

journalism and precarity



FALL 2013
ISSUE 3
INCIRCULATION.CA



INCIRCULATION

Media | Arts | Politics

- INGRID BEJERMAN
- MARTIN FORGUES
- ERNEST HOFFMAN
- GABRIELA CAPURRO
- KAT BORLONGAN
- PAUL FONTAINE
- PHIL CARPENTER

IN CIRCULATION

Issue Number 3, Fall 2013 / Winter 2014

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CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Special thanks to the faculty and staff of the Department of Art History & Communication Studies at McGill University, and all our Peer Reviewers.

ABOUT US:

IN CIRCULATION is an interdisciplinary journal based in the Department of Art History & Communication Studies at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. The journal is an annual peer-reviewed journal, published electronically in the Fall of each year. Each issue will address both historical and contemporary realities. Drawing on the diversity of the bilingual city in which it is based, the journal will explore the circulation of aesthetic, political, and cultural ideas. Without making any specific ideological claims, we nonetheless believe that scholars and artists can take an active role in creating a better world.

Each issue calls for a discussion of the theories, styles, methodologies, and ideologies that appear to have run their course. That is, we seek to re-discover, re-theorize, and re-conceptualize the thinkers and artists for whom others in the scholarly community have already delivered the eulogy. We seek papers that illuminate the relevancy of past thinkers, methodologies.

We embrace the potential of the electronic journal, and welcome responses to our pieces, multimedia content, non-linear structures, collaborative wiki sections, and will continue to explore the potential of digital publishing.

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Phil Carpenter has been a photojournalist for 15 years and is currently a photo and video journalist at *The Montreal Gazette*. He recently published his first book, *Breast Stories; Cancer Survivors Speak Out* (Fitzhenry and Whiteside). Through photos and essays, the book profiles more than 50 women across Canada who had mastectomy, and addresses issues of femininity and female identity. His international assignments include the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda, Canadian peacekeeping operations in Bosnia, and Israeli operations in the Golan. He was also one of the first journalists to arrive in Haiti after the earthquake in 2010. Phil has won several awards, including the Society for News Design's Award of Excellence, most recently in 2013. As a visual journalist, he is committed to documenting history and the human condition to encourage thought, debate and discussion. Phil teaches photojournalism at Concordia University's Department of Journalism.

Martin Forgues spent 11 years in the Canadian Forces before trading in his rifle for a pen. He works primarily in written media – print and web – and he can be read in magazines aimed at the general public (L'Actualité, Jobboom), specialized niche publications (L'Actualité médicale, L'Actualité pharmaceutique, Aggregates and Roadbuilding), news sites (Open File, L'Actualité Web) as well as in Le Trente, the magazine of the FPJQ, where he is a member of the editorial board. Passionate about radio, Martin has been on Les Oranges Pressées on CIBL 101,5FM and has discussed the situation in Mali on Radio-Canada in Québec. He also covered the war in Mali as a foreign correspondent during the winter of 2013. He recently founded his own documentary production company, [Productions Village Global](#), with director Alain Goudreau. Martin also sits on the board of the Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec.

Paul Fontaine is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. His research centres on diasporic communication networks in Canada. He has previously written on the role of Punjabi-Canadian print journalism outlets in the process of negotiating identity and maintaining transnational economic, political and social ties. Paul's doctoral dissertation will extend his previous work to include Punjabi-Canadian advocacy groups and university centres and institutes dedicated to Indo-Canadian and South Asian-Canadian Studies. His other research interests include journalism education and journalism's role in shaping collective memory. He received his MA in Journalism Studies from Concordia University and his BA in English Literature from the University of British Columbia. Before returning to university to start graduate school, Paul worked as a journalist in B.C. for five years, primarily as an education and city council reporter.

Ernest Hoffman is a Montreal-based journalist and researcher. He holds an Undergraduate Specialization degree in Journalism from Concordia University, where he is completing his Master's thesis, which critiques the philosophical underpinnings of journalism from a Buddhist perspective. He currently works as a research assistant with the [Concordia Science Journalism Project](#), where he focuses on how medical and scientific information is communicated and understood, and how people learn in deliberative public engagement settings. He is Managing Editor of *Almemar*, a Jewish arts digest affiliated with the Blue Metropolis Foundation, where he contributes long-form interviews with groundbreaking artists and cultural personalities. Ernest has previously worked as an economic news reporter, broadcast producer, editor, and documentary filmmaker. He continues to write freelance feature articles for magazines and trade publications.

