttons. But even that has to be learned!” These findings highlight one particular effect of digitization on the broadcasting industry in general: Like all commercial radio stations in Bavaria, FriedaFM does not use a studio technician to operate the mixing desk. This results in a high workload in a live broadcast situation. Hence, “I didn’t notice the time passing” was one of the most frequent comments. Or: As with commercial radio stations, voice tracking does have its appeal for at least some students at campus radio stations.

Finally, changes in media usage posed a challenge to the students in Bamberg’s campus radio. In contrast to the time spent in the studio, updating and maintaining friedaFM’s social media presence was not perceived a challenge at all. Students simply listed “taking pictures and writing teaser texts for the Facebook Page” as one of the tasks they performed in class. One student emphasized: “I also liked the fact that it was up to us to decide how we wanted to stage the Facebook photo, compose the corresponding post and present the program on-air.” Unlike their social media savviness, almost none of the students regularly tunes in to listen to traditional, linear FM or digital radio. Most of them prefer streaming services, audio books or podcasts. However, as stu-
students of Communication Science they are aware of the current media change. One of them re- 
lected: “Radio is in constant development and in constant competition with other, trendier me-
dia. As a background medium, the audience underestimates the effort that is necessary to pro-
duce a program.” During a recent workshop on the topic of social media, students accordingly proposed
to incorporate Instagram and WhatsApp to promote FriedaFM. However vital these platforms seem
to be for digital natives, the students themselves quickly realized that those addi-
tional tasks would be too time consuming. What’s more, using WhatsApp for push notifications is out of the question 
since the EU’s data protection law (GDPR) came into effect: Every subscri-
ber to the newsletter would transfer his or her mobile phone number to FriedaFM. Because of stu-
dent demand however, classes are now including the chances and challenges of Spotify. Some participants of “FriedaFM: Redaktion” have been venturing into the world of mobile reporting recently, using 
their smartphones as audio recorders: “I have tested audio recording apps on my Android phone. 
It seems to me that interviewees are more relaxed, because a smartphone is noth-
ing unusual.”

In hindsight, this statement might almost sound prophetic, as digitization at commercial broad-
casters reaches a new level. At the beginning of July 2019, BLR - the content provider for Bavarian 
local radio stations - has launched a new streaming service called BayCloudNet. On the one hand, 
this service now replaces expensive satellite transmission for syndicated radio shows with web 
streams. But it also turns any device running a dedicated app in the Google Chrome browser into 
a mobile recording and editing suite for reporters. The only additional hardware needed is a good 
quality microphone. NexCast, the developers of this cloud service, promise that BayCloudNet can 
even be used by presenters to voice track their shows or by radio stations to customize generic 
content with their own on-air design. In the near future, campus radio stations might incorporate 
the arising chances and challenges in their curriculum: cheaper and more accessible technology vs. 
the dangers of blandification.

Conclusion

As our qualitative analysis showed, digitization has led to the establishment of a multi-
faceted scene of campus radio stations in Bavaria. Being non-commercial outlets and operating in a pro-
tected context, often within the context of an academic Institute or Department and mentored by 
experienced trainers, campus radio allows a thorough training and journalism education of stu-
dents.

Our study particularly highlighted that for most students campus radio is the first contact point with 
radio in general. For a lot of them, campus radio then becomes a starting point for their future 
career as radio journalists and presenters. The practical nature of the training of students in campus 
radio certainly is central to encourage students to choose a career in radio journalism. Whether the 
students choose to follow a career in radio journalism or not, the chance to learn how to handle 
digital audio production technologies is highly appreciated by students committed to the campus 
radio project as they identify this a key competency for media work in general. Further- more, 
students were very aware for the challenges issued by digitization and thus the changes in media 
usage in general, especially streaming services and podcasts. Being members of the digital native 
generation, the maintenance of social media channels of the campus radio project did not bother 
them at all. To sum this up, campus radio supports young radio journalists to become their own
To conclude, a qualitative content analysis of students’ reports proved to be an appropriate methodological approach. Yet, quantitative surveys, allowing higher case numbers, could offer promising results, too. By doing so, future studies could expand their empirical approach by integrating other campus radio projects, too. Research questions to follow-up this study at hand, taking into account the impact of digitization for campus radio in particular, might be: How is social media integrated in the journalism education in campus radio? How are recent developments in radio (streaming and podcasting) integrated in the training of students in campus radio? What is the potential of social media for campus radio stations to increase listener loyalty? How are campus radio stations using social media to engage with their listeners on-air? Who is listening to campus radio? - Measuring audiences, their motivation and preferences.

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References


Looking for Intern Journalist, Ready-to-Work: Focusing on the Internship in Newsrooms to Understand Professional Integration of Young Entrants into the Journalistic Sector

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Abstract

Faced with a media sector in continuous transformation, the trainers in journalism schools ask themselves what training to provide to their students. Would journalism schools become stronger as partners of newsrooms, identifying ready-to-work profiles? Would editors develop strategies to select the best performing trainees in schools? And in doing so, would they not be confusing trainees and freelancers? To address these issues, we will focus on a particular period in the professional integration: the internship in newsrooms. We will approach this period from several points of view: an exploratory observation in our own school of journalism, a questionnaire online to collect opinions of young people who had recently done an internship in a newsroom and, lastly, comprehensive interviews with recruitment staff in the main French-speaking Belgian media.

Introduction

Faced with a media sector that continues to reinvent itself, journalism schools are constantly reconfiguring their programmes and teachings. In particular, they question the degree of specialisation to be provided to their students. The students themselves wonder whether they should showcase versatility or whether they should value a specialisation to meet the specific needs of media-related companies.

Before embarking on this research, we postulated that training oriented excessively towards versatility does not make journalism students more employable. Would they therefore be interested in cultivating a thematic or functional specialisation in order to distinguish themselves in the labour market? When examining this question, we noticed that when the media are looking for junior journalists for an internship or a job, they approach schools to find, in particular, profiles offering evidence of confirmed functional specialisations (HTML coding, creation of video for social networks, data journalism, etc.). This observation comes from our own experiences as teachers at IHECS, a Belgian journalism school. Does this mean that some editors delegate to schools the power to preselect, internally, their best students for a specific position or internship? In any case, this raises the question of the strategy developed on the one hand by schools to have their students taken on and, on the other hand, by the newsrooms to recruit. Do editors themselves filter candidates for internships? What criteria are used? What role do schools play? Are these practices, already firmly entrenched but rarely challenged, currently reinforced in an economic configuration where editors are not involved that much? This would amount to an internship, no longer a learning environment, but a space for pre-employment, testing skills considered acquired.
Literature

According to Dubar, professional integration is a social construct. In particular, he justifies this assertion by analysing the situation in France, which has witnessed, since the end of the 1970s, the deterioration of the bridge automatically linking the completion of studies and entry into the workforce.

"Employers abandon, in part, the criterion of "qualification" [...] for that of "competence" [...] A new environment thus emerges (let’s call it "post-academic"), a priori regarded as a stepping stone between the academic arena and business" (Dubar, 2001, p. 25).

This stepping stone constitutes the venue for the internship, a pivotal period between education and professional life. In the French context, internships tend to be generalised in the curricula, which encourages them to be considered as a growing, lasting and significant social fact (Barbusse et al., 2007, p.3). Several French studies (Barbusse, 2003, Walter, 2005, Le Pluart, 2006, cited by Barbusse et al., 2007, p.7) point out that a significant group of young people - nearly a third - leaving higher education in France get their first job following an internship.

In a labour market dominated by the idea of flexibility, a first job is not commensurate with stability (Trottier, 2000, p. 95). This situation is particularly reflected in the journalism sector: "its labour market is poorly regulated and unified, and those who access it are restricted from the outset to the unclear practices of companies in which the" relational "and the submission to the company’s way of doing things have a great impact on accessing and staying in employment" (Ruellan 2001, p. 146). In addition, there is an imbalance between supply and demand within the sector. Between 2003 and 2013, the number of staff employed by Belgian newspaper publishers has steadily decreased, with an average annual loss of 59 full-time equivalents (Standaert, 2016, p. 92).

According to both the sector and the journalism schools, it’s no mystery:

"In journalism, fixed-term contracts and part-time jobs have multiplied, and employers regularly explain in joint meetings that they have no other choice. The students, like many journalists, now adopt the mindset very early that entry into the profession requires an interim period in limbo, i.e. a period of varying length comprising training phases, renewed fixed-term contracts, freelance work and unemployment" (Devillard and Rieffel, 2001, cited by Lafarge, 2008, p.48).

And yet, journalism school teachers repeatedly state that persistent students will find a job in this sector. Should we see a paradox or, as O. Standaert suggests, accept the fact that labour-intensive activity now replaces the traditional indicators of stable employment.

"The work exists – its volume has even increased across almost all types of editing. But it is assumed by a core of employees that are more involved, while it is becoming increasingly difficult to get a stable full-time job" (2016, p. 69).

Faced with this reality, journalism schools have continued to "professionalise" in order to meet the expectations of the sector (Lafarge, 2008: p. 53). In the 1990s, French schools developed functional specialisations focusing on journalism for TV, magazines and the digital press, while others developed thematic specialisations (Marchetti, 2003, p. 84). Schools then become providers of
"young graduates" who are immediately able to be integrated into the work environment and are capable of mastering professional techniques and new tools" (p.85). They establish recurrent and lasting links with the professional world, notably by establishing themselves in the sub-labour market where "companies come to ‘shop’" or even by taking on "a role similar to that of Director of Informal Human Resources" (pp. 86-87).

**Methodology**

To deal with occupational integration, we propose a triangulation of methods: participation by observation, the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview.

*Participation by observation*

For the researcher, participation by observation does not involve immersing oneself in an environment to be observed, as in the case of participant observation, but taking a step back from one's own environment (Soulé, 2007: p. 134). Within the structure where we teach, namely the Journalism department at IHECS (Brussels), we are interested in the way in which students comment on and self-evaluate their internship experience, through their internship reports. This exploratory process has allowed us to collect a large amount of first-hand data from which our research question, our questionnaire and our interview guide have taken shape.

*Questionnaire*

To analyse the internship experience of students, a questionnaire based on a qualitative-quantitative approach was submitted to a student population in French-speaking Belgium who have graduated in the last few years. We obtained 102 responses\(^1\) to this questionnaire. This may seem limited compared to the number of students who have completed journalism courses in French-speaking Belgium. It should be remembered, however, that our goal was to reach recent journalism graduates who graduated within the last three years, which equates to an estimated target population of up to 900 people.

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1. For some questions, however, the number of respondents is slightly less than 102, in the knowledge that we occasionally had to exclude respondents who had checked multiple answers to a given question or who had not studied journalism. For each chart, the exacxt number of respondents is indicated as "N = x respondents".
The data collected should be viewed with caution for two reasons. First, it is reasonable to assume that young people who have not managed to enter the journalistic labour market will be less likely to respond to this type of survey. Secondly, our sample has an overrepresentation of recent graduates from the same institution\(^2\). This bias is due to the fact that, as a teacher in a long-term institute of higher education, we were able to mobilise young graduates more easily. The sample is indicative of some trends, but cannot be considered representative of the target population. This must be taken into account and not overestimated in the interpretation of the results.

**Interviews**

Finally, we will discuss the point of view of professionals involved in coaching internships in the editorial offices of French-speaking Belgium. To do this, we conducted semi-structured interviews with managers or executives (hereinafter referred to as C1 to C5) and journalists (J1 and J2) between June 2018 and May 2019. The aim was to determine how interns are selected and supervised in different editorial offices, but also to understand how they can fit in professionally.

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\(^2\) Out of 102 respondents, 47 graduated from a long-term institute of higher education (IHECS); 32 graduated from universities (UCL, ULB, Ulg); 14 graduated from a short-term institute of higher education (ISFSC, HELHA); 5 studied in France; 3 studied at several institutes; 1 did not study journalism. Note that in Belgium, journalism education is carried out either during short-term training (level 6 of the European Qualification Framework) or during long-term training (level 7 of the same framework). In the second case, teaching can take place at the institute of higher education or at university.
Results

First of all, we wanted to know, via the questionnaire, whether the respondents felt more specialised or versatile upon completion of their studies. The vast majority of respondents (87%, N = 101 respondents) feel more versatile, which could indicate that schools continue to "play the generalist and versatility card" (Neveu, Rieffel and Ruellan, 2002: p. 15). It could also be due to a self-presentation strategy used by respondents based on the integration of perceived labour market imperatives.

It should be noted that respondents can feel both multi-skilled and specialised. As such, 12% say they are "too specialised and not versatile enough" after graduation, while 53% say they are "too versatile and not specialised enough" (N = 101 respondents). This shows that they are aware that specialisation will make them stand out more easily. A specialisation is therefore desirable in their eyes, but it is the versatility that seems essential. In fact, 87% of respondents believe that specialisation is an asset within the labour market; this figure rises to 96% for versatility (N = 102 respondents).

These data from the questionnaire echo the representations of journalists and editorial staff. Among the surveyed professionals, all indicate that they place more value on versatile profiles. Several mention the importance of web skills ("transmedia narration", "ability to create a video", etc.) that now seem to be part of the "package" expected from a young graduate. They are no longer a means of distinguishing themselves, but a condition without which gaining a job would be difficult. However, a foundation of basic knowledge is essential to claim certain positions in mainstream media.

"Almost every week I receive CVs and the main interests are routinely travel, literature and exhibitions. [...] If you want to distinguish yourself from another young person entering the job market [...], you have to demonstrate a more refined knowledge of economics and politics" (C1)

Specialisation is seen as an interesting asset, but not absolutely necessary for work. One Le Soir newspaper executive mentions the fact that newsrooms are no longer looking for highly specialised profiles, but rather journalists with project experience that could potentially become editors-in-chief.
"The editorial teams of the future need people who know how to carry out projects, managers, project managers, to whom projects of all kinds can be entrusted [...] We will no longer hire [...] a journalist who reviews films for 35 years. [...] Furthermore, we are doing away with departments. And an internship will no longer be held at a 'company' department. [...] We shall work more and more transversally, by projects. A "World Cup" project, for example" (C2).

In the case of the newspaper Le Soir, the reconfiguration of the balance of power between the departments is in favour of transversal files, which now take precedence over the traditional subject headings. And it makes perfect sense in the light of the work of Jean-Marie Charon, who analyses the changing nature of the news media world in terms of a shift towards a horizontal ecosystem that invites people "to conceive an organisation and a functioning based on a plurality of clusters and project teams" (Charon, 2015, p. 85).

This reorganisation of work is likely to reinforce the versatility requirement of journalists, who will have to be flexible and engage in mutual collaboration. But what kind of versatility are we talking about? Is it media-focused, displaying a capacity of journalists to juggle media and media languages? Or is it thematic, allowing for treatment of a wide range of topics, with all sections combined.

![Figure 17](image)

This question was asked, through our questionnaire, to young entrants into the profession. Two elements emerge from their responses in the graph above. First, respondents feel both versatile and specialised. Versatility, however, is more assertive. Second, whether in the case of versatility or specialisation, respondents report feeling more comfortable with the media-related than the thematic area.

Our empirical results confirm this fact, since several journalists interviewed feel that too few trainees are comfortable with economic and political subjects. In addition, a journalist from RTBF
notes that the media skills of trainees have been reinforced over the years: today, trainees are mostly able to film, edit, record sound, and so on. However, these skills are not always viewed favourably in an editorial like the RTBF where, for now, there are still cameramen and professional editors (J1). To date, these technical skills are more valuable in print or digital press companies, as well as in small production companies.

**The internship as a positive but discouraging experience**

The vast majority of respondents describe the internship as an "overall positive" experience (96% of respondents), "which allowed them to learn and flourish" (91%).

However, other results from the questionnaire suggest a less enthusiastic response from respondents. Indeed, 25% of them feel insecure about their skills; 26% say they are discouraged by their initial career ambitions; 33% feel that they have gaps in their training and 40% feel that the internship has shown them an aspect of the profession that has disappointed them. We made a cross-tabulation to see if the answers varied according to the type of journalism school from which they graduated: there is no significant difference in this regard.

These exploratory data show that beyond the very positive assessment of the level of learning generated by the internship in general, a significant proportion of the young journalists felt discouraged during the internship experience, by failures in terms of the training, theoretical or practical, or with regard to its initial professional objective. Let's go back to some elements that may explain this feeling of discouragement, especially in terms of the perceived weaknesses.

**Recurring shortcomings: the basics**

When you ask young entrants "What lessons would have been useful in your training in order to allow you to be more successful during your internships?" The answers revolve around the fundamentals of journalism. More could have been expected to request training in digital tools and formats. This is the case, but it is not the reason given by most respondents. One respondent said:

"We make a real effort to learn to use new media and to crack the codes that we sometimes forget to learn traditional journalism: to process a dispatch, to make a simple TV report (especially in terms of shooting) or to struggle to locate the right interviewee or the best source".

Among the desirable teachings explicitly detailed by 63 respondents in the responses to open-ended questions are:

- Exercises based on real conditions (11 respondents)
- Course on general culture and news (10 respondents)
- How to work as a journalist: finding relevant angles or contacting sources, for example (9 respondents)
- Narration for television: filming or editing (5 respondents)
- Mastery of editing software or image processing (4 respondents)
- Personal development (4 respondents)
- Writing course (4 respondents)
These responses collected through our questionnaire echo empirical data illustrating the professional point of view. A Le Soir executive indicates that he rarely encounters interns who are uncomfortable handling a smartphone or visualising data with Infogram. "They are in their element there, it is rather they who teach us! "(C2). On the other hand, gaps are identified in basic journalistic skills, namely writing and spelling, information retrieval, general culture and languages. The majority of respondents particularly insist that there are recurrent gaps in writing skills:

"When we talk about skills, it’s true that there’s something in that: it’s that students can’t write. They can’t write for a broadcast or even write a Facebook post without making spelling errors. This is really where we waste a lot of time… because the editorial skill is not something you can learn in the course of a 2-month internship." (C4)

**Think about mentoring the trainee**

More than a quarter (29%) of the respondents felt that they were not well supervised during their internship. The supervision will depend on the size of the team hosting the trainee, and the tutor, but also the trainee's personality. In the RTBF television news, for example, it is often the publishers who are dedicated to supervising trainees, but if they are not proactive, they are likely to be left out:

"If the student fails to make himself or herself visible, we will not going looking for him or her. We have to be honest: it’s the student who has to ask questions and bring ideas to the table (…) Physically, it’s almost impossible to monitor the student on a daily basis. We can have daily contact, that we can do. But, on the other hand, to take the time to do a voice test each day or see what kind of reporting a student is able to cope with, no, it’s not mandatory" (C5).

In some places, however, there is a reflection on the supervision of trainees, often on the basis of individual initiatives. This is the case within RTL TVi, where a line producer (C4) centralises the training of interns for a series of programmes created for the channel. In this context, he developed an internal management policy for trainees with a "pedagogical path". This policy is concretised in particular by the creation of an "intern bible" formalising the various stages an intern passes during his or her two or three months in production. These stages are designed to occur gradually, ranging from an information search by a journalist, and the writing of texts, to the preparation of a sequence for the show. If the trainee proves himself or herself at these different levels, he or she is then instructed to perform a sequence of some kind alone, being, however followed step by step by an experienced journalist. Former trainees are also brought in to support the new ones. And at the end of the internship, everyone will have to add tips and tricks to the intern bible, making it an evolving work tool.