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From the Editor

JOURNALISM: PROFESSIONALIZATION AND PRECARIETY

Journalism signifies multiple realities and representations – an ideology, a profession, a craft, a trade, the act of collecting/writing/editing/presenting news or news articles, and a literary genre, among others. There is not – and never has been – a single unifying activity defined as journalism. Since the rise of citizen reporters, blogging, wikis, and pro-am newsroom collaborations, both the professional and academic spheres have come to increasingly contest the very definition of what it is to be a journalist and “do” journalism. Most analyses, however, fail to consider the historical complexity of the processes of professionalization in journalism and its systematic institutionalization as an intellectual and educational endeavour. This state of affairs is only exacerbated by the lack of a consensual body of knowledge within journalism studies as a field of inquiry, and journalism’s problematic status as a discipline and practice within the critical humanities and the social sciences.

While Mark Deuze notes that “journalism is and has been theorized, researched, studied and criticized world-wide by people coming from a wide variety of disciplines,”¹ journalism itself is an arguably indefinable, uncertain, multifarious, and extremely intricate object of inquiry. It is the definition of journalism itself which is rendered problematic, especially where differences from one national-cultural context to another are considered.

In their book *Data Trash* (1994), Arthur Kroker and Michael A. Weinstein write that in an environment of digital acceleration, more information means less meaning. Drawing on their work, Franco “Bifo” Berardi points out that within the digital economy, “the faster information circulates, the faster value is accumulated. But meaning slows down this process, as meaning needs time to be produced and to be elaborated and understood. So the acceleration of the info-flow implies an elimination of meaning.” Kroker and Weinstein’s virtual class anticipated the growing precarity of the cognitariat. Considering the historical role of the fourth estate, this virtualization of journalists should be cause for serious reflection.

Is journalism a profession? According to Chris Anderson, very little has been written about the problem of journalistic expertise in either the communications or sociological

¹ Mark Deuze, “What is journalism? Professional identity and ideology of journalists reconsidered,” *Journalism* 6, no. 4 (November 1, 2005), p. 442.

literature.² To further complicate matters, the little that has been written is marked by incongruity regarding concepts such as profession, professionalism and professionalization, and what they mean in journalism.³

What is journalism? How is it theorized? Is there an object of study that can be called journalism? Is there an academic field of inquiry that can be called Journalism Studies? If so, what is its relationship to Communication Studies? And to the Social Sciences in general? What can a critique of the political economy of contemporary journalistic practices tell us?

This issue of *In Circulation* seeks to situate the question of professionalization in the tension between media conglomeration on the one hand, and the increased precarity of journalists and "citizen journalism" on the other. Our aim is to put forward a critical review of the social advancement of the journalistic 'profession,' and the institutionalization of journalism, by reconsidering some of the key aspects which define and shape these processes.

We're grateful to draw on both the professional and academic spheres as we tackle these questions, beginning with contributions from established journalists in Montreal. Newspaper and radio reporter **Martin Forgues** brings us an op-ed about the difficulties – and the grim reality – faced by present-day journalists. "Journalism isn't dead," he writes, "but it's not very healthy either." Drawing on his work at the Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec, as well as his own experience as a freelance journalist, Forgues proposes "a little revolution" to address these problems.

Photojournalist **Phil Carpenter** offers us an image he captured during the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in April 2001. Commonly known as the Quebec City riots, the Summit is remembered as much for the security preparations and demonstrations that surrounded it as for the outcomes of the negotiations themselves. Carpenter's cover photograph invites the reader to reflect on the role of technology and citizen journalists in documenting events of this kind the world over, and on the impact these images have had on the public imagination, and on law enforcement policies.

Journalist and researcher **Ernest Hoffman** conducts an in-depth interview with James Compton, one of Canada's foremost scholars on issues surrounding journalistic labour in the digital age. The conversation alternates between scholarly analysis and professional critique, as Compton addresses the glib Californification of news discourse,

² Christopher Anderson, "Journalism: Expertise, Authority, and Power in Democratic Life" in *The Media and Social Theory* (ed. by David Hesmondhalgh and Jason Toynebee; London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), pp. 248-264.