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3. We shall not dwell here on the aspects cited by less than 4 respondents. Note that if the response rate is lower than for closed questions, it is because open questions require more commitment from respondents, some of whom did not wish to give their opinion.
This approach is qualified by the producer as "win-win", allowing a better support of the trainee, while being profitable to the company with a view to hiring:

"I too was a trainee in the past and I saw the way trainees were treated... or at least the way the interns at the company were supervised... or not. And I thought it was a shame that we didn’t make better use of the trainees, to let them grow and to spot talents and then to offer them work... which has happened many times. And it is often among my trainees that we come looking for profiles" (C4).

This particular conception of the internship is inseparable from a strategic reflection on recruitment within the RTL group. It also imposes an important pre-selection of candidates, prior to the internship. The producer states that he sometimes receives up to five training requests per day during the busiest periods. He conducts pre-phone interviews, following which some candidates are received face-to-face. Many are refused.

Note that for RTBF, the trainees are selected quite differently: the public broadcasting group does not make a selection based on skills or appetites. It is the schools that centralise the internship requests for the group "because there are a limited number of places and a lot of requests. And we only take trainees from schools (...) and masters; you do not take a graduate armed only with bachelor's degree anymore" (C5).

**Choice of internship location**

Before addressing the criteria that led to the choice of internship location for respondents, note that not all schools give students complete freedom of choice in terms of internship locations. In some schools, as at IHECS, the choice of internships is left to the student. In other schools, students are guided: the most common way is to let the student propose three internship locations, among which the school chooses two proposals. Finally, in most institutions, the most popular places of internship such as RTBF or AFP are accessible only on the basis of a pre-selection carried out by the school, upon application. The choice of internship location proposed by the student is therefore relative to the possibilities offered by the school. But in all cases, there is choice. Respondents are therefore able to explain the criteria that determined this choice.
It should be noted that the two most popular criteria justifying the choice of internship location are learning (94% of respondents) and discovery (80%). This suggests that the trainees first see the internship as a practical experience that should enrich their training path, and not as an experience that must necessarily lead to a job. The internship as an asset for professional integration seems to be secondary in the selection criteria, with 79% of respondents who have chosen their internship because it represents an asset on a CV; 75% said it would expand their network and 66% said they saw job opportunities there. The prestigious nature of the media is chosen as the criterion of choice by only 61% of respondents.

More than half of our survey respondents (52%, out of 102 respondents) say they had a job offer following their internship. 83% of survey respondents believe that the internship is the gateway to the profession. This is also what executives and journalists report when interviewed: some say they have sometimes reviewed a CV for very specific positions, but it is rather rare according to them. When a junior position opens, the tendency is rather to consider it first of all for brilliant trainees and freelancers, recently passed by the editorial staff.

What strategy should trainees adopt?

Are trainees strategists, whether in the choice of their internship or in their attitude during their internship? Not to a sufficient degree, according to a manager at La Libre Belgique:
"I do not feel that they have a particular strategy. They want to do a good internship. They all come a little stressed. Because many do not know what they are getting themselves into and what will be expected from them." (C1).

A Le Soir executive adds that their strategies for choosing an internship location are often not sufficiently informed:

"Journalists who come to the online [department] have made a strategic error if they want to go out into the field! The online department is all about publishing. If they want to write for online, they’d better go to the international department, for example. But they often don’t understand that ahead of time" (C2).

An RTBF executive notes that trainees, in terms of their attitude, would benefit from devoting themselves fully to their internship, which is now rarely the case:

"Absolute passion, where you don’t count your hours and where you work day and night, including weekends, it’s over. [...] Today trainees as young journalists want to leave, want to finish up at 1830 and start at 0900 and not before. But that is reflected in the evolution of society as a whole. While for me, if a trainee works ten days in a row, in any case he will show that he wants it, that he’s hungry. [...] This is our guy, we’ll say" (C5).

Applications for a position or an internship would often reflect a lack of understanding of employers' expectations. But "that's also where we see the good guys! "(C2). For him, young journalists must be able to feel the needs of a journalist and make themselves available at the right time. At l’Écho, the editor-in-chief, who closely monitors all trainees, believes that most trainees deploy a real strategy in this direction:

"I feel that [trainees] see themselves almost as a product and that they are laying the groundwork to sell this product, and finally to create a brand image. [...] They make contact from time to time, three months after [the internship]. I feel that all this is programmed into their strategy. [...] On social networks, we are in contact. It's pretty light, but [...] it's smart enough. [...] We feel that they take their future into their own hands and do the right thing. I find it admirable. There is a lot of maturity" (J2).

What strategy should recruiters adopt?

At RTBF, trainee candidates are not screened internally, but are pre-selected within schools. The strategy of locating promising candidates is thus essentially carried out during the internship, which usually lasts one month here: "When you have a trainee and he or she is good, we will really encourage that person. [...] I would not say that it is a strategy in the sense of being designed and developed"(C5). However, a form of identification is carried out within schools, through RTBF journalists who teach there as visiting or regular teachers.

This need to better identify the good profiles before the internship is mentioned by the majority of respondents. In the newspaper Le Soir, an executive deplores a lack of strategic vision at the recruitment level: "On the employer's side, there is 'zero strategy' [...] As the good candidates are recruited even before they have graduated, I wish we could implement [...] student job"(C2). He is referring to part-time jobs that could take place on particular time-based projects or even during
certain niches at weekends. The vision is once again that of "win-win": to meet the needs of the company, while allowing trainees/freelancers to experience an early professional reality.

In schools, some also defend early insertion of students, through internships following on from the baccalaureate. Another option is alternation training, based on the French model, where students spend a few days a week in a company, while completing their training. This concept makes it possible for students to acquire knowledge of how press companies operate much earlier. It has the disadvantage that students may not be ready at the beginning of a course, or may even generate extra supervisory work for the training supervisors.

These examples provide insights into the inclusion strategies that unfold in schools as newsrooms. But we still have to agree on what is behind this insertion term. Early, partial or temporary insertion does not necessarily correlate with a satisfactory employment situation for individuals, as Standaert notes (2016: p. 40).

Newsrooms that emphasise the inclusion of young people by offering an internship rarely have a project of long-term integration. Thus, a manager (C1) explained how to find a trainee, rather than a freelancer, to reinforce the writing team for two months while covering the municipal elections. Knowing that he was unable to hire for this position beyond the elections, he presented this offer of an internship as an opportunity for trainees who wanted to gain experience. But this "win-win" facade is poor at hiding the economic interests of the newsrooms and the short straw for freelancers.

This is what makes one journalist wonder whether his sector tends to confuse trainees with training and freelancers with remuneration:

"Nowadays we have young trainees who are extremely well trained. I think we say 'These days we have young journalists ready to work' [...] Now, the trainees we receive, they are in their last year of training. [...] They are young! In fact, I think that we sometimes confuse trainees and freelancers" (J1)

This question is similar to that asked in other sectors. Is there still a chance for young people to learn in companies?

"In the past, young people [...] were no more immediately able to be integrated into a company than those of today; admittedly, many jobs were less complex, but training was shorter and less complete. Employers gave young employees time to become fully productive while waiting for a return on investment over time. [...] For 25 years, companies have increasingly outsourced the financing of this period of adaptation of "newcomers" to employment to the State [...] as well as to the training institutions, the young people and their families (via low wages, short-term contracts and internships)" (Barbusse et alii, 2007, p. 5-6).

**Conclusion**

Let's go back to our original hypothesis. We postulated that training geared towards too much versatility does not promote the employability of students. This hypothesis must be reversed since versatility is valued by both young entrants to the workforce and by recruiters. This requirement would even tend to be reinforced by the overarching editorial projects that are being conducted in
newsrooms and which are upsetting the organisation of work, formerly compartmentalised by departments.

However, at the time of our survey, it appears that young journalists have an interest in promoting their functional specialisations relating to online journalism and the use of social networks. These skills are even considered by employers to be essential for a job today. This imperative, however, should not make schools and students forget the need to master the basics of the journalistic approach: writing and the search for information remain priorities for employers. However, it is in this regard that respondents to the questionnaire and employers note the most gaps in terms of training of students.

If versatility allows access to work, specialisation could, however, be beneficial to stabilise oneself in the profession, to acquire a stable job. One avenue of research on this point could be to deepen the issue of journalism as a specialisation, "as a positive marker of integration and a way to become an indispensable resource" (Standaert, 2016: p. 49). Our questionnaire showed that more than half of the trainees surveyed considered themselves "too versatile and not specialised enough". For their part, the employers interviewed believe that there are not enough trainees with sophisticated knowledge of political and economic matters.

We also asked, in the introduction, whether some editors delegate to schools the power to pre-select, internally, their best candidates for a specific position or internship. It seems that schools, in some ways, act as filters. By wanting to bring their students into the job market, they are regularly asked to pre-select students for certain internships and to notify employers of their best profiles. The editors, for their part, seem to measure the need to identify the right candidates before leaving school, thereby deploying embryos of "recruitment strategies" or early insertion, in a scenario advertised as a "win-win" one. These could reinforce the "porosity between the field of journalism training and that of companies" (Standaert, 2016: p. 39). On the ground under observation, however, professionals do not speak of constructed strategies, but rather stuttering practices that are still to be refined.

About the Author

Amandine Degand has been a teacher in the Journalism department at IHECS in Brussels since 2014. She is in charge of courses and workshops in digital journalism. She was previously active in the Association of Professional Journalists where she set up a platform for ongoing journalism training. From 2008 to 2012, Amandine Degand worked as a researcher at Observatoire de recherche sur le journalisme et les médias (UCL), where she completed her thesis on online journalism in French-speaking Belgium. An art historian and journalist by training, she has been a freelance journalist in the local, cultural and general press.

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Algorithmic Audiences, Tailored Communication, and the Democratic Imagination: A Qualitative Study of an “Insanely Popular” News App

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines an AI-powered news app “Toutiao” (“headlines”) that caters to individual preferences. It aims to illuminate the renewed relationship between media and audience with algorithmic processes. Toutiao is analyzed from the perspectives of tailored communication, algorithmic audiences, and information cocoons effects. This study calls for theoretical development in new forms of gatekeeping, the redefinition of agenda-setting, and a renewed conception of the active audience to advance this new and understudied subject matter.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, algorithm, gatekeeper, tailored communication, information relevance, active audience, agenda-setting, machine learning, information cocoons

Introduction

Many people may be used to the following scenarios: You log into amazon.com looking for a book, but the interface recommends to you DVDs, small electronics, and home improvement items that “you may also like,” as if it knows who you are and what you want; you grab your smart phone to check for messages, and before you look at anything, a pop-up window tells you that Stormy Daniels is being interviewed on 60 Minutes, leaving you wondering who’s that someone knowing you have been following the Daniels vs. Trump saga. You are a bit scared to see that Daniels story pushed to your phone from nowhere, but that’s fine, you look into it anyway because you are indeed interested. You are, however, stunned by what you see next: an advertisement for deodorant products along with the story. How do they even know you have smelly armpits?

This is non-fictional. A popular news app in China, Toutiao (the full name of which is Jinri Toutiao, or in English “today’s headlines”), is doing such things in reality, revolutionizing people’s news consumption behavior and overturning the relationship between news and information media and their audiences. Simply put, Toutiao “knows” what you read and what you like to know further, where you live and where you have been (if location sharing is active on your smart phone), what you have searched and how much time you have spent, and even what you value and what you dislike. As such, it pushes news, information, and advertisements tailored to your interests and personal preferences.

AI-powered news apps recommend personalized information to their users by analyzing user interactions with content on the platform. Take for example the newly (May 2018) revamped “Google News” app, which replaced the old “Google Play Newsstand.” It now has the “For You” section as the first choice among others, providing a personalized list of articles and local news, which the AI decides that the user might be interested in. The app is designed to adapt to a user’s
reading interests and improve over time based on the activities of the user, which are fed back in the form of user data. In China, the year 2012 saw the emergence of algorithm-based news apps, which gained immediate popularity. Among those apps, Toutiao has won remarkable market share and remains a leading app in Apple’s App Store. You may have never heard of it, but it has become “insanely” popular in China and beyond within only a few years of its establishment in March 2012. According to the company’s most recent press release, by March 2018 it had recorded 120 million daily active users. Toutiao has also expanded beyond China. By March 22, 2018, Toutiao had recorded 30 million daily active users outside of China. Behind this news and information aggregation giant is Beijing’s AI-powered Bytedance Technology, valued at more than $20 billion in its latest funding round. Founder Yiming Zhang, a software programmer in his early 30s, told Chinese media that his company was becoming “the world’s largest platform for information creation and distribution.”

The “insane” popularity of Toutiao makes a strong case for studying how artificial intelligence is transforming news consumption and information distribution, and therein the relationship between media and their audiences, and the reconfiguration of the public sphere. This paper employs a case study approach to examine and interpret the Toutiao phenomenon from several inter-related perspectives, including tailored communication, algorithmic audience, customization, information relevance, and “information cocoons.” Potential implications for an empowered public and a democratic public sphere are also discussed in the article.

Case Study Approach

Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied (Patton, 2015). A case study may involve the widest array of data collection methods as the researcher attempts to build an in-depth picture of the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Yin (2014) recommends multiple forms of data collection for case study: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts.

Case description

Toutiao, the artificial intelligence (AI) powered app, recommends personalized information to its users by analyzing user interactions with content on the platform. The app’s machine-learning algorithms monitor users’ reading habits and tailor offerings—including news, articles, videos, and ads. The more you read, rate, and comment, the more it knows your tastes and habits. Toutiao’s algorithms generate content lists tailored for each user, thereby differentiating from traditional methods of information distribution.

Since Toutiao's launch, it has won remarkable market share and according to the company’s most recent press release (March 2018), with 120 million daily active users and more than 1.5 million registered content publishers on the platform. These include a vast array of traditional media outlets, government agencies, businesses, and bloggers on almost everything from breaking news to celebrity gossip, and from policy announcements to parenting advice. Toutiao has already

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expanded beyond China, acquiring Flipagram and Musical.ly—two social video apps that are popular in the US. It also runs an English-language news app similar to Toutiao, called TopBuzz. By March 22, 2018, Toutiao had recorded 30 million daily active users outside of China.

**Field Work, Data Collection and Analysis**

This case study employs several forms of data collection, including in-depth interviews, documents, archival records, and physical artifacts, as they are central to qualitative inquiry.

Research access to the Toutiao site occurred in 2018, at its 6th anniversary. The site visit includes interviews with its key personnel, discussions over presentations of product overview, and collection of physical artifacts. Prior to the site visit, relevant documents, media coverage, and archival records were studied and a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of 19 questions divided into five sections was developed and formed. After the visit, follow-up confirmation and verification of facts and figures were performed via email and social media exchanges.

Three artifacts were collected on site, including one information brochure published in 2017 and two personal name cards. Field notes resulted from during and after the site visit consist of both descriptive parts and reflective parts. Documents were collected both on site and out of site during follow-up interactions with Toutiao key personnel. These documents include one “Toutiao Account White Book,” archival materials date back 1-5 years, PowerPoint presentation files, and four summary files in MS Word format.

Ten semi-structured in-depth interviews of Toutiao users in China were conducted in early 2019. A maximum demographic variation approach was employed in recruiting the subjects via a snowball sampling process. The final sample consists of 50% female subjects and 50% male, with the age range being 22 to 89, and education level ranging from high school to university. Among them, there are five working professionals (including freelancers), two students, two stay-homes, and one civil servant. The longest Toutiao app user started 36 months prior to the time of interview and the shortest being 5 months. In terms of frequency, eight out of the 10 interviewees reported that they used Toutiao app to get news on a daily basis, while the other two using it about every other day.

All the interviews were conducted in Chinese (research subjects’ native language), audio-recorded, and subsequently transcribed into English, each of which lasting an average of 30 minutes. Informed consent was obtained prior to each interview.

The semi-structured interview instrument consists of a total of 23 questions. Aside from basic demographic information, subjects were asked to talk about their news consumption pattern and their user experience and views of Toutiao. For instances, “On average, how much time in a typical day do you spend consuming news on news apps?”; “Compare the time now when you have Toutiao and before (you didn’t), does the personalized feeds make you happier consuming news? Do you feel more satisfied? Why?”; “Compare the time now when you have Toutiao and before (you didn’t), do you feel more informed and knowledgeable than before? Why?”; “With Toutiao pushing content to you at your convenience, is your search (active seeking) activities for news (of particular interests) reduced? Are you less pro-active in search of news? Why?”; “Did it ever occur
to you that you worry about missing news and information that you are supposed to (or need to) know?"

To preserve anonymity, each interviewee received an alphanumeric code. The first digit refers to the interviewee’s gender (‘F’ for female, ‘M’ for male). The second digit is the number to differentiate them from others within the same gender.

The transcribed interviews were coded and computer-assisted-analyzed with NVivo 12. By listening to the audio and reading/re-reading the text, coherent information was organized into categories. A descriptive label was assigned to represent each category, and in such a way major themes emerged. Major themes were then broken down into lower-level sub-themes to sort the responses more specifically. Representative quotes were then collected and organized into the correspondent themes.

**Tailored Communication and Information Relevance**

Tailored communication appears to be key to Toutiao. Its success has been achieved largely by using machine learning to attend to and figure out its users’ interests, preferences, and tastes, and tailoring its offerings accordingly to attract clicks and views. Facebook and Twitter also use machine learning to refine recommendations, but they rely more heavily on social connections.

In theory, tailored communication can customize the source, message and channel of a given communication to a given individual, presumably maximizing the relevance of the communication of that person. Marketers can divide a consumer market into different segments based on some factors such as age and ethnicity. People in the same segment are assumed to be influenced by the same marketing information. For example, preferred language or vernacular may be used in an advertising message as a cue to influence a certain segment of consumers. Such a message is expected to be more effective to people in the segment than outsiders (Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999). With regard to customization, conceptually, a tailored message may be regarded as a message suitable for “a segment of one” (Li, Kalyanaraman, & Du, 2011).

Researchers have argued that customized messages tended to ‘match’ the message recipients (Kalyanaraman & Sundar, 2006; Petty et al., 2002). According to Kreuter and Skinner (2000) and Kreuter and Wray (2003), a tailored message is created specifically for a given person based on his or her unique characteristics. In other words, tailored communication assumes that each person possesses some unique characteristics that can be assessed and reflected. Such customization approach somewhat resembles the basic concept of segmentation marketing (Murthi & Sarkar, 2003).

Although a customized message may take any format, the defining feature of customization is that the message is individually created and delivered in response to the message recipient’s needs or preferences (Kalyanaraman & Sundar, 2006; Petty, Barden, & Wheeler, 2002). In Toutiao’s case, each content item (be it an in-depth investigation by a prestigious newspaper, a transportation announcement by a local government, or a blogger’s repost of entertainment tidbits), is coded into a series of variables (such as source, genre, timeliness, views, likes, forwards, and heat index), ready to be matched with user preferences.
The majority of the interviewees reported an awareness of Toutiao’s personalized feed of news content, with only two subjects completely unaware of such operation. Among those aware, most are clueless about how the AI-powered recommendation system works its way to their user interface. These users appear nonchalant of how it works, as long as they receive relevant information and news of their particular interests. Overall, a positive attitude towards Toutiao was observed, with information relevance being the primary reason for satisfaction. Some users even reported reliance on, if not addiction of Toutiao as a daily information source.

**Female 1**
“I can sense it’s personalized. Every day when I open it [Toutiao], almost everything I see is what I want to read. I like this...It makes me read more relevant news.”

**Male 4**
“I am not sure how it works. But a while ago I browsed for fishing information, then it started to send me things all about fishing. Now I can’t live without it. It’s an important information source.”

Previous studies suggest that customized messages have certain advantages over non-customized ones such as being more memorable and more persuasive (Noar, Benac, & Harris, 2007). A key reason for people to like customization is that it allows differentiation (Franke & Schreier, 2008). In other words, receiving customized messages and possessing customized products make people feel unique and different from each other. As a matter of fact, a hidden assumption in the customization literature appears to be: the more unique a customized message is, the more effective it will be. Although offering a highly customized message, especially a tailored one, is generally a more costly and complicated process, the tradeoff is the communication effectiveness (Schmid, Rivers, Latimer, & Salovey, 2008), which will be discussed in the following section.

**Customization effects**

Though still in its early childhood, Toutiao’s astounding success begs for the question: why is customization more favorable than non-customization in news and information consumption? As the concept of customization gains popularity in various domains such as communication, marketing, psychology, and information sciences, the effects of customized communication are widely investigated (Li, Kalyanaraman, & Du, 2011).

As discussed previously, the beauty of customization is to create a match between the message and the message recipient. A typical method used in previous customization studies is to compare the effectiveness of customized messages to non-customized ones (Noar et al., 2007). Empirical evidence found from previous research shows that, in general, customized information can generate more desirable effects than non-customized information, including stronger memories and deeper perceptions (e.g., Beier, 2007; Campbell, DeVellis, Strecher, Ammerman, DeVellis, & Sandler, 1994; Skinner, Strecher, & Hospers, 1994), more favorable attitudes (e.g., Beier, 2007; Kalyanaraman & Sundar, 2006; Kreuter, Bull, Clark, & Oswald, 1999; Rimer, Orleans, Fleisher, Cristinzio, Resch, Telepchak, et al., 1994), and more intended behavioral changes (e.g., Bastani, Maxwell, Bradford, Das, & Yan, 1999; Rimer et al., 1994).

The field of health communication has extensively studied customization effects in particular. For instance, Bastani et al. (1999) examined the effectiveness of customized messages in persuading
high-risk women with breast cancer to utilize mammography. In their study, nearly a thousand eligible participants were randomly assigned to two experiment conditions. Participants in one experiment group received some customized information regarding the importance of obtaining screening mammography, while participants in the other experiment group received a standardized message on breast cancer and mammography. After 12 months, a follow-up interview found that the participants in the customized message condition had significantly higher increased screening mammography rate (10.2%), as opposed to those in the standard message condition (2.5%). In a comparable study, Rimer et al. (1994) tested the effect of customized quit-smoking guides to aged smokers and revealed that the participants who received customized guides reported reading more of the information than those who received a generic guide; in addition, they also gave higher evaluative ranks to the materials; in terms of behavioral change, they had a higher quit-smoking rate after 12 months.

Alongside health-related information, the effects of customization have also been examined with news stories (Beier, 2007), web portal content (Kalyanaraman & Sundar, 2006), email messages (Ansari & Mela, 2003), and consumer products (Schreier, 2006), most of which revealed some degree of superiority of customization over non-customization. According to Beier (2007), people tended to pay more attention to and remember more about customized news stories because these stories looked more “relevant,” as opposed to non-customized ones. Kalyanaraman and Sundar (2006) found that greater levels of personalized content in Web portals prompted more positive attitudes and affected users’ browsing activity.

All in all, research on customization effects has found that tailored communication is generally a more effective approach. The increasing popularity of Toutiao certainly speaks for the positive effects of tailored communication. In general, the interviewees in this study expressed appreciation of the content pushed to them on Toutiao app, although some mentioned a dislike of the advertisements that come along with the news. They commonly describe the user experience as pleasant, efficient, and convenient. Overall, it appears that they feel happier, some even thankful, after having Toutiao. They also tend to spend more time on news and think they are now more knowledgeable and informed than before.

Male 1
"With the automated push, I don't need to search for things. This is really convenient. It saves me time and allows me to spend more time on news and know more relevant stuff. I am satisfied and thankful, although I am aware that there may be some useful and important information that's not pushed to me just because they thought I am not interested."

Female 5
"Now I can read what I like to know any time at my own convenience without having to watch TV or read newspapers. It's different in that I don't need to waste time on those things I don't care to know. It's really fast and efficient with both depth and broadness. I feel I know a lot more than before."
Algorithmic audiences

The relationship between the media industry and its “audience” has been widely examined in communication research before. In a traditional norm, the term “audience” implies passive reception of news and information. That is why there is necessity to use the term “active audience” to label the reactive, responsive, and even participatory type of audience.

A profoundly new attitude towards audiences that has emerged in recent years, along with the rise of digital technologies and social media, can be understood by the helpful new media maxim, “people formerly known as the audience,” first articulated by media theorist Jay Rosen (2006). The notion of “the former audience” and its relationship to media signifies the fundamental shift in the direction of communication from a one-to-many broadcasting system to a many-to-many conversational one.

But neither “active audience” nor “people formerly known as the audience” is adequate or appropriate to describe news and information consumers like Toutiao’s users. Toutiao offers users the chance to read, rate, recommend and comment on news stories and other content. In turn, its “machines” obtain the data users generate and then analyze and “learn” about each individual user. Each Toutiao user is coded in terms of gender, occupation, age, education background, smart phone model, and so on. The users’ information consumption patterns are traced over time in terms of topics of interests, view duration, comments, forwards, and so forth. Through sophisticated algorithms, individuals are matched with tailored offerings of content, taking consideration of a controlling third dimension, circumstantial features, such as weather, geographic location, holiday, and network connectivity (see an illustration of the rationale in Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Toutiao’s News Recommendation System](image)

Apparently, this tailored communication process is neither “one-to-many” nor “many-to-many.” Users of Toutiao, who in fact are involved in a one-to-one communication process, are probably best described as “algorithmic audience” (Anderson, 2011).
The concept of algorithmic audience denotes a whole new notion of the information communication process. The wants and desires of individual audience members are no longer buried in and subordinated to professional media organizations’ wholesale operation of information creation and distribution. Instead, individual preferences are being attended to a greatly detailed extent and have become a respected and decisive priority in the communication process.

The first years of the 21st century marks the beginning of a period of fundamental transformation in the relationship between media and its “audience.” Against the backdrop of the ever-advancing new media and Internet technologies (which has caused the decline in the authority of traditional media, who used to operate largely in ignorance of their audiences), the world has witnessed a trend of audience measurement and behavioral tracking practices. While the “audience” may not necessarily realize it, all their behaviors over the Internet are potentially capturable by server logfiles and being analyzed for certain purposes, be it good or evil. Toutiao, while fully exploiting the material traceability afforded by the Internet, represents a fundamentally new series of challenges to and economic opportunities for media entities. The point of view from a corporate interests perspective is, if audience’s needs and wants are entirely traceable and knowable, then why should they not be catered too, particularly if catering can lead to profits?

**Gatekeeping, agenda-setting, and the democratic imagination**

With the emergence and popularity of AI-powered media like Toutiao, the affordance of the Internet has shifted from participation to traceability and algorithmically oriented production. Rapid growth rates in Toutiao usage invite speculation about more popular uptake and mainstream engagement in the coming few years. As such, the characteristics of algorithmic media like Toutiao may potentially feed our democratic imagination.

At this point, we should reflect on the practice and profession of journalism. One critically important dimension of power at stake in the public sphere is the role played by “gatekeepers” (McQuail, 1993): media personnel, opinion-leaders and censors all help to shape the parameters of public discourse. One may consider the common practice within mainstream journalism of reworking press releases and agency feeds. The production of news routinely implies a complex and multilayered chain of communication and sense-making: events, issues and ideas will be subject to the influence of various “filters” or “gatekeepers” (sources, journalists, sub-editors) before reaching the public (Shoemaker & Vos, 1996). The democratic deficit, in such a gatekeeping process, lies in the non-transparency and over-determination of the story selection process and the incapacity of audiences to question or challenge those selections. In a media landscape characterized by scarcity with finite numbers of news outlets often sharing similar routines, primary sources and journalistic cultures, audience “power” may be reduced to a minimum, with the only option being to distance or disengage from news media (Goode, 2009). In fact, increasing numbers of especially younger audiences have been doing so.

Blogging, citizen journalism and social news sites offer new possibilities for public participation at various points along those chains of sense-making that shape news journalists themselves—who are filters and mediators, not merely disclosers. The democratic appeal of Internet-based news lies in the possibility of alleviating that scarcity. The additional democratic appeal of Internet-based news, more specifically, lies in the prospect of citizens themselves participating in the agenda-setting process (Goode, 2009). The algorithmic audience at Toutiao, which virtually gets to decide
what kinds of news and information to be exposed to, represents a further democratic advance over older professional journalism models. Such an advance is marked with the increasing attention paid to individual audience preferences, as associated with the general democratizing trends afforded by the Internet.

Taotiao’s unique communication model, the proclamation that “only what you are interested can be called headlines,” easily maps onto the notion that taking the agenda-setting and gatekeeping process out of the hands of professional elites and devolving it into each individual user strikes an upset for democracy. What Toutiao’s users do with this information service platform, in theory, is far from passive consumption (though much online news delivery does precisely allow for this). In other words, they are not the general “public” being fed a “set” agenda in a traditional agenda-setting process, if Toutiao’s distribution algorithm is fully catering to each individual’s interests. Toutiao users, through active engagement such as posting, re-posting, commenting, recommending, rating, tagging and the like, virtually decide their own subsequent media exposure. It may be too early to say that the emergence of algorithmic audiences, like Toutiao users, declares the end of agenda-setting by professional or elite media organizations, but the Toutiao phenomenon does send a strong signal and should not be neglected or taken lightly by media researchers.

In terms of empoweredness, the Toutiao users interviewed in this study hold different views. Several of them do feel a sense of participation in the distribution and exposure process, and thus empowered. Others feel neutral or negative.

**Male 3**
“Yes, I definitely feel a sense of active participation. I think this is why many people like Toutiao. I can post comments to express my opinions. This is impossible with the traditional media. I can also force filtering unfavorable news.”

**Female 1**
“I don’t feel any difference.”

**Female 4**
“I don’t really feel empowered. I still see news that I am not interested after I reported my [dis]preference. I think Toutiao needs to operate in its business model so it can’t satisfy every single person.”

The fact that professional and elite news media still break and frame a large proportion of the news stories circulating around the online sphere is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. However, those institutions not only have to compete with a diverse range of alternative news sources, but must now also fight for the attention of an algorithmic audience empowered by AI technologies that backed Toutiao and its kind. With the algorithms serving as a surrogate gatekeeper for the algorithmic audience, the stories and information that professional news outlets break and frame will now stay in a “wholesale warehouse” begging to be shipped to individuals. The perishable nature of news products may make them well likely to become “overstock” or even garbage if not passing the algorithmic gate in time.

The newer notion that news production does not end with the news outlet has already been extensively theorized within media studies through the active audience paradigm, which emphasizes the role of audiences themselves as producers of meaning as they read, process and discuss media texts in diverse ways, often reframing them in the process (Moore, 1993). New
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media journalism, including the metajournalism of social news, can be seen as an extension of this active audience paradigm derived from the settled producer–consumer dichotomy (Goode, 2009). The life cycle of news stories broken by professional media, however, now takes on a new level of complexity and uncertainty. Stories, once online, encounter various possible fates: they may be amplified, sustained and potentially transformed as they are being re-circulated, reworked, and reframed by online networks; or they may be more easily buried in this vast new attention economy if they do not capture the attention or imagination quickly and strongly enough.

Whether a particular story reaches the homepage of a Toutiao user’s account or remains excluded and buried is now not totally up to the traditional so-called “gatekeepers.” The gatekeeping point here at Toutiao differs significantly. The renewed active audience paradigm has not realized an audience that is active to the extent of being in a gatekeeping role itself. It is necessary to look into this emergent new mode of gatekeeping power. The Toutiao phenomenon calls for a theoretical synthesis of the active audience perspective and the gatekeeping perspective. Both perspectives need to be developed to embrace the existing of algorithmic audience. The agenda-setting theory, which was initiated in a traditional media landscape half a century ago and assumes a relationship between a “wholesale” media and an aggregated and general public, also needs to be revisited and redefined.

In broad terms, an algorithmic audience like that of Toutiao does nurture our democratic imagination, as it fosters an unprecedented potential power for individuals who consume news and information online. Nevertheless, as always, democracy or power comes with a price. The algorithmic gatekeeping raises an ethical concern, as with any other AI practices. Such concern will be discussed in the following section.

**Information cocoons**

Admittedly, the most remarkable beauty of the Internet is probably its permission for unlimited specialization of contacts and information. However, while Internet communication technologies allow us to filter information and contacts in a very efficient way, it is also creating a risk that we may end up exchanging information only with like-minded people. As technology gives each one of us the power to control deliberately what information and opinions we are exposed to—that is, to tailor a communicative world to our prior interests and convictions—it is also considered a threat to democracy at both societal and individual levels.

There is, of course, a convenient populism at play here. Objective newsworthiness becomes secondary to subjective personal favors. Toutiao’s company rhetoric, particularly its corporate slogan, “only what you are interested can be called headlines,” reminds us of the “information cocoons” concept, which was first termed by Harvard professor Cass Sunstein in his book entitled “republic.com” (2001). It is also reminiscent of “The Daily Me” concept, which was prophesied by MIT professor Nicholas Negroponte at the very early age of the Internet. In the prophecy, “The Daily Me” was an entirely personalized newspaper in which each individual could select perspectives that he or she liked. Both terms have been cited to warn about such ethical concerns as, at the societal level, the threat is that the choices made by individuals will add up collectively to a fragmentation of society so pervasive that the public sphere will cease to exist; at the individual level, people are exposed only to the kinds of information and opinions they want to hear (as a result, they become uninformed in other regards and biased), and members of like-minded
subgroups will interact only to their fellow members and never with those with whom they disagree (Sunstein, 2006; Sunstein, 2007). If this happens, as Sunstein (2006, 2007) warns, communication technologies can threaten democracy by creating “information cocoons,” within which information is filtered and tailored to our tastes and favored opinions.

For-profit communication entities, like Toutiao, bear a social responsibility for public interests and the well-being of society as well. While developing artificial intelligence technology that can help people tailor news, information, and contacts to their own needs as a solution to overcome information overload, Toutiao and its peers should be aware that they can lock their users into comfortable information cocoons and generate inert or addicted consumers who are unaware of their cocoons of ignorance. As Sunstein (2007) argues, such is the greatest danger for freedom in a democracy.

The interviewees in this study commonly exhibit a sense of comfort and gratification with Toutiao’s personalized information and news feeds with some of them unaware of what’s going on. Overall, they reported a less active information searching behavior after using Toutiao. Most of them clearly expressed trust of Toutiao’s recommended content and do not worry about missing out information beyond what’s available in Toutiao app (see Table 1).

Table 1 Attitude towards “information cocoons”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Supporting Quotes</th>
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| ambivalent   | 1         | M2: ‘This affects people’s opinions.’  
M1: ‘I don’t like it, but I wouldn’t say I’m concerned about it. There’s nothing I can do about it.’ |
| concerned    | 1         | F4: ‘Yes, I’d be concerned about it.’  
F1: ‘I don’t have these concerns’  
F2: ‘I’m not very concerned about that.’  
F3: ‘Perhaps the news that’s filtered is things you aren’t interested in, so I don’t mind.’  
F5: ‘I’m not concerned. I think news is news, there is an underlying truthfulness. They aren’t just making things up.’  
M3: ‘I’m not too concerned about this. I will continue to use it with no less enthusiasm. I feel good with it.’  
M4: ‘I don’t have concerns. It (Toutiao’s pushed content) is just what I’m interested in. Because I’m interested in it, I don’t feel like it’s one-sided.’ |
| not concerned| 8         |                   |
The lack of concern and low level of awareness for the potential threat found in this study is striking. Information cocoons impoverish the marketplace of ideas and the diversity of information and viewpoints, and limit the people we are in touch with. A diversity of opinions and exchanges is paramount to the very survival of deliberative democracies, as Sunstein (2007) suggests, and thus a diversity of viewpoints must be maintained in order to avoid that danger. When reminded of the potential threat to their well-being, some of the interviewees, fortunately, expressed willingness to open for different perspectives and embrace possible change.

**Male 1**

“When we see something, we like to see it from multiple perspectives, not getting all our information solely from one person or one media outlet that’s promoting its own news. We hope Toutiao can change for good.”

**Female 4**

“I don’t want to just see a narrow range of things; I want a more comprehensive view. So yes, I need to think about changing the use [of Toutiao app]. I need to be pro-active to search for more news.”

**Male 2**

“If you have good self-control or critical thinking, it won’t impact you. At least you can try to get news from other apps. Personally, I think that people with less self-control are more likely to be affected.”

The potential danger of AI-based news apps has yet to be further empirically researched in future studies. But at a minimum, Toutiao and its peers should carry the responsibility to disclose to its users the potential harm it may bring about using such a tailored communication product. Toutiao’s users should also self-educate so that they become aware of the information cocoons of ignorance that they may have unintentionally chosen to weave for themselves.

**Concluding Remarks**

This case study examines the popular AI-powered news app Toutiao. Through site visits, semi-structured in-depth interviews, discussions, collection and analysis of documents, archival records, and artifacts, the background, rationale, and potential effect of its algorithmic operation are researched and assessed.

At the core of Toutiao’s practice are the sophisticated algorithms that match news and information content with individual users and circumstantial features, according to personal tastes and preferences. Toutiao is representative of a major shift in communication models from a “one-to-many” broadcasting system and subsequently a “many-to-many” conversational one, to a fully
personalized “one-to-one.” As such, its communication process is a customized and tailored one, which seems to have contributed to its remarkable popularity. This is in line with previous research on customization effects, which discovered that tailored-communication, in general, has a positive effect and is favored over non-tailored.

Toutiao’s algorithmic communication model is revolutionizing its users’ news and information consumption behaviors and overturning the relationship between media and their audience. Its “algorithmic audience” symbolizes a whole new notion of the information distribution process, in which the wants and desires of individual audience members are no longer buried in and subordinate to professional media organizations’ wholesale operation. Instead, individual preferences are being attended to and respected, becoming a decisive priority in the communication process.

The emergence and practice of algorithmic media like Toutiao make it necessary to revisit the gatekeeping concept, the active audience paradigm, and the agenda-setting theory. An algorithmic user is active to the extent that he or she virtually gets to determine what to see and read, thus playing a gatekeeper role, thanks to machine-learning and algorithms. Consequently, the algorithmic users are empowered to refuse to be a part of the general public in an agenda-setting process.

News and information services like Toutiao may appear considerably more democratic than “traditional” providers. Individuals are in control of their exposure to news and information through their own rating, commenting, tagging and reposting actions. The idea of an empowered algorithmic audience does provoke our democratic imagination with its positive side. However, the warning from Sunstein (2006, 2007) against an “information cocoons” effect, with concerns about the demise of a well-rounded public sphere and the formation of biased and ignorant individuals who see a distorted world, remains compelling. The potential harm that AI-powered media may cause to members of the public and to the society as a whole, in the long run, is yet to be empirically researched, but the present threat should not be neglected. Both Toutiao and its users are reminded to by all means take measures to minimize the possible distortions.

Finally, it is worth pointing out the overall limited press freedom in China. Against such a backdrop, Toutiao users may not and need to know how they are navigating a potentially tricky landscape while fulfilling a journalistic mission. Is Toutiao’s recommending algorithm fully loyal to its users personal interests? Probably not. It has to abide by the Communist regime’s regulations while not running afoul of censors. As one of the interviewees points out, although she tries to train the app not to send her certain topics, she continues to receive news on Chinese Communist leader Xi Jinping’s political talks. As such, another question may be raised for debate: With news apps like Toutiao, is the public more empowered and knowledgeable, or double-dosed with censorship indeed? Is news consumption facilitated or in fact even more constrained?