³ Randal Beam, "Journalism Professionalism as an Organizational-Level Concept," *Journalism Monographs* 121 (June 1990), p. 1.

the rapid rise of unpaid 'hope labour', and the past decade's key failures by Canada's flagship media outlets.

We then bring you three scholarly articles addressing issues of representation, the ideal of objectivity and professionalism in journalism, and the education – or lack thereof – of professional journalists. **Gabriela Capurro** advances an explanation of the role of journalism in the perception of Mexico in Canada, examining how asymmetric international relations are expressed through neo-colonial discourse in the press. Through a critical discourse analysis of newspaper coverage of the H1N1 flu outbreak, Capurro examines how the power imbalances that characterize the bilateral relationship between Mexico and Canada were reflected in the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*, demonstrating that these asymmetries were expressed through a neo-colonial discourse that emphasized difference, stereotype, and a perceived sense of superiority over the racialized Other.

Kat Borlongan tests the theory that if we hold fast to the idea that objectivity is an indispensable criterion for newsmaking and that professional journalists are, in fact, neutral bystanders, then it follows that NGOs cannot be considered true newsmakers. But the author states that we must address two questions before drawing this conclusion: To what extent do media organizations satisfy the objectivity criterion? And, why should we so readily accept that the ideal of objectivity is universally absolute and, consequently, dismiss NGO news? Borlongan offers an illuminating response to both.

The issue concludes with **Paul Fontaine's** article about the educational challenges faced by journalism departments as newsrooms tackle the problem of creating revenue and communicating effectively in an online environment. Fontaine explores how journalism schools are torn between the conflicting goals of creating a curriculum that meets the industry's needs, while also trying to equip students to think critically about the profession they hope to practice.

As long as the disputed profession of 'journalist' continues to exist, it is imperative that journalism departments in colleges and universities provide their students with the tools to best serve their audiences. And the most necessary tools are not technical skills, but the students' ability to think critically about journalism, and their role as journalists. Journalism Studies does belong in the academy, where the new ideas, critiques, and research, which ultimately inform education and the practice of journalism in the field, are being produced. The texts presented here are our humble contribution towards this end.

– Ingrid Bejerman, Ph.D.

Editorial from Martin Forgues, freelance journalist

“JOURNALISM IS RIPE FOR A REVOLUTION”

« Journalism is dead ». An assertion that keeps circulating around and is slowly becoming the main reason why journalism students either desert their programs or embrace a much more lucrative public relations career.

But it's unfair to assume, if not outrageously dangerous, that journalism as a whole has in fact met its demise. If anything, I believe it's ripe for a little revolution that even involves returning to its roots.

Yes, journalism jobs are increasingly more scarce and precarious, there's no denying it. Countless editorials and columns have been written over the past decade about how an economic paradigm shift in the printing business is killing newspapers and magazines, about how the internet and social media mean that businesses can now advertise directly to their customers and don't need radio and TV stations to gulp their marketing budgets. About how new online publishing is, thus posing the question as to how it can become a moneymaking powerhouse. About how to preserve and profit from intellectual property in the face of increasingly rampant piracy and the emergence of the “copyleft” movement.

But all these economic and business points aside, there lurks another threat to journalism and the media: an increasing loss of public credibility. A perception that journalism, which in the past embodied a duty to defend truth in the face of lies and to strengthen the public's ability to make informed choices, is now an integral part of the very system it's supposed to question.

Both these threats work in a very symbiotic way. Precarious working conditions in an economically weakening and increasingly fragile industry mean less resources for, as an example, deep investigative work. Less time for analyzing the contents of a new government policy. The round-the-clock news cycle creating the need for constantly fresh content means that journalists must resort to basically copy and paste press releases without much questioning, leading to a public perception that they're just information conveyor belts.

Shrinking budgets also mean shrinking newsrooms leading to increased workloads for already burdened staff journalists and to resorting to freelance work. In Quebec, 85% of magazine content is provided by freelancers, and is an increasing part of newspapers' content as well. However, working conditions and outrageous intellectual property contract clauses make most freelance journalists part of the working poor class, forcing them to take in several mandates to make ends meet and prevent them from reselling their material to several media, thus impacting negatively on work quality.