Research into the renewed relationship between media and audience with algorithmic processes has just begun. This article calls for a research agenda that contemplates new forms of gatekeeping, a redefinition of agenda-setting, and a renewed conception of the active audience paradigm, including a uses-and-gratification perspective. These concluding remarks may be deemed merely germinal thoughts in an attempt to advance an important but still understudied subject matter.
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About the Author

Roselyn Du received her PhD from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she was awarded a prestigious University Fellowship as well as the Future Faculty Fellowship. She obtained her MSc from North Carolina State University, where she received the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award. Her areas of interest include data journalism, algorithmic audience, media credibility in the “post-truth” era, political communication and public opinion, and global media. Her research has resulted in multiple international and national Top Paper awards. She has published widely in refereed journals such as Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, Journalism–Theory, Practice and Criticism, International Journal of Communication, Journalism & Mass Communication Educator, Global Media and Communication, International Communication Research Journal, Newspaper Research Journal, and Asia Pacific Media Educator, as well as in well-recognized edited volumes upon invitation. Dr. Du also spearheaded the Data & News Society, a multidisciplinary community of practice based in Hong Kong since 2015. In a previous life, she was an award-winning frontline journalist in China.

References


An International Look at Teaching Audio Podcasting: A Comparison Across Continents

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Abstract

Within the context of a skyrocketing demand for quality audio work globally, this paper discusses the pedagogical approaches utilised by educators who taught radio, audio and or podcasting courses. This research especially captures the techniques and skills that make teaching audio journalism unique. It acknowledges that seismic change has been occurring in the usage of audio journalism internationally; there has been an explosion in the number of free and high-quality online guides to podcasting and audio journalism more generally; the universal adoption of smartphones means audio makers no longer require high-cost equipment to record or edit interviews. This paper builds on the knowledge of audio educators in Australia, New Zealand, Egypt and Canada on ways to prepare students to be audio producers, and in doing so this paper draws out a list of best practices for classroom teaching and what are now better defined as “googleworthy.” This paper also posits that experiential learning theory plays a role in the preparedness of university-level students. This study concludes with five specific tips used by global educators to teach podcast journalism, as opposed to radio journalism.

Keywords: podcasting; radio journalism; audio journalism; journalism education; broadcasting; radio; audio; audio storytelling; smartphones; experiential learning

Introduction

There is scant literature about the teaching of audio in journalism courses internationally, and even less on the subsection of how the academy has responded to the upsurge in podcasting, despite its increasing popularity in the western, and increasingly Asia, listening world. As outlined in the literature review below, even the term podcast is only 15 years old, so it is understandable that the study of pedagogy around podcasting is also in its embryo stage. The authors of this research paper are experienced teachers of audio journalism, both in the industry as well as in tertiary institutes, and are pioneers in teaching audio podcasting within the journalism curriculum. With the scarcity of information on teaching methods used by other podcast educators within journalism, this research project focused on exploring how current audio podcast journalism educators structure
their courses, and what they found successful. The research particularly focused on global teaching techniques in order to avoid a mono-national approach that may not be globally useful.

**Literature Review**

There has been a huge uptake in online audio journalism since the word ‘podcast’ was coined by BBC journalist Ben Hammersley (Hammersley, 2004). An early pioneer of the platform, Christopher Lydon, from National Public Radio (NPR), in the USA, described podcasting as combining intimate voice, interactive weblog interactivity and download portability (ibid). “The ability to broadcast out, and have the internet talk back to them, Lydon says, is very appealing to journalists: professional hack and weblogger alike” (§7). The word was a combination of broadcasting and iPod, according to podcast scholar Richard Berry, who was among the first scholars to note the potential revolution in audio that became possible with the introduction of MP3 players such as the Apple iPod (Berry, 2006). Originally any audio available online was called a podcast, but that was refined to downloadable audio (ibid). Although the iPod was created in 2001, it was 2005 when it became “widely popular” (Edwards, 2011), and from then anyone with a personal computer could create an audio program and distribute it freely, through the internet to subscribers around the world (ibid). Audiences were suddenly able to become producers and also to find their own voices.

A podcast has been defined as on-demand digital audio, and that very definition separates itself from radio or audio files, as to be a podcast they must be downloaded to a computer or digital device (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2015). Radio is broadcast by airwaves to a mass audience, is scheduled and mainly live-to-air, often monetised, and in most countries exists in a heavily regulated environment. By contrast, podcasts target niche audiences, are listened to on-demand, are often experimental, inconsistently monetised, and currently unregulated. Apple dominates the market through Apple Podcasts (formerly iTunes), however there are other subscription services for android phones via Spotify and Google Podcast (ABC, 2018). Vehicle manufacturers have given podcasts an added boost with the introduction of connectivity in cars. Apple CarPlay and Android Auto (Google) are often standard accessory in new cars, allowing smartphone audio to play through car speakers which means valuable (captive) drive-time commuters now have a choice of podcasts instead of solely AM or FM radio (Roose, 2014).

The dictionary definition of podcast and radio, however, does not capture the full complexity of the medium or arguments that podcasts are simply extensions or adaptations of radio as a medium. Berry (2016a) argues that podcasting can be considered “inside or outside radio” and urges scholars to consider if research about podcasting should be considered as being different from linear radio broadcasting. However, in another paper Berry (2016b) also argues that the term podcast itself may be numbered:

The processes by which podcasts are delivered will be superseded by streaming, ‘smart’ radios and other yet-to-emerge systems. In this evolving market, radio and media businesses will consider not how they might counter these trends but how they might exploit and embrace them as new opportunities to engage with and expand their audiences. (p. 668)
Podcast Listenership

In America, 51 per cent of adults surveyed listened to one (Edison, 2019) while in Australia 91 per cent of adult Australians were aware of podcasts and a third had listened to one (ABC, 2018). The UK, Canada and New Zealand show similar trends with the popularity of downloading audio podcasts. Edison’s longitudinal podcast research study in US (and also in Australia and Canada since 2018) called 2018: “a watershed moment for podcasting – a true milestone. With over half of Americans over the age of 12 saying that they have ever listened to a podcast, the medium has firmly crossed into the mainstream” (§3). In other parts of the world, podcast listenership has been slow to grow, like in Egypt, where one in ten listen to podcasts (Media Use in the Middle East, 2018).

Listening is considered to be increasing because there is growth in the quality of the audio content as a result of stronger scripting and writing. The content ranges across every possible topic, and survey data shows audiences access podcasts for a range of reasons including content choice, learning new things, information, entertainment, and the ability to listen anywhere anytime while multitasking (ABC, 2018).

The speculation that the podcasting genre will sustain continued growth is enhanced with Google’s new search feature that allows for podcast playback in the search results (Porter, 2019). This could be an instrumental discovery tool for some global audiences where podcasting is flourishing a slower rate than in the US. It’s also true that increasingly attention has been paid to podcasting to other parts of the world. Frary (2017) has reported upon the boom in podcasting in countries such as Vietnam, Zimbabwe, China and North Korea where people want freedom to express themselves without interference from the state. “It certainly draws less attention than erecting a radio transmitter, buying studio equipment and broadcasting live over closely monitored airwaves” (Frary, 2017, p. 25).

Podcasting Skills for Journalists

Journalists and audiences have taken to podcasting with gusto, but not all successful podcasters have come from radio backgrounds, nor are part of the big public service broadcasters (PSBs) such as BBC, NPR, CBC and Australia’s ABC. Although the PSBs were early adopters of podcasting technology (Murray, 2009), and many podcasts have found success thanks to promotion from within existing broadcast networks, new commercial players have also thrived. Murray (2009) argued that one reason that podcasts have flourished from newer players is the very nature of podcasting, which creates highly fragmented audiences with doubtful brand loyalty. Interestingly, Berry (2016b) notes that podcasts have had little impact on the traditional content of radio. It has, however, created a space for new forms of audio and offered greater access to audiences for producers.

Popular and award-winning podcasts are not only being produced by the traditional radio outlets and producers, but also by traditionally print journalists. The podcast topic of True Crime has proved not only popular with listeners, but has also resulted in arrests in a number of cold cases (Locker, 2017). The most downloaded podcast in Australia, and the first one to make it to the US Apple podcast charts, was a long-form true crime narrative investigation, *The Teacher’s Pet*, a
story produced by a newspaper journalist which has also resulted in an arrest (Graham, 2018). Other award winning podcasts such as *Wrong Skin* and *Lost in Larrimah* were also long-form crime narratives produced by newspaper journalists (Watkins, 2019). In New Zealand, the true crime podcast *Black Hands*, produced by a newspaper journalist, has been downloaded more than 3.5 million times, which is significant for a country with a population of only 4.5 million (Quin, 2018).

Journalists who once saw themselves as only print journalists have discovered that podcasting is one of the many new skills that need to be mastered. “We do not just write anymore, we talk on video, we podcast, we blog, we live stream and we meme” (Murphy, 2015, p. 151). Traditional print newspapers are also using podcasts to drive membership and increase subscriptions to some news outlets. *The Guardian* newspaper has acknowledged that download numbers are also good for advertisers, suggesting that podcasts could help drive multiple revenue streams as listeners take action after hearing a podcast advertisement (Southern, 2019).

One of the unique characteristics emerging about journalism podcasting is its use of emotion in the scripting, and also the personal relationship between the podcast host and the audience. This has been demonstrated by the popular news podcast *Mueller, She Wrote* about the FBI probe into US President Donald Trump’s alleged ties to Russia. The co-host admitted the format was to shine a light on corruption but “to do it with a little snark and a lot of laughter:” (Quin, 2018, §52). The BBC Technology Reporter described podcasts as “intimacy plus” and popular British journalist and podcaster Olly Mann explained that podcasts are “literally in your ears” and that with headphones the content is “in their personal bubble” (Goodrich, 2018, §13).

**Journalism Education Response**

There are only a few studies published into how academia has responded to the so-called renaissance in audio (Roose, 2014) lead by podcasting. An Australian survey of university capstone programs completed in 2017 noted a trend away from the word radio, with a recommendation to replace the medium-specific ‘radio’ in curricula (Cullen, 2017). Wake and Bahfen (2016) looked at curricula in Oceania (Australia and the South Pacific) and found that journalism courses had maintained radio within their programs, but in some cases extended the skills of audio production and radio writing skills across curriculum into programs which previously would not have offered an audio component (such as writing courses). Many antipodean academics were also taking advantage of the near universal adoption of smartphones by the student body to use mobile phone applications for recording and editing.

Teaching of audio within the academy has predominantly been done with action research (Keengwe, Onchwari, & Oigara, 2014; Wright, 2015) or experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Steel, Carmichael, Holmes, Kinse, & Sanders, 2007; Sugarman, 1987; Taras & Gonzalez-Perez, 2015). Experiential learning requires real-life radio production and post experience reflection (Kolb, 1984). The university radio courses run by Wake and Bahfen (2011) in Australia culminated with the production of news bulletins for a community radio station. Wake (2012) discussed experiential learning, specifically in asking students to create international radio content for Australia’s international broadcaster ABC Radio Australia. She noted how ‘craft skills’ and ‘listening’ were vital for the project. Neither of the Wake’s papers (2011; 2012) made any specific mention of podcasting, despite all student work being published online.
The power of emotion in podcasting was previously mentioned. It is also a vital aspect of teaching audio. Award winning audio documentary maker and academic, Siobhan McHugh, has published scholarly articles on teaching audio, but in the context of a convergence journalism class rather than a specialised audio class. She advises students to tap into the use of emotion in telling strong audio stories (McHugh, 2014). She is among those who argue that when emotion is combined with earbuds, it can create powerful emotional reactions. The listener invites the storyteller into their most personal and mental space, though their ears, which is same sentiment was previously mentioned by podcaster Olly Mann. The strength of the voice certainly plays a key emotive role, as Mia Lindgren notes, a voice that transmits “warmth, empathy, personality and provide(s) us with company,” (2016).

Podcasts are now considered to have some value within journalism audio/radio courses within university curricula. Fox (2018) wrote a review in an academic journal of Michael O’Connell’s book, *Turn up the volume: A down and dirty guide to podcasting*, which was released in 2017, where she encouraged journalism educators to include podcasting in their curriculums by stating “This is a transferable skill that students should have upon graduating,” (p. 194).

Successful podcaster have a range of tip sheets for new podcast producers. Astrid Edwards (2019), producer of the award winning Australian podcast, *The Garret*, suggests while everyone can make a podcast, that not everyone should. She contends that good podcasters are like good writers: good writers need to read; good podcaster need to listen.

As outlined in the literature review above, the journalistic use of audio podcasts has burgeoned, but information on how best to teach students about the new platform is still limited.

**Research Questions**

This research explores how radio and podcasting is being taught by current audio journalism educators. To answer the research questions robustly the research focused on education in several countries around the world.

- **RQ1**: What do experienced audio journalism educators see as key points for teaching podcasting?

- **RQ2**: What role does experiential learning play in developing audio storytelling skills (technical, editorial, craft)?

- **RQ3**: What methods do experienced audio educators employ to teach students how to understand the relationship between podcast creators and listeners?

**Methodology**

This project uses a mix method approach, drawing on the collective teaching experience of the authors in their respective countries, as well as a survey of educators working in audio and journalism around the world. An invitation-sample survey was used to gather viewpoints on teaching audio podcasting from current educators in this field. The online survey was sent to those known to teach podcasting, including a Facebook group associated with the Broadcasting
Education Association (BEA). The survey was not anonymous. It was mainly open-ended questions, and some questions were multiple choice or Likert scale, which included the opportunity for expanded comments.

The second part of this project used email correspondence to gather more in-depth discussion about the unique podcast pedagogy from educators in several countries. The participants represent educators at universities known to offer radio and/or podcast education. The criteria for the sample were educators who had previously been professionals in the radio industry, currently teach audio, and are from different countries. The overarching question posed to this group was to identify differences in teaching the new platform of audio podcast in comparison to the traditional platform of broadcast radio. Here are the relative background of the ethnographic participants.

Alexandra Wake is program manager of the Bachelor of Communication (Journalism) at RMIT University, Melbourne Australia. Wake had a long career in radio, specifically international broadcasting with Australia’s national public sector broadcaster the ABC. She has worked predominantly in news, as a senior reporter, producer, executive producers and news editor. Wake has taught hands on radio skills since becoming an academic at the Higher Colleges of Technology in Dubai in 2001. While her last paid shift as a radio newsreader was in 2015, she continues to oversee news broadcasts by undergraduate students on Australia’s largest community radio station RRR, and sets podcasting assignments for her graduate students in introductory theory classes.

Catherine Strong teaches journalism at Massey University, New Zealand, and her research focuses on newsroom practices. Previously she was in-house industry trainer for Radio New Zealand, Maori Iwi radio stations, and Solomon Island Broadcasting Corporation. She specialises in audio journalism and has taught at various other institutions, including Kent State University (USA), Zayed University (UAE) Broadcasting School (NZ), and Asia-Pacific Broadcasting (Malaysia). Prior to joining academia she was a senior journalist in all platforms – print, TV, radio, online. Kim Fox is professor of practice at The American University in Cairo (AUC). She primarily teaches audio production, which she has taught over the past 10 years. Although AUC doesn’t have a college radio station, Fox manages to embed her decades of radio experience in her courses with projects that involve scriptwriting, gathering natural sounds, narration and other skills that are applicable to podcasting, radio and audio media. Her students at AUC have won more than 40 international awards for the audio they’ve produced in her courses. Additionally, Fox is the executive producer of the *Ehky Ya Masr* (Tell Your Story Egypt) Podcast. Her team of young producers tell narrative nonfiction stories about life in Egypt. The podcast has won several awards from the BEA.

Kathryn Gretinger is a senior instructor in the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of British Columbia. Gretinger continues to teach and train audio skills with for Canada’s national public broadcaster the CBC. Her journalism career has been predominantly current affairs working as a producer, host, documentary maker and trainer. She teaches integrated journalism courses at UBC including audio modules, podcasting, radio and digital storytelling. Her work at the graduate level often involves project-based/experiential learning, but also includes basic skills and recording techniques. One key example of this work is supporting a student-led podcast project called *Cited*. This initiative borrowed from the best in audio storytelling techniques to create a powerful knowledge mobilisation research podcast.
Results

The response to the invitation survey was 26 educators from seven countries (US 11, Canada 3, Australia 7, UK 3, New Zealand 1, Egypt 1, Greece 1), representing 24 different universities. Their experience in teaching podcasting was a mean average of 4 years, ranging from 6 months to 10 years. All participants, except one, had taught radio journalism for several years, with 42% having taught radio for more than 13 years.

Although most taught undergraduate level (80%), they also taught at master’s level (33.77%), Ph.D. (11.54%) and even professionals, as well as external organisations and graduate diploma (11.54%). In the 24 universities, half required their students to learn podcasting, while the other half had it as an option. There were a variety of teaching modes, and most respondents indicated they use a combination of lectures and coaching students at computers (lecture: 65.38%, coaching: 53.85%); and 11.54% taught distance/online with no face-to-face contact with the students.

The educators all answered the question of why should students be learning audio journalism podcasting. Almost all gave the same answer: that it is such a fast growing media platform that students may have better employment possibilities if they know it. One wrote “It is the emerging media of our time. The numbers suggest listeners from all demographics are gravitating towards this kind personal listening experience.”

The survey asked educators what was the difference in teaching radio versus audio podcasting. The responses from the educators were fairly cohesive. Most agreed that the basic skills are similar and taught the same, but most identified that podcasting has more flexibility in length, style, and casualness. They also pointed-out that students need to appreciate that podcasts have a longer shelf life than a fleeting radio programme, so stories should be structured for longevity. The educators also pointed out that legislation covering online podcasts and broadcast radio may be different, and of course differ from country to country. A theme, however, that came through most of the educators’ responses was the “intimacy” aspect of the audio podcast, which has been mentioned the literature review in this paper, and the fine tuned “storytelling” part of the platform. The storytelling style was more personal. They pointed out that the major difference in the two audio platforms was that students needed to carefully identify their niche audience, and then structure and tell the story in a way that suits that niche audience. According to the educators in this survey, radio has a set time to be distributed to the listeners, whereas the podcast producer may also need to develop the listener base, and need to use social media marketing to attract an audience.

There was significant continuity with the learning outcomes that the educators expected students to achieve for the basic podcasting course. The educators were asked what skills/knowledge they include in the first-level podcasting courses they teach. As seen in Figure 1, when completing the course, students would have learned very hands-on practical skills that were unique to audio and not necessarily included in other journalism courses. This is in line with Wake (2010) stating “students needed greater technical training, from the simple (how do I make an international call) through to editing and mixing” (p. 161). The aspects assessed by more than 80% of the educators was software editing, interview skills, how to use external microphones, how to properly use recording devices and audio scripting. Another three learning outcomes that were rated highly by more than 70% of the educators were how to conduct field interviews, listening skills and voice performance.
The majority of respondents did not specifically included as a part of the core curriculum, some reporting that it was an entirely hands-on course. The 29.17% of respondents who did teach theory as part of the curriculum relied on a variety of industry and communication theories, and there was no agreement over any particular theoretic foundation for teaching audio podcasting journalism. About 85% felt it was important for students to have real out-of-class experiences in learning audio podcasting, but a third of those indicated it was not always practical to arrange the exercise or assignment during the semester. Only 8% felt students could adequately learn the skills solely within the classroom. One respondent put it this way: “The technical skills can be taught to a 10-year-old, so the real university-level skills are getting out and gathering interviews and data, and putting it together in a fair, balanced, cohesive news story.” Another respondent pointed out that: “Students fear interviewing, so it is important to dive right in on day one by sending them out to record vox-pops and approach strangers.” As shown in Table 1, the educators rated from 1 to 5 the importance of various styles of students having real-life experiences, with 1 being optional to the learning and 5 being crucial to include in a course. The educators highly favoured students interviewing real newsmakers, so that the students were pushed outside the classroom; and educators also valued publishing the podcasts publicly, both scoring a total about 3.5 out of a total of 5. The most favoured activity, 4.45 out of possible 5 average from all the educators, was the requirement of the students creating a completed journalism audio podcast.