Journalism isn't dead, but it's not very healthy either. And it's fair to assume that if journalism catches the flu, democracy will start coughing and shivering too.

The remedy might come in the form of a little revolution. It's already started in the form of hyperlocal media and cooperative journalism which cover "grassroots" stories that closely impact of their respective communities' daily lives. Journalism co-ops such as Media Co-op outlets regroup in collectives and share content with each other. New media initiatives such as *Nouveau Projet*, a bi-annual magazine based in Montreal, took a bet on long-form stories, analyses and commentary, à la *Monocle*, and is currently doing great, having resorted to crowdfunding to gain start-up capital. The aforementioned financing method also means more resources to industrious freelancers who wish to tackle more ambitious projects. Those examples could – and should – shake out the crumbling Big Media into jumping on this bandwagon.

This, combined with a need for journalism to go back to what it used to do great – comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable, to paraphrase muckraker Findlay Peter Dunne – could give it its much-needed Phoenix wings.

Interview with James Compton

“STRAIGHT UP WITH COMPTON: ACTS OF JOURNALISM,
HOPE LABOUR, AND THE PRECARIOUS FUTURE OF THE DIGITAL WORKER”

Ernest Hoffman

[James Compton](#) is one of Canada’s foremost scholars on issues surrounding journalistic labour in the digital age. An Associate Professor at the University of Western Ontario’s Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS), Compton is the author of *The Integrated News Spectacle: A Political Economy of Cultural Performance*, and co-editor of *Converging Media, Diverging Politics*, a collection of essays on corporate convergence and its implications for journalism and democracy. His research has been published in the *Canadian Journal of Communication*, *Journalism Studies*, *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*, and *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, among others. He is also a long-time member of the [Union for Democratic Communications](#).

Ernest Hoffman: You’re the primary investigator on a major SSHRC-funded research project, *The Future of Organized Labour in the Digital Media Workplace* – can you tell me a little bit about it?

James Compton: Well, it’s a SSHRC Partnership Development Grant, where you pitch a collaborative research project to work with other organizations. What we did was successfully pitch a research project involving the [Canadian Media Guild](#), which is one of the primary unionized representatives of journalists in the country, they represent workers of Canadian Press, and CBC and elsewhere, the [Writer’s Guild of Canada](#), and also [ACTRA](#), three streams. So we have our labour group here at [FIMS](#), with several faculty members working on that, and we’ve worked with our partners to come up with research ideas of interest to them.

Hoffman: So this is dynamic – you’re putting this together with the major representatives of the workers, and you’ll have a pretty clear picture of what their concerns are, because they’re going to be coming right at you. What’s your sense of the members’ relationships with the big players in the industry?

Compton: I think the general point you can make here is, people are worried. They're really worried about the future of work, and in particular about people being compensated for work. There's a lot of anxiety around that – all three of our union partners represent people who are struggling with that

The digital workplaces have become complex places, and they've changed in a lot of ways. And not simply because of digitization, it's not a reductive starting point at all. We're looking at issues of job setting, and the implications and challenges to quality in the digital newsroom. That's of particular concern to people at the CMG. But also for both ACTRA and the Writer's Guild, they are under a lot of pressure with regards to new business revenue streams from digital platforms, and how their performers or writers are remunerated, or not, often not. Digital content is migrating across these digital platforms, and there is an attempt to extract value from these things, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. There's a lot of playing things out.

“It's all about exposure and promotion, but when do people actually get paid? A lot of people are waiting for that day.”

Hoffman: And a lot of experimentation on the part of the industry, saying 'okay, we have this, now how do we repurpose this five times?' Obviously, that's a very good idea as a business, but downstream you at some point have to decide who owns it, and who makes money on it.

Compton: Yes, there's a phrase that being touted these days in the literature called '[hope labour](#)', and I think it captures a lot. Many people, students too, are being promised 'oh, work for free, and you'll get great exposure!' It's all about exposure and promotion, but when do people actually get paid? A lot of people are waiting for that day. So it's put a lot of stress on people.

One of the things I want to investigate further is that there are so many digital workers who are unemployed or underemployed, that there are two things that I think might be happening: first, value being extracted out of them with their free labour, or hope labour, where they're basically working for free.

But also as consumers! There has been some research done, and in different media sectors, but particularly in news organizations, they're looking for new revenue streams,

and [one new way they're looking to get paid that has higher margins is conferences](#). So they have conferences on things, and they have their named, branded journalists that attract people, and people pay money to go to these conferences, and these become forms of spectacular circulation of value.

So the same people who are underemployed feel compelled, particularly in the world of acting etc., they go to these conferences because these poor artists need to go there to try to network and build their brand and get work. Beyond this hope labour, they have to pay! So not only are people being asked to work for free, or for very little, but then they're also being used as consumers.

Hoffman: That's amazing, and that mirrors what's happening with sessional professors, where people graduate with say, a PhD in history, and they have to pay a fortune to go to the annual history conferences, which are always in very expensive cities, Las Vegas, New York, San Francisco, in the hopes that they'll meet someone, and there's a handful of positions being hired, but they have to pay in the hopes that they'll maybe land themselves even a sessional job, never mind a tenure-track position.

Compton: Well, it's a similar logic... In the case of news organizations and entertainment companies, it's a for-profit business structure. News organizations are actually launching conferences as a new revenue stream, that's the intent of this, as opposed to the academic world, where people still feel compelled to go and spend money in order to get a job.

But in this case, there's a dual exploitation that's being developed right now. This large pool of highly-skilled underemployed labour is being used in multiple ways. The fact is that there's a few winners, and many, many losers. The few winners get held up as examples, and you'll see profiles of some of them, the business pages are full of it, and also in journalism trade publications. There's an online version of it called [Media Shift](#), and I get their daily digest. I don't read all of it, but I like to keep abreast of the Zeitgeist. So what's the Zeitgeist? Well, people are being told that they must become entrepreneurial, and must build their brand, and it's all up to them.

I would argue that this is part of the neoliberal ideology – that all the responsibility is on the individual's shoulders. It's not the broader system that has disenfranchised a lot of people. No, it's your responsibility! You need to work harder! You need to find an entrepreneurial outlet! You need to build your brand! And then they'll have examples of

people that are doing it, and it's usually selling that promise back to people who are precariously employed. That's the cycle. It's kind of depressing, looking at it.

Then you see journalism programs – like in New York, [Jeff Jarvis is running an 'entrepreneurial journalism' program](#), which strikes me as an oxymoron. He's one of the most famous of what I would call the moral entrepreneurs for selling this ideology, and they sell their own success. He's very successful, he's a very clever guy, he's a very good writer, but I think he's also selling a lie. He's selling the lie that it's all up to you. But it's impossible!

“So what's the Zeitgeist? Well, people are being told that they must become entrepreneurial, and must build their brand, and it's all up to them.”

Hoffman: Yes, he also started from a position of strength. He didn't just 'build up his brand'!

Compton: That's right – he started from a very strong position.

Hoffman: It's like that old joke, how do you make \$1 million in the stock market? Start with \$1 billion! It's not necessarily an improvement even for him, much less anybody else!

Compton: Yes, but he's not alone in selling this, and it's attached to what some people are calling the California ideology, this kind of libertarian mixture of California freedom and entrepreneurial 'pull yourself up by your bootstraps'.

Hoffman: And the messianic role of technology, that technology will somehow empower these individuals, who are going to turn around and become millionaires through their own brilliance and hard work.

Compton: That's precisely it, right. It's attached to this fetishized notion of technology as inherently liberating and democratizing. Well, it can be, it could be, there's always the promise, right? So you get Henry Blodget writing one much-circulated piece suggesting that [we live in the golden age of journalism](#)... That's such a bunch of bunk!

I would argue that it's patently not. I mean, can you say 'weapons of mass destruction' five times fast? The biggest, most important stories of the last 10 years, the lies put forward by the Bush administration that were, without any questions, just holus-bolus adopted by much of the US media, and used to justify arguably an illegal war that is still costing many, many lives. And also the financial collapse of 2008, where the business press were simply a bunch of cheerleaders for a deeply corrupt system. Journalism has failed miserably on arguably the two most important stories of our lifetime.