Another result of the survey was that the majority of the educators required students to reflect on their out-of-class experience: 44% did it in a formalised manner, whereas 12% indicated reflection was done more casually, if time permitted. Despite the course being about audio, almost all formal reflections were written, with two different forms. One style was to require students to turn in a formal essay-style reflection at the end of the course; the more common style was to require students to turn in a short written reflection every week or two, or after each practical assignment. In contrast, one educator allowed students to do a recorded audio reflection, rather than written. One participant wrote that the reflections “bring up very interesting self-assessments”.

Instructors tended to agree that students working on 'real life' or publishable work was a key to their learning experience. While these findings are preliminary, the in-depth interviews with experienced audio educators did not find this surprising. They agreed that the experience of “creating for grades” as opposed to “creating work that is released to an audience” is fundamentally different. This is an area of curiosity and could certainly be pursued in further research.

Furthermore, educators in both the survey and in-depth interviews reported that relying on a reporting-back method, such as reflections, allow students to cogitate and articulate the learning and the consequence of the work they produced.

It’s a given that teaching a skills-based course comes with a built-in set of challenges. The survey respondents shared some common themes for this topic including getting students to listen to a variety of audio content; time-related issues: not enough class time, not enough time in the semester to teach all of the layers to making quality audio podcasts and the amount of time it takes to assess student-produced audio; student’s lack of attention to detail and helping students find their ‘voice’. Additionally, there was feedback about difficulties with audio editing software as well as recording equipment.
Most of the educators involved in this research project generously shared their tips on teaching audio podcasting. There was a common theme of focusing on storytelling, and to challenge students to tell stories outside their normal environmental lens, and be aware of how they can serve other parts of the community. Another common thread was to arm the students with skills and knowledge, then let them be creative. As shown in Table 2, some educators provided specific resources for other educators to use. This shows only a few of the comments, but these are the ones that were expressed in various ways by several of the respondents.

Discussion

There was a general sense among the authors after reviewing the survey results that embedding meaningful reflections would enhance the student learning experience. This aligns with the position of Steel et al. (2007) in that “journalism learning and teaching offers fertile ground for those wishing to develop their approaches to teaching within a reflective research based context” (p. 332). If the reflection part of the assessment was weighted as equal to, or close to, the published and public audio piece, students may realise that they have more licence to experiment and fail. Often the best lessons are in the failure, but if students are only focussed on a grade or public embarrassment by virtue of the work being public, then they may find themselves unwilling to experiment.

The fact that educators suffer from numerous time-related constraints, as it relates to teaching podcasting, isn’t surprising and actually fits with the experiential learning approach as it may take time to arrange logistics and other tasks associated specifically with audio production. It seems, however, that equipment to produce audio content is not as much of a barrier as it used to be for teaching audio courses. The low cost of quality audio recorders, and in many cases the use of smartphones, to record audio interviews has proven beneficial to educators since students typically have access to a mobile device.

The difficulty of teaching listening skills, as well as how to craft an intimate audio story, continually presents a challenge for audio educators. The task of coaching students to find their ‘voice,’ as also outlined by Lindgren (2016), is arduous over the course of a few months, and with just a few hours of class time.

What has organically emerged from this research is a list of best practices for teaching audio podcasting (see Table 1, Table 2 and Figure 1). It was fortuitous that many of the survey respondents took advantage of the open-ended questions write, at length, about their experiences teaching audio courses.

Conclusion

In response to the first research question, the overwhelming agreement from the interview and survey participants as it relates to the main elements that should be taught in a podcast course was that there should be a focus on teaching audio-specific technical skills. The reasoning behind this was that fluency in this area would better prepare the future media practitioners for careers in the fields of radio, audio and podcasting.
In line with the viewpoint that podcasting is taught to prepare the students for working in the industry, it is understandable that the experienced educators also overwhelmingly felt that real-life experience in making podcasts was crucial, and they urged the importance of getting students out of the classroom into interviewing skills. The educators also embraced the other side of experiential learning, which is the reflective analysis afterwards to cement the learning. They agreed that human beings tend to learn by doing, but this is particularly relevant to audio where the oral storytelling method is key to a participant's development as storytellers. The thinking behind this suggests that the act of creating and sharing, then reflecting on the work, produces another layer of learning for students, as suggested by earlier educators in other disciplines (Kolb, 1984). Reflecting resonates as a way to solidify the experience by way of understanding the processes that led to the completion of the audio project.

Emerging from this research was an agreement from the global podcast educators that in particular, students need to learn the skills of strong interviewing techniques, writing oral-platform scripts, gathering quality audio utilising an audio recording device, as well as fluency in utilising audio editing software.

Future research could focus on the audio podcasting learners to explore how their perspectives on attaining production-related knowledge aligns with the educators’ perspective. A welcome research scenario would investigate student-produced podcasts as individual case studies or an ethnographic examination of the student content creation process.

Combining the quantitative survey results, and the qualitative responses and in-depth interviews, this research concludes with this specific list of teaching tips. These relate to teaching podcasting as specific and different to radio, and focus on getting the students to:

- Listen to good samples
- Immerse in practical application which is a combination of theoretical and technical skills
- Track and unpack what “sounds natural”
- Produce content that they are interested in
- Finally, remember that without storytelling skills, there’s no point in learning to technically produce a podcast

Declarations

The survey was conducted with ethical approval from Massey University in New Zealand. None of the researchers received any funding for the production of this paper.

About the Authors

Alexandra Wake is program manager of the Bachelor of Communication (Journalism) at RMIT University, Melbourne Australia. Wake had a long career in radio, specifically international broadcasting with Australia’s national public sector broadcaster the ABC. She has worked predominantly in news, as a senior reporter, producer, executive producers and news editor. Wake has taught hands on radio skills since becoming an academic at the Higher Colleges of Technology in Dubai in 2001. While her last paid shift as a radio newsreader was in 2015, she continues to
oversee news broadcasts by undergraduate students on Australia’s largest community radio station RRR, and sets podcasting assignments for her graduate students in introductory theory classes.

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### Table 2

**Abbreviated edition of educators’ tips for teaching audio podcasting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Respondent #1</th>
<th>Students have to be able to tell a story — without storytelling skills, there’s really no point in them learning how to produce a podcast. So this includes being able to communicate effectively with written text and to conduct effective interviews.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Respondent #2</td>
<td>Students have the choice to create podcasts based on their interests. They must do a 6 episode podcast to get the experience of creating ongoing content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Respondent #3</td>
<td>Teaching in different countries has shown me that students differ by culture. In one country the students were hungry for every new technical advancement, whereas in another country the students won't touch any technology without help — not adventurous. My tip is to get them editing audio on the first day and they never look back. They love it. I use free download software so they can continue at home and don't have to rely on costly software. I subscribe to scaffolding teaching — small skills in the classroom, then a few skills in a controlled environment, then they are ready to put all these together to go out into public and cover a story. TIP: make them listen to a few good news podcasts to get them used to hearing quality podcasts. The students use these as a benchmark and improve their standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Respondent #4</td>
<td>Encourage them to listen to a variety of audio, especially audio produced by students like them. And the story formatting should be diverse so that they can see that there really are many ways to tell a story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Respondent #5</td>
<td>Assigning materials and readings that engage in different ways with questions of representation and the role of the media in perpetuating certain stories matters. For our class this included the podcast Missing and Murdered — talking about sound design, field recording, interviewing, scripting, pacing...and the themes in this podcast. This led us to Duncan McCue’s “Reporting in Indigenous Communities Guide” as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. As well as the book &quot;Seeing Red&quot; by Mark Anderson and Carmen Robertson. Students in my class were from diverse communities. It matters in any class, and it mattered in my class, to critically think through tracking and unpack what it means to &quot;sound natural.&quot; Chenjerai Kumanyika's and Sam Sanders’ work resonated with my class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Respondent #6</td>
<td>Use Siobhan McHugh’s podcast series, The Masterclass, as a teaching tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Respondent #7</td>
<td>I want to give them as comprehensive an immersion as possible. Theory, Technical, Practical.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Optional</th>
<th>If Time Permits</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Always Included</th>
<th>Crucial</th>
<th>Weighted Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing real newsmakers (provided by teacher)</td>
<td>47.83%</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing real newsmakers the student finds themselves outside the classroom</td>
<td>20.83%</td>
<td>4.17%</td>
<td>20.83%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>41.67%</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a completed journalism audio podcast</td>
<td>3.85%</td>
<td>3.85%</td>
<td>11.54%</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>65.38%</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a podcast off campus</td>
<td>32.00%</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
<td>44.00%</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing a podcast publicly</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>24.00%</td>
<td>24.00%</td>
<td>32.00%</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Q11: Looking at your first course/semester of audio podcasting, what does the assessment require of the student? (Focus on the first audio podcast course your students take)
Applying the Lean Startup Methodology to Television News: An Exploratory Approach

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Abstract

In this pilot study, the current research is attempting both of these in a class of fourth-year students called, “Reporting for TV News.” The class’s aim was to “disrupt the news” through an experimental and iterative process of iterating along the way using a Silicon Valley approach to rapid development called The Lean Startup methodology. Results and findings are discussed.

Keywords: Lean startup, Instagram, Television news, Innovation

Introduction

Journalism business models have remained relatively unchanged for a century (citation). Advertising revenue has been the economic engine behind newspapers since the early in the 20th century, radio since the 1920s, and television since the 1940s (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2014). The meteoric expansion of technologies like streaming services and “free” content online, has left the journalism industry scrambling to find new revenue streams in an increasingly complex society where companies like Facebook and Google have gobbled up both advertising revenue and attention (Gilder, 2018).

Innovation is another area where journalism has foundered despite myriad conspicuous threats as the internet became a ubiquitous platform in much of the developed world. The New York Times, for example, only implemented a paywall in 2011, which critics considered so porous that it was actually a “freemium” model (Salmon, 2011). Public reception only reinforced this theory since many of its readers already considered its content to be “free” because it had been up until that point on the internet. Scores of media organizations made the same mistake, dragging their feet when it came to innovating and creating new revenue models for their companies as advertising revenue dwindled. However, newspaper companies like The Guardian, based in the United Kingdom, have experimented with giving full access to consumers in hopes of donations among other revenue streams, and reports its digital arm recently surpassed print revenues for the first time (Waterson, 2018). Most major new organizations have moved to a subscription model in the United States with nominal increase in revenue (Pew, 2018).

The daily newspaper industry in the United States has been gutted since its height nearly five decades ago. From 1970-2016, more than 500 daily newspapers went out of business in the United States, and daily subscriptions have fallen roughly 33% since record circulation numbers in the early 1970s (Pew, 2018). And while most Americans still prefer watching the news on television versus reading or listening to it, there has been steady shift to online platforms for news. In fact, in a 2018 study by Pew, online news (34%) consumption only trails television (44%) by 10%, and is continuing to gain ground (Pew, 2018). Naturally, this shift equates to lost revenues,
necessitating rapid change and innovative ways for news organizations, big and small, to create new ways to earn money.

To enact change and innovation in the journalism industry, journalism instructors need to teach entrepreneurial practices and infuse them in journalism curriculum. This paper explores a battle tested method widely-used in Silicon Valley and in entrepreneurial organizations created by Eric Ries, called, The Lean Startup Methodology, by applying Ries’ framework to a journalism news course called, Reporting for TV News. The purpose of this exploratory teaching approach was to gauge younger users’ interests in format, delivery, and platform over the course of a 15-week academic semester, and tailoring a student-created program to meet the demands of the market by rapidly iterating based on user feedback over intuition. At the heart of this methodology lie the principles of iteration, user testing, and feedback – all done quickly, unlike traditional business methods of heavy upfront development before launching (Blank, 2013).

Literature Review

Entrepreneurial practices have been studied in the journalism and media literature for considerable time, and there are many definitions of entrepreneurship in the broader academic literature. Venkataraman (1997), defines entrepreneurship as, “the scholarly examination of how, by whom, and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited,” (Venkataraman, 1997). Likewise, Brown (2015) suggests entrepreneurship is the process of discovering an opportunity and putting together a plan to exploit that opportunity. According to Ries (2011), an entrepreneur is someone who makes new products or services under conditions of extreme uncertainty. In media studies, Hoag and Seo (2005) define entrepreneurship as, “the creation and ownership of a small enterprise or organization whose activity adds at least one voice or innovation to the media marketplace,” (Hoag & Seo, p. 3, 2005), and, Hang and Weezel (2005) argue entrepreneurship is an essential part to the structure of media organizations. More specifically, Khajeheian (2013) defines media entrepreneurship as, “Individuals or small firms of which use their own or others’ resources to create value by extracting opportunities via offering a service or product that consists of any type of innovation in any of product/service characteristics, process, distribution channel or place, or different innovate usage to the media market, or any other market that media is its main channel of interaction.” (Khajeheian, p. 128, 2013). Despite differences in definitions in the broader academic literature, there scholarship is particularly scant when it comes to entrepreneurship in the media studies discipline. Hang and Weezel (2007) conducted a meta-analysis in search of articles and book chapters spanning nearly 44 years (1971-2005), and only 78 appropriate studies related to entrepreneurship in media industries. Khajehaeian (2017) set out to find a consensual definition of media entrepreneurship, examining existing definitions and collecting an amalgamation of keywords associated with entrepreneurship and arrived at what is purported to be a widely-accepted definition:

“Media entrepreneurship is taking the risk to exploit opportunities (creation/discovery) by innovative use of (radical/incremental/imitative) resources (ownership/control) in transform of an idea into activities to offer value (creation/delivery) in a media form (content/platform/user data) that meets the need of a specific portion of market (businesses or consumers), either in an individual effort or by creation of new venture or entrepreneurial managing of an existing organizational entity and to earn benefit (money/attention/favorite behavior) from one of the sources that is willing to pay for (direct consumers, advertisers, data
Entrepreneurship in journalism education

The proliferation of technology and decline in legacy media audiences has prompted the need to create new revenue streams in the industry, and thereby teach entrepreneurial skills and best practices in journalism-centered curriculum. Many universities have seized on this opportunity, by either infusing entrepreneurial practices in their curriculum or creating full-fledged programs around entrepreneurship. In 2012, Arizona State University’s Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication launched the Scripps Howard Journalism Entrepreneurship Institute, aimed at teaching educators how to incorporate entrepreneurial practices into their courses. The program covers topics from business planning to rapid-to-concept development, and culminates in a semester-long course participants create to bring back to their institutions (ASU, 2019).

The City University of New York (CUNY) was also an early adopter of journalism entrepreneurship curriculum. The school currently houses the Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism, aimed at helping aspiring media entrepreneurs launch new business ventures. Other notable journalism schools like Northwestern’s Medill school and USC’s Annenberg school offer degrees in this space, Columbia’s Pulitzer school infuses entrepreneurial practices in its courses and offers a dual M.S./M.B.A. degree in partnership with its business school, and the Poynter Institute offers tailored classes on journalism entrepreneurship. While this is just a small subset of institutions, Becker, Vlad and Kalpen (2012) found that roughly 30% of journalism education programs in the U.S. are teaching some form of entrepreneurial journalism in the curricula. Educators have clearly identified a need and responded to market demands, yet the area of entrepreneurship in journalism remains a fledgling field in both industry practice and academic research, thus creating opportunities for practitioners and scholars alike.

Teaching entrepreneurship within mass communications and journalism programs has also been met with criticism. Blom and Davenport (2012) argue that entrepreneurship should be taught in business schools where there is natural synergy between courses such as finance and accounting. However, there are tangible signs that there is an industry push for innovation and entrepreneurship. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been earmarked for journalism initiatives between Google and Craigslist aimed at combatting false news and information by creating innovative tools to snuff out bad actors, among other goals (Roose, 2019).

The Lean Startup

The core idea behind this process is to quickly bring a product or service to market through a cycle of steps applying the lean startup methodology: Build, Measure, Learn. In the initial development stage, a hypothesis(es) is proposed following inductive reasoning and brainstorming. Then, an organization will Build a product or service into a minimal viable product (MVP), which allows it to test its initial hypothesis(es) without spending an inordinate amount of time or money perfecting a product or service. Next, an organization will Measure its hypothesis(es) based on users’ response to it in the marketplace, which, by design, will indicate whether your product has initial promise in the marketplace or not; and finally, Learn, where there are two pathways forward based
on user feedback: preserve or pivot. Learning allows a company to gain insightful information about the successes or failures of a minimal viable product. If preserving, you stay the course with the product or service because your initial hypothesis(es) were correct, thus continue to explore similar pathways until you have a product or service ready to enter the marketplace. An organization pivots when the hypothesis(es) is refuted, with the idea of gaining valuable insights about what did not work and move in a new direction to test new hypotheses.

The goal of this iterative process is to continuously cycle through the entire loop of build, measure, learn until reaching a goal of building a product or service to reach a critical mass of users in the marketplace as quickly and inexpensively as possible. Many news organizations and news startups have acted on assumptions and brought a full-scale product to the market without testing the market beforehand that ended up failing (e.g., One Minute News, et. al). However, Ries’ methodology has been used in some of today’s most successful technology companies and could have application in news organizations. For example, Dropbox, a file sharing software company, applied the lean startup methodology as a fledgling startup, growing the company to a 40x multiple in just 15 months. Similarly, robo-investment firm, Wealthfront, had success applying the methodology in a highly-regulated industry (Ries, 2011). With the Lean Startup Methodology as a framework in the context of new programming, this study poses the following research questions:

RQ1: How will a small-scale survey help guide participants in constructing the initial product?

RQ2: For senior journalism students accustomed to legacy media instruction, how will they receive a technique typically used in early stage ventures when applied to a new program?

RQ3: Will the students apply the skills they learned in this process in their future careers?

Methods

Data were collected through interviews at the end of the fall semester in December, 2018 and analyzed using Strauss’ grounded theory research methodology as a guide (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The class also used Ries’ (2011) lean startup methodology throughout the process in order to gauge effectiveness and format of the show (product). While data were not collected while using this methodology, notes are provided in the findings section that demonstrate the iterative nature using this methodology.

Show format

Participants came up with all elements for the show, from format, branding, and aesthetic. Participants chose IGTV, Instagram’s nascent television app launched in June, 2018 that allows users to watch long-form programming in a vertically-oriented formation (Instagram, 2018). Participants came up with the name, Phoenix First, built complementary branding, and filmed promos posted to Instagram stories (short pictures and/or video clips), and still pictures and videos posted on the social media scroll feed. Elements were gathered in the field then produced using a TV control room and studio.
Participants then experimented with shooting for horizontal and vertical formatting. Since the medium is vertically-oriented, participants had to change the way they approached filming interviews and b-roll. For example, many of the shots in the field and studio had to be taken from much further away in order to fit a vertical phone screen. Framing shots and thinking about the outcome was another challenge students faced. Additionally, the editing format had to be changed in post-production to fit a mobile environment, and graphics and lower-thirds (titles) were built and formatted for this environment. This was another area where students had to iterate and think on the fly to achieve desired/improved results.

Findings

Preliminary findings that shaped decision-making

From the interviews conducted in this research, the interviewer found three main themes that emerged from the respondents. Falling under the first research questions: How will a small-scale survey help guide participants in constructing the initial product? Participants reported that all respondents (N = 31) reported receiving all of their news online, in a predominantly mobile environment. The majority reported consuming news in short formats, too, such as Snapchat, Twitter, and news bulletins like The Skimm. These preliminary findings also lead to a discovery that there was an appetite among participants for news delivery via Instagram TV, particularly because of its novelty.

Other findings that influence show and story format were the relatability of the anchors, which included wearing more casual clothing. One respondent said, “I would like news more if anchors didn’t act like know-it-alls.” There was also a desire for a mix of funny, light-hearted content, and less tragedy in news broadcasts. From these findings, the class decided to incorporate more casual clothing, casual language and diction, and a mix of reporter stories with tracking—but short—and narrative stories with more latitude and no voice overs. The course instructor invited a Screen Actor’s Guild acting coach to train students in voice and diction, camera presence, and movement training, while maintaining a casual approach to the format of everything in the show.

Main findings

RQ2 yielded mixed findings:

For senior journalism students accustomed to legacy media instruction, how will they receive a technique typically used in early stage ventures when applied to a new program?

Format shift and adaptation

Participants students with more experience working in student media and professional environments through internships reported finding the shift in format and aesthetic more challenging and harder to adapt to, especially since they were working concurrently as student journalists throughout the duration of this course. Roughly half of students reported these challenges. One participant said:

“The medium not only disrupted itself, but it disrupted what the future of the news looks like. Since we were so comfortable with our traditional news skills, our
broadcasts may have lost some of those qualities that set us apart from traditional television news.”

Another participant reported challenges in tweaking the mechanics of news gathering.

“I often tend to shoot my interviews and b-roll in a specific way, with my interviews being framed very traditionally using the rule of thirds and shooting chest up and for my b-roll I shoot a variety of wide, medium and tight shots. These methods were not necessarily the most effective for a vertical video, though. It made me think critically about how I was shooting and where in my viewfinder I was placing my subjects to ensure that everything would be seen when the final package was edited.”

Conversely, non-student media participants found unique challenges because of the intense pace of the Build, Measure, Learn methodology. One said:

“The biggest challenge we faced in this class was timing. From quick turnarounds to limited filming time in class, it seemed as though we were always on to the next thing immediately after we finished the previous thing.”

Viability and sustainability of the business model

While the participants generally agreed that this format of producing and delivering news was and is the future of TV news, a quarter were skeptical. One participant wrote:

“The bottom line though, is important in more than one way. Nothing can be sustained at a high quality without financial stability, and I’m not sure social media users would like having their eight-minute news briefing interrupted after every story for commercials, which in a sense would defeat the purpose of using these outlets to deliver news in a quick manner. While I would like to see news outlets experiment with this, if the money isn’t there, the broadcast won’t be either.”

Another participant discussed the advertising structure of the current television news environment and concern over tepid digital revenues.

“I was talking to someone about advertising revenue at one of my internships at a top 25 television market, and they told me that roughly 96% of their revenue still comes from traditional revenue, next to a mere 4% through digital channels. Most of the focus at that station is still television advertising.”

This anecdote is further strengthened as noted earlier in the paper by a Pew (2018) study, where most (44%) people still favor news consumption via television versus digital environments, though this rift is growing smaller.

The second theme that emerged from the finds was viability of the business model.

Future use of this build, measure, learn in careers

For Research Question 3: Will the students apply the skills they learned in this process in their future careers?, all participants reported finding value in using the iterative processes of the Lean
Startup methodology, including those that do not plan pursuing a career in journalism. One student wrote:

“The practice with the acting coach helped me realize how I speak to an audience, which will come in useful in my career. I also found it useful that we created an entire news medium from scratch, changed things as we went, and built a brand and were creative.”

Similarly, another participant said:

“Working with IGTV and the video settings is an important skill to have in a professional environment. It allows you to really understand your audience and become creative in how the news is presented, allowing for experimentation along the way.”

And another said:

“I think the skills I learned in this class and the experience with IGTV will translate to the real world. It will allow me to think about audience more critically and bend the rules to fit whatever platform is popular in five or 10 years’ time.”

This same participant mentioned to the research in a discussion after this course was over that a job she interviewed with was intrigued by this experience, and she thinks that gave her a competitive advantage in being hired by the organization.

Discussion

In keeping with the theme of, “Technological mutations and the future of journalistic practices: what to keep, what to drop,” this paper is going to depart from what was gleaned from this group and provide recommendations—some radical and potentially controversial—about how journalism—and media organizations more broadly—should think about approaching audiences and ways to capture new revenues.

Analytics are a fledgling industry in the media space that warrant and need more attention and resources. Academic institutions are beginning to implement analytics courses in curriculum, but more is needed in the media space. Analytics provide useful insights about how users engage with content—namely online—which leads to behavioral patterns, which can then be used to target consumers. While this has been criticized in popular press (Facebook, et al.), it is something that needs implementation, both digitally and on traditional mediums. Antiquated techniques such as television diaries and basic ratings measurements should become more robust or shutter.

Secondly, the notion that local news outlets send reporters to do live shots at local businesses, corporations, or other commercial entities is absurd. Public relations practitioners refer to this as “earned media”, however, I suggest news organizations start charging fees for such practices with multi-tiered bundles that include television and digital offers, structured by such things as air time, placement, and visibility and length of time on webpages, among many other parameters, including social media posts. There is a huge opportunity for news stations, particularly local, to create new revenue streams and start paying employees more. Network and cable news channels also fall into
this conundrum of missed opportunities. Interviewing authors, for example, should be pay-for-appearance type endeavors packaged across platforms, all while remaining transparent about the coverage. This approach could certainly be applied to companies like Tesla, Amazon, Google, etc. whom mainstream media often treats with reverence, clambering to get the Jeff Bezos, Musks, and Pages of the world on-air – why not charge them?

We must remember that media companies by and large, are part of a corporate structure—many gigantic—and the function of a corporation or enterprise is to make money. I want to be clear that this is not directed towards individual journalists, but executives calling the shots within these corporate structures. While these companies, namely the Big 5 in the United States—Disney/Fox, CBS, Comcast, Viacom, and AT&T—news media still claim to be objective and hold true the values and ethics of journalism like objectivity and non-biased reporting. However, the U.S. has seen a dramatic shift in those principles following the election of President Donald Trump. Most notably, for example, was the broadcast giant Sinclair Broadcast Group, owner of 193 stations across the United States and in roughly 40% of all U.S. households, orchestrated an all-hands-on-deck scripted broadcast where anchors were forced to read biased statements criticizing other news outlets (Levitz, 2019). Additionally, the group has been an ardent supporter of the Republican party, even garnering an angry tweet from President Trump when its acquisition of The Tribune Company—another media giant—was blocked by lawmakers (Levitz, 2019).

Therefore, if the journalism industry wants to innovate and grow and create revenues, it must depart from some of its current practices. This also includes masquerading as something that many companies are not: Objective truth-tellers out to be the watchdog for the American people.

About the Author

**Alex Luchsinger, Ph.D.,** is an assistant professor at Elon University in North Carolina. His research is at the intersection of media effects, communications education, technology and entrepreneurship. Before academia, he was a journalist and decorated U.S. Marine, including a Purple Heart for wounds received in action. He is currently involved in a technology venture in the U.S., and is interested in cultivating entrepreneurs in the communications and education space.

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Abstract

This study looks at how local TV news directors make decisions on what technology-based innovations to implement through the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003) and relevant innovation management research (Day & Schoemaker, 2000). Interviews with 18 TV news directors and assistant news directors revealed that some decisions are based on directives from corporate owners, while others accommodate viewers’ shifting news consumption habits or improve the station’s efficiency. Developing strategies for OTT (Over-The-Top) distribution of video news is a priority, but station leaders say they must quickly adjust and move to where they’ll find additional audiences for their content.

Keywords: Local TV news, technology, diffusion of innovation theory, audience, OTT

Introduction

Local TV news is still the dominant news source for Americans despite the fact that station consolidation has caused the number of newsrooms to decrease and the local TV news audience, especially younger demographics, is declining as a result of a changing media environment (Knight Foundation, 2018).

For local TV news leaders, these changes have created a sense of uncertainty and raised questions about how to stay relevant. One of the biggest concerns is keeping up with the seemingly constant evolution of communications technology. From new ways to access information, to digital video distribution and social media reporting, local TV news managers around the U.S. must regularly make crucial decisions about what innovations they should adopt. Research has shown that these decisions are not easy. Often companies make choices well before a technology’s impact on the industry is clear (Day & Schoemaker, 2000). When faced with uncertainty, newsroom managers are more likely to simply follow trends that put them in alignment with the industry (Lowrey, 2011). Many innovation management researchers argue that, in order for companies to adopt innovations successfully, they need to develop strategies to handle change ((Day & Schoemaker, 2000; Lawson-Borders, 2003). However, multiple studies have found that news organizations seldom have a strategic plan in place (Adams, 2008; Saksena & Hollifield, 2002), and the ones that do fail to execute the plan properly (Mico, Masip, & Domingo, 2013).

The diffusion of innovations theory defines the stages in the adoption of a new technology, and the factors influencing its success or failure (Rogers, 2003). According to Rogers (2003), innovation is a process where new ideas or technologies are shared among members of the same social system.
through three stages: identifying the problem or the new technology, deciding to adopt or reject it, and implementing it to become a part of the company’s workflow. Using diffusion of innovation theory and relevant innovation management research, this study seeks to gain information about local TV news operations and their managers’ adoption of innovation. Most previous research in this area has been conducted on newspapers (Adams, 2008; Bressers, 2006; Lowrey, 2011; Saksena & Hollifield, 2002; Singer, 2004), but there are a few studies that look at local TV newsrooms (Bivens, 2015; Mico, Masip, & Domingo, 2013). This study aims to provide further insight into key factors influencing technology adoption and implementation in local TV news organizations.

Literature Review

Local TV News

In today’s digital first media landscape, more people get their news from television than any other source (Nieman Report, 2018). Local television news stations remain profitable, too, with reports showing that, in 2016, local TV over-the-air advertising revenue was $20.6 billion (Pew Research Center, 2018).

However, a changing media environment and station consolidation have caused the number of local TV newsrooms to decrease over the last decade. In the U.S. in 2018, 703 local TV newsrooms produced news for 1,072 stations, and the five largest broadcast companies – Sinclair, Nexstar, Gray, Tegna and Tribune – owned an estimated 37 percent of all TV stations (Knight Foundation, 2018). There’s also no doubt that overall consumption of local TV news has fallen significantly with a 15 percent drop in audience since 2013 (Reuters Digital News Report, 2018). Nearly everywhere we see evidence that the technology preferences of news audiences are evolving. In 2017, more than 22 million U.S. adults canceled cable or satellite service (Knight Foundation, 2018), and for the first time, more people accessed news via smartphone than by a computer or laptop (Reuters Digital News Report, 2018).

Local TV news organizations are trying to adapt. They’re putting efforts towards reaching younger audiences via social media such as Facebook and Instagram, and they keep experimenting with new social media strategies (Knight Foundation, 2018). Live streaming on social platforms often focuses on breaking news, but it’s not unusual for a station to look for ways to use live streaming daily. (Knight Foundation, 2018).

One of the five largest station groups in the U.S., Tegna, has been organizing summits where journalists from stations it owns across the country come together and brainstorm to jump start innovative thinking in their newsrooms (Nieman Report, 2018). Many stations are investing in new technologies such as bonded cellular live transmissions, adding digital teams to their news personnel, focusing on distribution of content on OTT, experimenting with digital-only newscasts, producing digital first investigative stories (Knight Foundation, 2018), and experimenting with augmented and virtual reality (Nieman Report, 2018). TV stations are having particular success with OTT applications, which are creating new avenues for revenue and growing audience (Nieman Report, 2018). According to nScreenMedia (2019), which tracks the OTT sector, consumers continue to transition more of their viewing time to streaming media, and news and sports are primary drivers of the increase. In fact, Conviva (2019), a video measurements and analytics
company found that live streaming hours grew 65% between 2017 and 2018, with much of that growth stemming from live news consumption.

However, not all TV stations are open to innovation, sometimes out of fear that too many changes would alienate older viewers (Nieman Report, 2018), and that new technologies would bring drastic changes to news practices and disrupt the workflow to the station’s detriment (Chou & Ju, 2005).

**Innovation management in newsrooms**

Media organizations frequently adopt innovations, particularly emerging communication technologies, as an essential part of organizational success (Day & Schoemaker, 2000). However, these decisions are not easy to make because companies often need to evaluate emerging technologies well before they fully understand the impact of adoption (Day & Schoemaker, 2000), which can lead to overextended personnel and budgets (Bressers, 2006).

In a study of eight mainstream television news organizations in the United Kingdom and Canada, Bivens (2015) found that adoption of expensive technologies such as satellite newsgathering equipment were made at the highest managerial levels, illuminating “the top-down understanding of what is important and worth investing in for television news organizations and their audiences” (p. 205), whereas technologies like social media, “do not require substantial initial financial investment, are available for journalists to adopt more organically, of their own volition, with top-down control manifesting later or more haphazardly” (p. 206).

To help organizations in making decisions on emerging technologies, Day and Schoemaker (2000) developed four strategies: 1) better recognition of early signals of change, 2) developing and cultivating collective learning, 3) staying flexible to adjust to environmental changes, and 4) encouraging development of new technologies while preserving established organization practices. Lawson-Borders (2003) argued that adoption of innovation is a “process in which organizations must manage in order to integrate content across platforms” (Lawson-Borders, 2003, p. 94.) She identified Seven Observations of Convergence as a guide for newsroom managers which include communication, commitment, cooperation, compensation, culture, competition, and customer. However, research has demonstrated that decisions about innovations are often made without a structured plan in place. For example, research on the integration of online editions of U.S. newspapers found that managers did not develop a business plan, did not set measurable goals to assess the success of the online newspaper, nor did they conduct audience research beforehand (Adams, 2008), and that the innovation adoption process was “relatively haphazard, involving low-levels of research, resource commitment, involvement by the editorial department or use of cross-functional teams” (Saksena and Hollifield, 2002, p. 75). Mico, Masip, and Domingo (2013) found that the management of one European public broadcaster management did have a plan for adopting an innovative approach to convergence, but they did not execute it well and did not communicate their decisions with the newsroom, which led to backlash from reporters who then saw convergence as detrimental to their work conditions.

Another factor in decision making is perception of uncertainty, which is defined as an extreme condition where little is known about an emerging technology and it is not possible to assess risks (Wilson, 2007). Organizations and managers tend to avoid uncertainty (Donaldson, 2001, Pfeffer
and Salancik, 2003) and newsrooms regularly create routines to avoid it (Boczkowski, 2007). Singer (2004) identified several factors that curtailed the adoption of new technology within local newspapers and television stations such as fear of trying something new and finding time to master it. However, when newsroom managers are forced to make emerging technology decisions in situations of uncertainty they tend to reinforce institutional tendencies and follow industry trends (Lowrey, 2011).

**Diffusion of innovation theory**

How an organization makes decisions regarding emerging technologies could affect organizational performance. The diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 2003) defined innovation as an idea, practice, or object that is considered novel, and diffusion as the process that changes structure of a social system triggering social change. Rogers (2003) identified three stages in the diffusion of innovation process: 1) initiation, where the new technology is detected; 2) decision, where the technology is adopted or rejected, and 3) implementation, where technology becomes a part of the workflow. Five aspects of the innovation are crucial for the decision-making process: relative advantage over existing innovations; compatibility with the company’s work routines; complexity of the innovation; trialability – is it easy to experiment with; and observability. Many mass media scholars have used this theory to study technology’s impact on media from a variety of perspectives. For example, the theory informs our understanding of the technology acceptance model. According to Davis (1989), the technology acceptance model proposes that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are important factors in predicting an individual’s adoption of technology. In the case of news organizations that rely on technological means to distribute their journalism, following technology usage trends is critically important to their success.

Most of the focus on mass media research regarding innovation has been focused on individuals within the organization as the units of adoption (Garrison, 2001; Lawson-Borders, 2003; Singer, 2004, 2006), but few studies used his theory to evaluate the factors related to newsroom managers decisions to adopt innovation (Lawson-Borders, 2003). Likewise, in the media management literature there has been little focus on the management of innovation in newsrooms (Adams, 2008; Bressers, 2006; Saksena & Hollifield, 2002), and little recent research on local TV newsroom innovation decision making. Therefore, using diffusion of innovation theory and the discussed innovation management research, this study seeks to evaluate how local TV news directors decide what innovations to implement through the following research questions:

R1: How do local TV news stations choose the technology they adopt in support of journalistic practice?

R2: What technological innovations are being implemented in local TV newsrooms?

**Method**

In order to answer the research questions, this study collected in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the news directors or assistant news directors of local TV newsrooms in the U.S.
Participants

Eighteen local TV news directors or assistant news directors were interviewed for this study. The researchers opted for a small research sample because the goal of this study was to reach depth rather than the breath of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The participants for the study were selected using a snowball method. The researchers first interviewed participants that they knew, and the others were recruited per their recommendation. The researchers stopped recruiting new participants once the point of redundancy was reached and no new information was emerging (Patton, 2002).

Twelve of the participating news directors or assistant news directors were male and five female, and they came from nine states – Alaska, Hawaii, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Wisconsin – representing larger media markets such as Raleigh, North Carolina, and Nashville, Tennessee, and smaller media markets such as Anchorage, Alaska and Columbus-Tupelo-West Point, Mississippi. The participants also differ in how long they have been news directors ranging in one and half years to 14 years on the job.

Interview guides

Both authors of this study conducted the interviews following an interview guide comprised of open-ended questions. The interview guide served the purpose of a conversation starter and a guide to ensure that all the relevant research areas were covered (McCracken, 1988). The questions asked the participants to explain the process of innovation decision making, describe the current technologies they are pursuing, and talk about the impact of recently adopted technologies on the journalistic practices in their newsrooms. The interview guides also contained questions about the station’s audience and views on competing news outlets in their media markets; however, those responses are not included in this study.

The interviews were conducted between September 2018 and May of 2019. Fifteen interviews were conducted over the phone, and three were conducted in person. The interviews lasted from 25 minutes to one hour, were recorded on a digital audio recorder and transcribed in their entirety by the researchers or their assistants.

Data analysis

Braun and Clarke’s (2006) method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within data was used for analysis. The researchers separately read the interview transcripts searching for meanings and patterns to generate initial codes. The researchers then used the codes to develop themes that captured important aspects about the data related to the research questions, and that symbolized a patterned response throughout all of the interview transcripts. The researchers considered whether the occurrence of the theme was found within the individual interviews and across all of them, whether enough data supported the themes, and whether themes had internal homogeneity (within the theme data correspondence) and external heterogeneity (clear distinctions between themes), which resulted in combining similar themes into one. Lastly, the researchers named the themes and wrote the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
Analysis

A series of key themes emerged through the process of analyzing responses to specific interview questions. In general, all of the respondents agreed that technological change had and would continue to have a tremendous impact on the business and operating models integral to the success of local television news. Though nearly all expressed a significant degree of uncertainty in determining how technology may evolve and change the business of local TV news into the future, all seemed willing to address the inherent challenges and several seemed optimistic that they would be able to figure out how technological developments could, in fact, help sustain and grow their journalistic efforts.

R1: How do local TV news stations choose the technology they adopt in support of journalistic practice?

In analyzing responses to R1: How do local TV news stations choose the technology they adopt in support of journalistic practice? the researchers established three key themes. Theme one involves a group of respondents that relied on corporate suggestions or directives in making technology decisions; another theme is focused on an audience-driven approach to technology adoption; and a third encompasses traditional return on investment (ROI) decision making – does the new technology help make the newsroom more efficient, give the station an edge or avoid creating a competitive disadvantage?

Corporate influence on technology adoption

Stations that are part of big ownership groups were, not surprisingly, more likely to report that technology adoption was driven, at least in part, by corporate decision makers. Stanton Tang is the news director at KOLO in Reno, Nevada, a station owned by Gray Television.