You can't tell me that we're living in a golden age of journalism, when thousands and thousands of people have been laid off, even just since 2000, and the trend was even worse before that. You've got gutted newsrooms, and they're turning to more celebrity, more spectacular kinds of coverage that's easy to produce.

There are exceptions... A lot of people would say that [Glenn Greenwald](#) is the most important reporter going right now, and I might agree. But then people say 'ah, he's a blogger, and this shows...' I've seen people try to reproduce the California ideology touting him...

Hoffman: No, he's an employed journalist for a major news organization that has a [very unique financial structure](#)! This is an exceptional newspaper, it's owned by a foundation... it's a very unusual thing!

Compton: You've jumped in and you made my point...

Hoffman: Right sorry, sorry...

Compton: It's okay. But yes, it's patent nonsense! I mean, there are some instances of great reporting, there always are. You can point to Greenwald, for sure. A couple of years ago, the New York Times, which has a lot of blood on its hands for its role with the Iraq war, but credit where credit's due, did some [fine reporting about how Apple iPhones are made](#), and won a Pulitzer for it. You have some examples, of course, but overall the quality is dropping.

It's about reporting, and there's an elision that's made – I like to focus on the labor of reporting as the standard, not these things about 'journalism'. There's this really pointless discussion that continues to go on, that I try my best to avoid, between professionals and amateurs. It really goes nowhere, in my view. You get into these

things where people say old-school/new school. 'Oh, you're just part of an old industrial model! You need to get with the new times!' – this kind of nonsense.

Reporting requires resources. Reporting stories like the deep corruption that led to the financial meltdown requires a lot of time and effort, and to do that kind of reporting, news organizations must invest in it. You can't do that kind of thing if you're precariously employed. Sorry, it's not possible. It's not a knock on an individual. It's just that the labor required to produce a particular kind of public good that we associate as a necessary precondition for a healthy liberal democracy is not being supported, and I'm seeing fewer and fewer resources. The Guardian is one example of an organization that is investing, but they're also at risk of running out of money.

Hoffman: And I guess it's not only a financial measure – an individual doesn't have a team of lawyers on retainer to deal with the consequences of doing this hard-hitting investigative journalism, right?

Compton: Well, that's precisely it. You need resources to back you up, multiple kinds of resources, legal and so on. The new model, in which we extract value out of a precarious labour force, and then celebrate them as citizen journalism and free ranging entrepreneurs, while people like [Arianna Huffington get rich](#), and others get paid pennies for writing short stories that are constructed based on algorithms that are linked to what product vendors will put ads beside – this is horrible!

This is where we're at. This is the reality behind the shiny patina of the California ideology.

We've conducted a survey of Canadian journalists, we wanted to get a sense of what people are experiencing and then link them back to this broader context in which people are being told that they're brands. Reporters at newspapers are being held responsible now for getting more ads sold.

“Every newsroom in the country looks at the Globe every morning to see what they've got, and what they've got is a very skewed view of what matters in Canada.”

Hoffman: Yes, they're being told directly how many views and how much revenue their story brought in, as if they're in the advertising department!

Compton: I was a reporter at the Canadian Press in the 1990s, and even five or seven years ago, these kinds of discussions would have been laughed out of the newsroom. What's really interesting is how normalized this has become. There used to be a separation between money and the craft of reporting. It was flawed, but now you don't even have that. Now it's just considered that that's all from the industrial era, now you need to get on with the new way of doing journalism. Or committing acts of journalism, whatever the hell that means.

People are actually using this language, and this has developed, I would argue, because of the extreme stress that journalists labour under, and that their employers and their former employers are under. And it has completely changed how we discuss the craft. Now it's all about how you monetize, it's this language, monetizing content, you read it all the time – is anyone talking about reporting anymore? Build your brand! What's the impact of that kind of commodification itself on journalistic labor, and the kinds of stories that will be told as a result? I think they're enormous.

Hoffman: I guess if you're fundamentally changing the goals of the working journalists, and the measures that you're using to judge their work, then of course you're changing the output enormously, and you're changing what being a journalist is.