Tang: “It’s harder for individual stations to really seek out technology, so we do rely on our corporate technology people to tell us and keep us informed about what’s available to us.

Yet, even within Gray Television, it’s just as common to find news directors who use corporate intel as a guide versus a mandate, and that’s how News Director Tim Geraghty at Sinclair station WKRC in Cincinnati, Ohio characterizes the technology adoption process in his station group.

Geraghty: “If our company—Sinclair Broadcast Group— is behind a piece of technology and it’s rolled out to the other stations, we certainly embrace it and we’ll find the best way to use it. There are also other technologies that we’re aware of that we want to give a try to see what works for us.”

News directors who work for large station groups also report cost-savings and a reduced learning curve when their corporate technology officers negotiate group pricing and facilitate knowledge exchange across the company’s member newsrooms.
Tech adoption response to audience use

Audience preferences for technology are a big part of what drives adoption in local TV newsrooms. For most of our respondents, decisions are made to go where the audience is for two reasons – first, because many working in local TV news believe they have a mission to serve communities and second, because it makes good business sense. At WRAL in Raleigh, North Carolina, News Director Rick Gall says considering the audience is a priority when selecting new tech tools.

Gall: “First and foremost, is how can it better enhance our newscast and ultimately serve viewers or readers? However, people are consuming our news on any number of platforms, how can we better serve them? If we can invest in technology that does that that makes the most sense.”

But keeping up with the audience is a challenge. Every new technology requires newsrooms to adapt as they adopt new tools. News Director Jason Pasco of KTVN in Reno, Nevada says the evolution has been sweeping:

Pasco: “We’ve changed from being a TV newsroom that produced TV shows to being a newsroom that produces content for television, but also content for websites and for apps and for social media and really any way that someone wants to get their information. We want to be there and to give it to them. So, that is the big shift in focus that’s there – it’s the technology of how people receive news that’s changed how we have to distribute it.”

News director Sandra Boonstra of WTVF in Nashville, Tennessee sums it up as “the challenge of being everywhere.”

Bottom line and technology adoption

The reality is that local TV news is a business, so our respondents made it clear that the technologies adopted had to pay off in terms of the bottom line. At WTVA in Tupelo, Mississippi, Assistant News Director Craig Ford said addressing public demand is just step one. “We got to pay attention and then try to figure out okay, where do we need to be and how can we monetize so that we can pay for what we do? We can make a profit and we can serve the community,” Ford said.

Adopting technology to make the newsroom more efficient was a common refrain among respondents as well, including Pasco who said, “The biggest thing I look at is what’s going to help make the job we do easier.” News Director Ed Reams of WKOW in Madison, Wisconsin was one of several who also talked about competitive pressures.

Reams: “There are a lot of things that are out there that are cool and very innovative and might be fun to play with for a short period of time, but the bottom line is, if we’re going to invest into it, it’s got to be something that gives us an advantage or makes us better in the newsroom and that better our competitive position.”

Local newsrooms have to do the math with every new technological development – nearly every decision to adopt requires a cost-benefit analysis says Colin Benedict, news director at WISC in Columbus, Ohio.
Benedict: “What are the things that are really going to be valuable to our audience and to our business, that has to be part of the equation... We have to choose the ones that we think are going to be lasting and have value to our audience, for us, and in an ad-supported newsroom to our advertisers.”

R2: What technological innovations are being implemented in local TV newsrooms now?

The researchers identified three dominant themes emerging from responses to R2: What technological innovations are being implemented in local TV newsrooms now? The first overarching theme encompasses technology’s impact on gathering and disseminating news content overall; the second is focused on the ways in which technology enables engagement with the news audience; and the third is focused specifically on OTT delivery of news content as a key technological change that appears to be an important part of the strategy for ensuring the future of local TV news.

Current technology impact on gathering/disseminating news

Time and time again respondents pointed to instantaneous live reporting facilitated by bonded cellular as the current technological development having the greatest impact on their ability to gather and disseminate news. Edward Trauschke, news director at WNCN in Raleigh, North Carolina stated:

Trauschke: “Back in the day when I was a reporter, to cover a hurricane you’d have a satellite truck and that’d be your base and you didn’t stray far from the base because that was the only way you were going to get your story back to the station. In a recent hurricane we had six bonded cellular units out with crews and, surprisingly, the cellular service held almost the entire time— even on the coast, even in the middle of the hurricane. So, suddenly we have crews out right in the middle of the action going live -- not connected by a cord to a satellite truck. We were live in rescue vehicles going through the rivers rescuing people live on television.”

The use of cellular backpack solutions for reliable and high-quality live broadcasting and video streaming across digital platforms, as well as the use of standard smartphones for going live via Facebook and other social media is ubiquitous among our respondents. However, news directors such as Gall of WRAL in Raleigh, also report concerns about accuracy and ethics in a world where you can report live to the world in seconds:

Gall: “Because you can be continuously live, you have to be paying attention to things that can happen in and around the live. If you’re at a protest and there’s profanity flying, if there’s violence. There are things now that can be live that just wouldn’t have been before, so you have to be paying much more attention to what’s coming in, you have to be utilizing judgement throughout... The vetting now is happening often times as it’s live versus somebody shot some video and you can send it in and you can take time to review it.”

The lack of reliability for mobile-enabled live reporting in rural parts of some stations’ coverage areas was also a cause of concern for some respondents.
**Technology enhances audience engagement**

For more than a decade, the audience has been steadily gaining influence over what gets reported by local news organizations. At its best, audience power translates into more relevant news coverage, delivered in the formats and via the channels that people prefer. The vast majority of our respondents see the need to engage audience as a must and recognize social media is their greatest technological tool for interaction. News Director Chip Mahaney of WCPO in Cincinnati, Ohio says social media has become part of the core business of local television news.

Mahaney: “There’s not a moment where someone in this newsroom isn’t checking social media and making sure we’re not missing a news update from a local source or maybe even a competitor or some other media place somewhere around the world, or that you’re not engaging with the consumer either local or otherwise on some platform where they have sent a question, they have a comment, they have a need that we have the ability to instantly address.”

Social media is the dominant engagement tool referenced by respondents, and Reams of WKOW in Madison said the current paradigm is part of a major evolution for media organizations.

Reams: “For the longest time for all platforms—radio, television, newspaper—we were all push mediums. We produced it and we were hopeful that the public would consume it, and for a long time they did. But now, we really rely on viewers’ feedback in making decisions of what we provide for coverage. This started back with comments to webpages and then has transitioned to conversations on social media. We really use that feedback and those conversations to help determine what people are interested in.”

Technology has changed the very nature of the types of news local television stations cover. “We also, frankly, get more story ideas from viewers now than we ever had in the past,” said Tang, news director for KOLO in Reno.

**OTT delivery of news content critical to future**

The newest technological development generating the most enthusiasm among respondents by far is the emergence of OTT. At its most basic level, OTT describes the distribution of video content via the internet without requiring users to subscribe to a traditional cable, satellite or pay-TV service. Local TV news companies are investing in and capitalizing on this new distribution platform because they believe they can monetize their content there, either through advertising sales or through subscription services.

At Gray-owned KTUU in Anchorage, Alaska, news director Tracy Sabo says their OTT efforts are part of a corporate strategy.

Sabo: “We have a number of OTT platforms that we use to reach viewers, sbtv.com, that is an outlet we use to put all of our newscasts including all of our sister stations owned by Gray TV, they are all on that app. So, I can watch the news from all over the country and so can our audience without being tied to a broadcast outlet, we are on Hulu, Roku, YouTube and we are on a number of different platforms that allow us to reach viewers in a non-traditional sense.”
Sabo and WCPO’s Mahaney say OTT is invaluable to local TV stations because streaming services accommodate an audience that has grown accustomed to time shifting their news consumption. In addition, Mahaney says OTT services are changing the way local news stations think about their content.

Mahaney: “We can have different shelves on our OTT app, and so the latest news is always one shelf, and we have a live stream shelf that is always there when we’re streaming something live. We’re building other shelves so we can take a long-standing franchise of WCPO’s, which is called ‘Don’t Waste Your Money,’ and we can put all that content on its own shelf... and if you just want to watch a lot of good consumer reporting, you can stream that for an hour or more. At the same time, you can also produce special programming that a station might air just once on a local broadcast, but you can produce it to give it a long shelf life on an OTT platform. We know OTT viewers, once they’re locked in on something, they’ll stay on it for quite a long time, big chunks of an hour at the very least, because once you actually get to what you wanted to watch on OTT, you’re often looking to put that remote down for a while.”

For some, OTT is “a regeneration of broadcast” or “the new generation of TV” and many hope OTT will create a significant new revenue stream, providing local stations opportunities to reach new audiences or hold on to existing viewers, albeit on a new platform.

**Discussion & Conclusion**

This study explored the processes, challenges and opportunities associated with the adoption of communications technology within local television newsrooms. The analysis of in-depth interviews with 18 news and assistant news directors across a broad range of market sizes indicated that corporate ownership, audience preferences and newsroom efficiency concerns were the primary influences on technology adoption.

Technology adoption suggestions and directives that originate at the corporate level are associated with the idea that those at the very top of a media organization are better positioned to determine where investments in technology should be made (Bivens, 2015). However, whether a station was part of a large or small ownership group, a preponderance of respondents stated that they had the flexibility to experiment with technologies at the station level. Though the news managers interviewed for this study did not describe using any formal processes identified by innovation management research to guide their decision making (Adams, 2008; Saksena and Hollifield, 2002), it’s possible that corporate technology officers may have followed some of those best practices, and this could be an important area for future research.

The desire to “go where the audience is” was a major driver in technology adoption among the study’s respondents. The challenge is that the audience is becoming increasingly fractured – millions of U.S. adults are canceling cable or satellite service (Knight Foundation, 2018), and for the first time in 2018, it was reported that more people accessed news via smartphones than computers (Reuters Digital News Report, 2018). News managers adopted technologies that audiences prefer for two stated reasons – to serve their communities more effectively and in recognition of the fact that news audiences are increasingly becoming more fractured as people adopt technology that best suits their personal needs in accordance with the technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989). The challenge for news organizations continues to be uncertainty over whether a particular audience preference will be long-lived and whether the audience using the
technology has an appetite for news. Respondents described feeling pressure to know which of the dizzying array of social platforms, in particular, were going to be crucial and which were okay to ignore. Adding complexity is the fact that newsrooms have limited resources, so most respondents focused on a small number of established social platforms, preferring to simply follow the industry trends (Lowrey, 2011).

According to Rogers (2003) diffusion of innovation theory, the characteristics of an innovation, such as its cost and impact, can greatly influence the decision to adopt or reject that innovation. Respondents in the study reported making choices about technologies to embrace based on their perceived contribution to newsroom efficiency and overall importance to the station’s bottom line. This is a difficult process as well, especially as it relates to emerging technologies because their overall value and impact are seldom clear from the beginning (Day & Schoemaker, 2000; Bressers, 2006).

The researchers also asked respondents to identify the most important technologies currently being implemented in local TV newsrooms. Analysis of the in-depth interviews determined that bonded cellular and smartphone-enabled live capabilities, as well as the various uses of social media platforms are now firmly embedded in newsrooms cultures. Most indicated that OTT content delivery options were emerging as a technological innovation that would change newsroom systems into the future.

The ability for local TV to go live in an instant has been greatly influenced by the use of smartphones in conjunction with social media streaming platforms, as well as the adoption of bonded cellular technology. Live streaming via social platforms is a daily occurrence at many local TV station, though breaking news continues to be the most frequent use case (Knight Foundation, 2018). The study’s respondents noted that this new technology is giving journalists the ability to cover events in unique ways, such as reporting live during a rescue operation or in the middle of a protest march. However, they also expressed concern about accuracy and the ability to handle ethically challenging situations well when they are so frequently reporting live.

Social media, in general, are integral to newsroom operations at this point and respondents said they value the increase in audience engagement facilitated by the platforms, as well as the insight journalists glean from observing audience behaviors around content posted to social media. These insights help guide news coverage – serving as a source for story ideas, in particular. Both the increase in live reporting and the use of social media to better interact with news audiences are examples of technologies in the final stage of Rogers’ (2003) diffusion of innovation. Stage one involves detection of a new technology, stage two is the decision-making stage and in stage three, the technology becomes a part of the company workflow.

In contrast, we found OTT technology to be on the cusp between stage two and stage three. Several of our respondents reported being unsure of how OTT would influence their newsroom operations, though all recognized that the technology was attracting viewers and creating new revenue streams for TV stations (Nieman Report, 2018). Others were leading the charge to explore the possibilities for this new technological innovation through experimentation with live streaming, on-demand news or new uses for archival content.
The 18 interview subjects selected for this study were remarkably consistent in their identification of the technologies being implemented in local TV newsrooms and in approaches to adopting new technologies. However, this is an area rich for further research as it is unclear whether the leaders shaping local TV news – a primary source of news and information for U.S. audiences – are making their decisions based on well-informed strategic plans or on an ad hoc, follow the leader basis. In the end, this matters because a vibrant local news industry is critical in supporting an informed U.S. citizenry.

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References


Innovating the Future for Journalism with the Students: Hyperlocal Journalism Module in Journalism Education 2012–2018 in Finland

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Abstract

This paper argues that journalism education plays an important role in testing new ideas and practices in journalism. The main aim of this paper is to present the experiences of the hyperlocal news module 2012–2018 in the University of Jyväskylä, Finland and summarize the module’s implications for journalism education. The paper asks if it is possible to use hyperlocal journalism module as a proxy for the future of journalism and journalism education? Its methodology is based on case study research, ethnography, and content analysis. The data consists of student-run hyperlocal news outlets (n=46), and ethnographic observations.

Keywords: Hyperlocal, journalism, education, innovation, pedagogy, intimacy, Finland

Introduction

In the new millennia, journalism programs have been under the same kind of constant pressure that journalists experience in newsrooms resulting from the need to continuously reinvent their journalism operations according to the rapid techno-social changes among their audiences (Deuze 2006; Deuze 2017). Journalism has had to transform its operating environment from print to digital, then to 24/7 online environments and thence again to ubiquitous mobile communications (Krumsvik, 2016; Goodman & Steyn, 2017).

New and interesting digital tools and applications that could be used in journalism are flowing into the media market all the time. It is not possible for newsrooms to purchase every shiny new device or application, instead they focus on those that seem to be the most useful. In general, most of the news media companies have insufficient resources to test and constantly innovate their work practices. The luxury of having all the cutting edge digital tools is the preserve of the few most resourceful media companies (Küng, 2015; Posetti, 2018).

Journalism schools operating under more relaxed time schedules and without profit pressures, seem to suit far better as testbeds for innovations in journalism than the financially challenged newsrooms (Lassila-Merisalo & Uskali, 2011; Goodman & Steyn, 2017).

There is, however, consensus among the journalism educators that “future journalists must learn how to find and use more varied, nuanced tools to deal with increasingly challenging circumstances” (Goodman & Steyn, 2017, 2).
Also Laura Castañeda emphasizes the necessity of curriculum innovations, especially to put new technologies and multimedia skills to curricula. But, according to her findings in terms of starting online courses focusing on multimedia skills, she detected several factors hindering the renewal processes like faculty skepticism, a shortage of technological know-how, and a lack of support within schools (Castañeda 2011, 362).

In similar vein, Goh and Kale advise that journalism schools should reinvent their curriculum to “foster multimedia consciousness in students” (2014, 308). The scholars offer project-based learning (PBL) as a solution in the transformation of a traditional print journalism course to develop digital journalism competencies. Perhaps even more importantly, Mark Deuze (2006) formed two modes for journalism education: the reactive and proactive.

In contemporary practice, most of the journalism schools’ curricula contain proof of both modes. There are the traditional and sustainable core elements of news production, ethics and history, but also new layers (programs, courses or modules) related to the new technologies, platforms, devices and applications. There are still large differences among journalism education institutions in how they have adapted to all the techno-social changes. For example, a study by Berret and Phillips (2016) revealed that 40 % of the journalism schools in the US did not have any elements of data journalism in their programs.

The evolution of journalism has moved from the analogue medium era (print, radio and television) to digital “multi-platformism”, where all the old media forms are still valid, but assimilated to an innovative hybrid news ecosystem, where the leading social media platforms and other tech companies, play roles of increasing importance as the new gatekeepers (Anderson et al., 2014; Bell et al., 2017). Mark Deuze explains: “In the process of using news, people deploy and exchange multiple devices, interfaces, and platforms as they move through their day.” (Deuze 2017, 310)

The major issue concerns how journalism education should be adapting to all these changes. According to the large corpus of literature about journalism education’s new digital challenges, many concepts have been used to describe the transformative forces in journalism practice and education, starting with convergence and the move from multimedia to multiplatform journalism. Convergence refers to “the merging of distinct technologies, industries, or devices into a unified field” (Merriam-Webster 2018). The definition for multimedia is “using, involving, or encompassing several media” (Merriam-Webster 2018). Interestingly, multiplatform (or multiplatform) has yet to enter Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary. Still, many journalism schools around the world use the term, for example at the Birmingham City University (UK) and University of Maryland (US). Of course there is also a plethora of other terms developed by scholars in order to understand and frame the evolving communication environments like media as ensemble, polymedia, mediation and mediatization (Deuze 2017, 311).

Next we will move to add still a new concept - hyperlocal journalism.

**Hyperlocal Journalism in Journalism Education**

Initially, according to a Google search (22.5.2019) hyperlocal journalism (henceforth HLJ) courses do not exist at all, or they are called something else like community journalism. For example, University of Cardiff runs a special centre for community journalism
(Communityjournalism.co.uk). The centre for example offered the world’s first Massive Open Online course (MOOC) on community journalism in 2014, which ran for six weeks (Cardiff.ac.uk, 2014).

According to the current body of HLJ research, there is not yet consensus about the concept among scholars (see Metzgar et al., 2011; Radcliffe, 2012; van Kerkhoven & Bakker, 2015; Nygren et al., 2018). This kind of theoretical struggle of the best definitions for the new concepts are common in the area of emerging technologies. It often takes a decade or two to form a conclusion or to start new schools around diverse definitions.

More seriously, HLJ seems to be an exceptionally fluid concept. For example, Metzgar et al. (2011) included in their study rather large areas to be covered by hyperlocal journalism operations (henceforth HLJOs), for example metropolitan cities like San Diego (via Voice of San Diego), Chicago (via ChiTown Daily News) and Minneapolis (via MinnPost). The geographic element was just one criteria in Metzgar et al.’s definition:

Hyperlocal media operations are geographically-based, community-oriented, original news reporting organizations indigenous to the web and intended to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement. (Metzgar et al. 2011, 774)

There is indeed a certain link between community journalism and HLJ, even if the author of this paper argues that they are not necessarily the same. Cardiff University’s Centre for Community Journalism for example assimilates both terms in their definition:

We define a community and hyperlocal news publication as a news service that typically pertains to a specific geographic area such as a town, neighborhood, village, county or even postcode. (Abbott 2017).

Community journalism is believed to have been coined by professor Ken Byerly at UNC-Chapel Hill (1957–71), when he used the term in a title of his new course, because the old one did not sound good enough to him. For Byerly, community journalism meant the weeklies and small dailies (Lauterer, 1995, xi). More recently, for example Nygren et al. (2018, 37) suggest the definition about hyperlocal media should also include local free newspapers, local subscribed newspapers and community radio. Similarly, Harte et al.’s (2018) book “The decline of local newspapers and the rise of online community news” emphasizes the current troublesome situation with traditional local newspapers.

At this point, the author of this paper still hesitates to accept any of the aforementioned definitions for HLJ. Metropolitan/city/town and local journalism are valid terms, but should not be mixed with HLJ. Quite naturally, hyperlocal should be a smaller area than either a city/town or a locale. Where the exact line goes is quite difficult to define, and actually, there is already a new problem lurking, when next going through the journalism students’ interpretations of hyperlocal: where is the line between hyper- and ultra-local?
The Strategy of Piloting New Courses and Modules

In order to tackle the rapid changes in journalism practice, the Department of Communication at the University of Jyväskylä started piloting new courses and modules in journalism education at the turn of the new millennium. The first in 2001 focused on foreign news. At that time there was not a single course in Finland offering introduction to the work of foreign affairs reporters, foreign correspondents or stringers. In a way, the success of the first pilot course, encouraged the later continuation in a similar fashion. The innovation journalism course started in 2005, and was among the first of its kind in the world (Lassila-Merisalo & Uskali, 2011).

Piloting a course or a module is a quick way to react in journalism education to new challenges and opportunities arising from the horizon of media landscape. At the same time, piloting hints to the students, that the course is still in its early stages, in other words, still a work in progress. Presumably, piloting lowers the students’ expectations, but ensures that testing will be at the core of the course.

The hyperlocal news module was innovated in winter/spring 2012 to be part of a new mandatory multiplatform journalism course for the BA students in journalism.

Around 2008-12 hyperlocal news operations were much hyped especially in the United States (Berkey-Gerard, 2013), but not in Finland. Since the start in 2012, the hyperlocal news module has been an essential part of the multiplatform journalism course. The hyperlocal module started as a small scale 1-2 weeks home assignment in 2012–2013. Later the module was initially extended to one month (2014-2015), and finally in 2016 to its current timeframe of two months. For every course, special tasks for the hyperlocal news operation were slightly modified using the feedback from the previous course, and also because of the evolution of mobile and web technology.

Journalism students have proved to be innovative and critical users and creators of digital media content and eager to test their new skills in practice. Coincidentally, the official course code (JOUA007) hints at the James Bond series of British spy movies, where the new(est) ‘gadgets’ always assist the hero at critical moments. From the outset, the HLJ module has offered a testbed for many new digital hardware tools and software programs, such as the gadgets and applications used in the module 2012-2018, which included: smartphones, tablets, drones, and 360 degree cameras to WorldPress, Blogger, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Storify, Fusion Tables, Periscope, Bambuser, SoundCloud, Jodel, and Snapchat.

From the outset, the module has consisted of five lectures. There has also been a closed Facebook group for each course, where the instructors have jointly continued discussions with students and also given assistant and support, when needed. In this way, the notion and practice of co-learning (Okada 2013) has been applied in the module.

Research Questions, Mixed Methods, and Data

The main purpose of this paper is to answer three research questions.

1) How do the students define hyperlocal journalism?
2) What kind of digital content do the students create, when given a free hand?

3) Is it possible to use hyperlocal journalism module as a proxy for the future of journalism and journalism education?

As Raymond Madden (2017, 26) notes: “A method is just a tool”. This paper uses many tools being based on mixed methods. Its methodology is taken from case study research, ethnography, and content analysis. For example, Harte et al. (2017) used this kind of multi-method approach in their study about UK-based hyperlocal publishers.

Case study first entered scholarly usage at the turn of the 20th century, but global usage began much later because for a long time, the term attracted the epithet ‘mere’. But, in the 1980s, the first seminal method books emerged, especially Robert Yin’s “Case Study Research: Design and Methods” (1984), and as a result the method became the focus of social sciences and humanities. In the field of education, case studies have focused, for example, on modules, programs and universities (Gerring, 2017; Yin, 2018).

Ideally in case study research, the scholar has little or no control over behavioral events. But, in this study, as the author is the instructor of the HLJ module, there was an element of control. However, the main research questions included “how” questions, which are often related to case studies as are “why” questions (Yin 2018).

Furthermore, Yin (2018) suggests the scholarly focus of case study methodology should be contemporary cases (Yin 2018). But, in this study, the contemporary time period was stretched back to 2012. Therefore, this study uses also the methods of ethnography, especially participation observations (Madden 2017)

As always with research methods, ethnography includes various emphases and nuances; it is flexible and responsive to local conditions. But it is also awareness of the ethnographic tradition; the origin of the term lies in 19th century anthropology. Nowadays, ethnography overlaps with many other research methods like the case study. In terms of data collection, ethnography often involves the participation of the scholar, who observes, listens and collects material. The scholarly focus is also on a few small-scale cases like a group of people. The analysis of data is based on interpretation of meanings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

In addition to case study and ethnography, this study also uses the method of content analysis, which has been used successfully in journalism studies for six decades. Each scholar defines the scope and complexity of the content-analytic study ranging from simple sets to large samples (Neuendorf, 2017). Content analysis can be defined as systematic, quantitative analysis of text or other content.

We will now move to define the data for this study.

From 2012 to 2018, students of JOUA007 created 59 HLJOs (see Table 1).
Table 1. Number of hyperlocal journalism operations (HLJO) created by students of JOUA007, 2012-2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>HJLOs</th>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
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</table>

In the first year, 2012, there were two courses on multi-platform journalism, in the spring and autumn semester involving two separate cohorts of students (2011-2012; 2012-2013). Since 2013, there has been only one course per academic year, always in the autumn and aimed at second year BA students and first year MA program students.

Approximately one in six students who created and managed a HLJO deleted it from the internet after the end of the course. The choice of keeping or deleting their HLJO was the prerogative of the students. For this paper, the focus will be only on those HLJOs that are still openly available on the net (N=48), and could be geographically defined as HLJ entities. Two student-run websites were excluded from the data, because they lacked a geographically identifiable area (one was related to a students’ association and the other to another university course). Thus, the data set consists of 46 student run HLJOs (see the Appendix 1).

The students had the freedom to choose the publishing platform. The open-source WordPress blogging platform was the most popular (69%) with half-a-dozen other platforms barely reaching double figures like Blogger (13%), Tumblr (11%), and an assortment of others like Instagram, Wixsite and Scoop.it aggregating (7%).

Even if, the main task for the hyperlocal module stayed the same, the modules to create and run a HLJO are not directly comparable. Primarily, the time periods differed, but more importantly, so too did the sub tasks. For example, the HLJOs, since 2014, had to produce at least one real-time reporting assignment.

Also starting in 2014, every HLJO has had to create a clip of camera drone aerial footage. Initially, the students found this assignment difficult to complete due to their lack of the necessary skill-set - drone flying and camera operations. Therefore, a separate drone journalism spinoff course was created for the next year. An optional drone journalism course has since 2015 been a supporting course for the multi-platform journalism course.

From the beginning, in spring 2012, the module has focused on mobile production of hyperlocal content involving whatever digital devices the students possessed, e.g. smartphones, laptops and desktops.
Results

Defining hyper-local journalism: new terms needed

Jyväskylä is the seventh biggest city in Finland with 140,000 inhabitants and has 24 districts spread over a large geographic area of lakes and forests. The students, for the most part, chose centrally located districts where they lived and studied for their instant HLJ projects. The most popular areas for hyperlocal reporting were Kortepohja (n=6), the students’ village (about 20 minute walk from the main campus and city center); Kauppakatu (n=3), the main market street in the city center, and also the University’s main campus (n=3).

The most used geographical space for the hyperlocal projects was either a street or a neighborhood consisting only of several street blocks (34 of 46 –74%). Other locations were the lakes near the city center (Jyväsjärvi and Tuomiojärvi) and their surroundings (3 of 46). Generally, each HJLO comprised one location. The exception was a project entitled “On the other side of the bridge”. This HLJO focused on three city neighborhoods linked by a bridge and involved a production team of three hyperlocal correspondents, one in each neighborhood.

In similar vein to the area of foreign reporting, where foreign correspondents are placed in different cities, the hyperlocal correspondents reported from their neighborhoods. Their stories often focused on the same topics, but from slightly varying hyperlocal perspectives. For example, when comparing hyperlocal restaurants.

The smallest areas for the HLJ projects included a night grill eatery, a gym, the city library, the train/bus station, a spiritual center, and a graveyard. But the tiniest hyperlocal news operation of all consisted of an apartment in a students’ accommodation block. All the news were produced either from the living room, kitchen or balcony.

All these seven aforementioned hyperlocal news projects focusing on really small geographical areas, challenge our understanding and definition of HLJ. One can argue that the students, when given the opportunity, really pushed the concept of hyperlocal to its limits. These environments could also be called ultra-locals.

Ultra-local journalism consists of just one small location, a building or even an apartment. Research literature on HLJ has yet to recognize this need. In general, the focus of HLJ businesses, as well as the scholars exploring these and other hyperlocal organizations, have been towards larger geographical areas not smaller ones. Obviously this is because it has been really difficult to build a sustainable business model for HLJ (Metzgar et al., 2011; Kerkhoven & Bakker, 2015; Nygren et al., 2018).

However, a tendency was observed during the years the hyperlocal module was delivered that every year the students wanted to invent totally new hyperlocal locations. They were all aware of the previous courses’ HLJOs. This cumulative collection of earlier works was always used as educative examples during the initial phase of each new module.

This study also found a need to use another term for HLJ, for those operations running only for a short time. The journalism students’ HLJ sites lasted only from a few weeks to a couple of months. Therefore, they could be called ‘instant HLJ’ outlets or projects. Instant HLJ differs from long-
duration operations. By ‘instant HLJ’ we refer to short, ad hoc projects that aim at serving special purposes. These tasks could be educational, but also other kinds of professional or non-professional ones. Instant HLJs may focus on short time events like conferences, festivals, celebrations, fairs or sport competitions.

Towards team work

The members of the HLJO teams varied from one to four. A module instruction concerning solo (individual) HLJOs was that solo individuals could publish fewer stories than those in teams of two or more. Nevertheless, during the initial five years (2012-2016) 13 students opted to conduct solo operations. Interestingly none of the students chose to go it alone in 2017 and 2018. Contemporary journalism is, indeed, a matter of team work.

The number of stories created by the hyperlocal outlets were almost constant. Each HJLO, in the period 2012-2018, published on average 7.5 stories, 13.5 images and 1.6 videos.

According to the rather basic content analysis, 48.2 % of the stories could be defined as news - telling objectively, new, timely and newsworthy issues for their hyperlocal audiences. The second largest category were features (30%), which involved more subjective storytelling, also used elements of literature, and included artistic photos and videos. While an average news story consisted mainly of a short text and perhaps one photo, feature stories were rich in both text and photos. The longest feature stories were several pages long including a dozen of artistic photos.

Low news thresholds, competition and humor

One key aspect of the news content of the hyperlocal sites was that the most important news criteria was related to the location. Furthermore, the news threshold was low. For example, if the door handle of a sauna in the students’ village was changed, that was reported. Or, if a dog had urinated near the exit of the house in which the hyperlocal journalists were living - that event made the news. Sometimes one could interpret that there was an unofficial competition among the hyperlocals about the lowest news threshold.

In addition, students’ humor was seen in many forms during the module. Starting from the names of the hyperlocals, and their innovative reporting styles. Perhaps the most innovative HLJO was based on the example of a blockbuster movie Pulp Fiction by Quentin Tarantino (1994). This HLJO focused on reporting what was happening at the so-called Upper Campus and consisted of a series of enacted videos imitating the style of the aforementioned movie. The headquarters for this HLJO was in a pub located close to the campus.

The competitive nature among the hyperlocal outlets was seen on many levels. For example, when conducting the live reporting assignment, one HLJO organized a live session lasting 17 hours. In another case, trying to attract more audience than the others, one hyperlocal news team wanted to test swimming in an ice cold lake, and one hyperlocal went to find food from the rubbish bins. In 2018, the “unofficial bravery contest” among students went even further with live reporting included donating blood (at the Jyväskylä Blood Service Centre) and body piercing in a studio. Of course, soon afterwards, the course instructors initiated ethical discussions of the limits of live reporting.
In addition, in terms of personal storytelling techniques, the correspondents (n=2) of one hyperlocal project constantly used the narrative of sportscasters in their reporting. Both of them had worked previously as sports journalists. They created, for example, a novice fail video, where they showed how their first test flight with a drone in the city center ended up on a rooftop. Later, another attempt almost hit a bus. This novice fail video clearly shows that the instructor gave insufficient instructions and training. In a similar fashion, a HLJO that focused on the many activities in the city library, chose the style of literature journalism in their production.

Excluding news and feature stories, other story types (21.8%) included comments, background information (about the hyperlocal neighborhood), art reviews, online tests, a list of upcoming events, about us, and closing/farewell posts.

Giving a free hand, i.e. allowing the students to report without restrictions enabled them not only to focus on news, but also to test various genres of journalism.

**Transparency and intimacy**

Almost all the HLJOs included at least some kind of note that the website was part of course work. More rarely, only about 10% of the HLJO sites, offered the real names of the contributors. Interestingly, those sites with openly displayed authors were, without exception, more ambitious operations than those anonymously/avatar authored sites. Furthermore, transparency of authors increased over time, and by 2017/2018 working anonymously was a rarity.

In the long discourse on trust in journalism, it has become clear that transparency matters. As Craig Silverman (2014) emphasizes: “One of the most important ways journalists and news organizations earn the trust of the public trust is by being transparent about who we are and the work we do.”

There was one HLJO site, which obeyed this call for transparency ambitiously by publishing all five of its editorial weekly meetings as 15-20 minute podcasts. The authors openly told how they got the story ideas, and also the kind of problems they encountered in the process. As their main themes were sex, violence, drugs and ordure, many ethical problems of reporting were discussed in the podcasts.

The ‘closing/farewell posts’ category was especially common among HLJO sites that indicated more than the average amount of effort into the course assignments. These posts also revealed a sense of emotional attachment to the HLJO sites. For example the HLJO that focused on Kauppakatu, the main market street of the city, and used the style and themes of an evening tabloid wrote:

> “Although ANKKA (acronym for, and nickname of the hyperlocal) is threateningly close to be ending, we are not totally giving up yet. If any opportunities arise, we will roll up our sleeves and take the bull (journalism) by the horns, if our common cause demands it.”

Actually, they never posted anything after the course, nor did any other hyperlocal site.
The addictive role of contemporary social media platforms in peoples’ everyday lives is also based on this intimacy dimension; user generated content algorithmically organized in the forms of intimate news streams. Sundar (2008) calls this “self as a source”, and Deuze (2017, 320) talks about affects, emotional engagement that helps people to navigate in complex media systems.

Starting from 2014, all the HLJOs have been linked to the main social media platforms, especially Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. The feedback, and interactivity, however, has been modest. According to open web analytics published in the websites, the average numbers of the users for a hyperlocal story has been a mere 10–20.

The highest numbers of clicks related to various video content and to one Facebook group (202 followers), which had an innovative system of three hyperlocal correspondents. The most watched video earned almost 300 views. It was based on interviews made in a spiritual center and focused on answering the question of ‘what is mystique?’

**Weak signals of upcoming journalism trends**

According to the results of this study, and perhaps most important of all, the students’ hyperlocal journalism projects have constantly included weak signals of coming changes in journalism practice. During the first modules in 2012, students used several tools such as Excel, Google Maps, and Google Fusion Tables, all of which are now common in data journalism. As a result, in 2013 the first spin-off course, data journalism was created. (For more about data journalism see Coddington, 2015; Ausserhofer et al., 2017).

In 2014, camera drones were introduced for the students as potential new hyperlocal video devices for journalism practice. Students’ feedback indicated that a short theoretical introduction of drones during the module was insufficient for proper journalistic practice, so in autumn 2015 the second spin-off course was started. The topic was drone journalism. (For more about drone journalism see Gynnild & Uskali, 2018).

In similar fashion, during 2012 small audio files appeared on the HLJO sites. Their presence necessitated the course instructors to collaborate with the students to create the third spin-off course, which was delivered in 2016. The core topics were audio journalism and podcasts. In 2018, four of the six HLJOs contained several podcasts. Once again, the weak signal of the renaissance of audio journalism was seen in the early HLJOs. (For more about the audio journalism see Bottomley, 2015; Berry, 2016).

In this way, journalism education can indeed play an important role in innovating the future for journalism. Moreover, piloting a course or a module is a quick way to react in journalism education to new challenges and opportunities arising above the horizon of the media landscape. At the same time, piloting hints to the students that the course is still in its developmental stages, i.e., is still a work in progress. The word *piloting* lowers the students’ expectations, but ensures that testing will be at the core of the course. Also, by focusing on a new area of journalism practice, hyperlocal journalism, will offer the students new creative opportunities for storytelling.
In hindsight, the HLJ module could be seen as an experiment related to innovation pedagogy, which aims to teach students to become more innovative or creative by giving them responsibility in the process (Darso, 2011; Nyre et al., 2018).

Conclusion

This paper first and foremost contributes to the proactive and innovative mode of journalism education by presenting the hyperlocal module, and analyzing its implications for journalism education. The hyperlocal journalism (HLJ) module could also be seen as an experiment related to innovation pedagogy and to the ethos of co-learning.

Based on the experiences of the eight HLJ modules delivered 2012–2018 and doing basic content analysis of the 46 still extant HLJO websites, using ethnographic observations, and the ethos of case study, we can claim that hyperlocal journalism module have served well as a proxy for the future of journalism and journalism education. Altogether, three spin-off courses were created in data journalism, drone journalism and podcasts were largely based on the experiences and feedback of both students and instructors of the hyperlocal journalism module.

Based on the experience of delivering the HLJ module from 2012 to 2018, two additions to the terminology of HLJ are suggested. Firstly, ultralocal journalism refers to a small location, a building or even a single apartment. Secondly, instant HLJ refers to short time, ad hoc projects that aim at serving special purposes.

This study also found the importance of intimacy in HLJ. As the HLJOs were often close to the living places of the students, they could easily engage with their tasks. As insiders of their own living areas, the students were able to give quickly nuanced insights and news, about which passers-by were usually unaware. This kind of immersion and intimacy seldom happens in newsrooms and the production of metro desk news, national politics, social issues, international affairs or economics. In this way, hyperlocal and ultralocal could offer a totally new, more intimate dimension for journalism storytelling.

Indeed, in an era of constant information and news overflows, hyperlocal news are easy for producers and audience to understand and interpret as meaningful. There is a special emotional bond in HLJ as we can see from the students’ closing/farewell stories.

Transparency, and self-criticism are essential in these kind of research settings. In ethnology, researchers commonly walk amid the group they are studying (Madden, 2017.) In the context of higher education, running a module in a course, gives valuable insights for the instructors, but could also blind them to not seeing clearly enough both the pitfalls and weak points.

Interviewing the students or collecting their views via systematic feedback surveys could have added more depth and nuances to the study. But as the resources of time and financing were limited, this study was unable to conduct either interviews or surveys. Also, more detailed content analysis,
especially of texts, images and videos could have offered deeper information about the evolution of hyperlocal storytelling.

Finally, as this study was based on only a small longitudinal Finnish sample of students’ HLJOs, follow up studies could test and compare these results with those in other countries.

About the Author:

**Turo Uskali**, PhD, Senior Research Scholar, Head of Journalism Program, Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, Associate Professor II (20%), Department of Information Science and Media Studies, University of Bergen, Norway. Uskali leads several research projects focusing on innovations in journalism. The newest ones focus on immersive journalism (virtual reality/augmented reality) and data journalism. Uskali has published almost 100 publications: research articles, book chapters, books and book reviews. His latest book, co-edited with professor Astrid Gynnild (UiB), Responsible Drone Journalism was published by Routledge (2018). He is also the founder of award-winning Journalism Research News (http://journalismresearchnews.org/).

References


## Appendix 1

### Hyperlocal journalism operations

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