Compton: Yes. The professional culture, the set of norms and standards that, flawed as they may be, used to be attached to a sense of public service, have been eroded in an environment where people are being compelled to merge with the logic of exchange value. News value, the public use of reporting, is being redefined as whatever can be monetized. If it can't be monetized, it's of no use any more.

Well, there are fundamental repercussions here – you need that labour to have a democracy. It strikes me as unacceptable to say 'well, you know, they need to make money.' If companies are not willing to make money while providing a certain level of reportage that is necessary for liberal democracy, then maybe we'd better find another way, because that's the implication. It means you can't have a functioning liberal democracy. I think it's that serious.

Hoffman: Yes, if our system assumes that there are people whose job it is to report on the government to the public, and report the needs of the public at some level to the government between elections, then if there aren't people who can afford to do that properly, then that system isn't necessarily going to function.

Compton: Look at a relatively well-off paper like the Globe and Mail, which has laid off a lot of people recently. They recently admitted that [they only care about readers who make a hundred thousand dollars or more](#). They don't care about anyone else! That's a very small slice of the Canadian public!

The Globe and Mail is simply not interested in serving the broader Canadian population. They have a target audience that's very narrow, and very well-heeled. You could say 'well, that's their right, it's their money, it's a private company.' Fine, but don't tell me they're serving a broader audience! It used to be that papers would still make an attempt, flawed as it might have been, but not anymore.

The Globe is the paper of record. Every newsroom in the country looks at the *Globe* every morning to see what they've got, and what they've got is a very skewed view of what matters in Canada.

Hoffman: How is the Canadian crisis-in-journalism conversation different from the American one? You're talking about the Californification, the entrepreneurial dream, but in Canada, of course, we have big players, but perhaps fewer— how is it different here?

Compton: Well, I think it's the same logic, it's just that we're playing catch-up. One of the truths that's lost in the California ideology, and the sense that the Internet creates this enormous plurality of ideas and voices, is that the research shows it's actually more concentrated in media terms than it has been before, and those levels of concentration reproduce themselves online. There's a really great book by Matthew Hindman called [The Myth of Digital Democracy](#). They actually went and looked at the numbers, and looked at the 'power law' of search engines, and the data is actually being reproduced year over year over year, if you look at the [Pew Center stuff](#).

So while it's true that you can go on the Internet and find anything you want, what do most people do? Most people, it turns out, go to established news sources. And TV, contrary to common-sense discourse, remains the number one news source for most people. They may say, 'I get my news online.' Well, TV remains number one and local TV is really, really important. Now, these are US data, so I'm making an assumption that there are similar trends playing out in Canadian context, but nobody's actually been able to do that type of data in Canada.

And it's also really clear, if you go on blogs, and online news organizations, that they're repurposing stuff from the mainstream media organizations, which have cut staff

drastically. People say, ‘well, I get my news from Twitter.’ Well, no you don’t! You may have read something on Twitter, but where does the reporting come from?

“Journalism has failed miserably on arguably the two most important stories of our lifetime.”

Hoffman: Right, who are you following on Twitter, and were *they* getting *their* information?

Compton: What Hindman points out is that the concentrations that we see in the so-called legacy media reproduce themselves, and in fact become even more concentrated online, and when you ask the question ‘what do people do?’, not what might they do, or what could they do – what do people *actually* do? It’s an important question, it actually matters, and that’s the part that usually gets lost in the celebratory discourse.

Hoffman: What’s your sense of what’s happening in the journalism research environment – are you encouraged by that you’re seeing, and what do you think needs more attention?

Compton: There are good people – from the political economy perspective, Dwayne Winseck has a nice online resource that just came out again this week on [media concentration](#). He’s got raw numbers, which hasn’t done before in detail, so that’s a great, great service. People have done good work all over the place. People are worried about a lot of the things that I’ve been talking about.

As for journalism schools, they’re kind of turning inward, I think, in some respects. They’re under a lot of pressure, because enrolments are down, and the budget models require bums in the seats, so they’re under a lot of pressure to change, and get their numbers up.

Hoffman: How do you mean, turning inward?

Compton: Well, there’s discussion now about starting up the kinds of entrepreneurial notions of teaching journalism that are happening in United States, and bringing them to Canada – I know some schools are talking about that.

In Circulation thanks James Compton for this interview

“SWINE FLU AND THE PANIC PANDEMIC: NEO-COLONIAL REPRESENTATION OF MEXICO IN THE CANADIAN PRESS”

Gabriela Capurro

Abstract

The A H1N1 influenza or "swine flu" virus appeared in Veracruz, Mexico, in April 2009 and quickly spread to other countries becoming a global pandemic. In the Canadian press the illness soon became known as the "Mexican flu" and the coverage focused on the stigmatization of Mexicans as carriers of the flu. Through the reproduction of dominant ideologies the media reinforce common-sense stock of knowledge, which can perpetuate negative perceptions between nations. The literature on the Mexico-Canada relationship is scarce and does not address mutual representation in the media or how they could affect mutual perceptions. This paper addresses this by advancing an explanation of the role of journalism in the perception of Mexico in Canada, and examines how asymmetric international relations are expressed through neo-colonial discourses in the press. Through critical discourse analysis of newspaper coverage of the H1N1 flu outbreak, this paper examines how the power imbalances that characterises the bilateral relationship between Mexico and Canada were reflected in the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*. Results show that these asymmetries were expressed through a neo-colonial discourse that emphasized difference, stereotype, and a perceived sense of superiority over the racialized Other.

Introduction

The A H1N1 influenza or "swine flu" virus appeared in Veracruz, Mexico, in April 2009 and quickly spread to other countries becoming a global pandemic. The disease caused the closure of schools, offices, restaurants, bars, theatres and stadiums in Mexico, and the Mexican government advised its population to wear masks and avoid public spaces. Soon after, the international community imposed travel warnings and passengers arriving from Mexico were screened for flu symptoms at airports worldwide. In the media, the illness soon became known as the "Mexican flu" and the coverage of the outbreak focused almost exclusively on Mexico. This paper analyses with a postcolonial

approach the representation of Mexicans in the Canadian newspapers the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail* during their coverage of the H1N1 flu outbreak, to assess whether such representations reflect the power asymmetries of the Canada-Mexico relationship and, thus, reinforced a neo-colonial discourse. By focusing on journalism practices, the field of journalism studies allows the analysis of the impact that transnational relations have on media discourses and the effect of those discourses on public perceptions of other nations and on the diplomatic relations.

Critical discourse analysis was performed to determine if a neo-colonial discourse was conveyed by referring to racial and cultural superiority/inferiority, otherness, fear of the Other, and xenophobia. The results of this study show that both newspapers depicted Mexico in racialized ways, mainly through the use of stereotypes. Mexico was referred to as a biological and cultural threat, while Canada was depicted as helpful and rational. This tendency, however, was challenged by other mainstream and alternative media that questioned Canada's attitudes towards Mexico and examined the role of NAFTA in the health crisis.

This paper begins with an overview of the literature on postcolonialism, and media discourses of disease and racialized groups in North America. It then turns attention to the methodology and results. It concludes with a discussion on how power asymmetries were expressed through a neo-colonial discourse that emphasizes difference, stereotype, and a perceived sense of superiority over the racialized Other.

Postcolonialism in the Americas

The problematic of colonization and decolonization is examined by postcolonial studies, challenging established institutionalized knowledge and situating issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, subalternity, diaspora, immigration and globalization within geopolitics and relations between countries and their particular histories (Shome and Hegde, 2002). Postcolonialism also studies the manifestations of neo-colonial relations between developed countries and underdeveloped ones due to economic and power disparities (Mignolo, 2001). These relations suppose a new form of "colonization," with no occupation of land but rather industrial and labour exploitation of former colonies and the export of their natural resources to developed countries (Khor, 2001).

Neo-colonialism is mostly based on economic interests and supposes asymmetric power relations between nations, which are expressed in free trade agreements that encourage foreign investment, the exploitation of resources and cheap labour, and the control of immigration. These free trade agreements facilitate the

economic expansion of powerful nations to underdeveloped countries (Castells, 2004; Grinspun, 1993; Bhattacharyya et al., 2002). This is the case of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which liberalizes trade flows between Canada, Mexico and the United States. NAFTA is characterized by economic imbalances that generate power asymmetries, giving the larger economies --the United States and Canada-- greater political and economic influence (Cooper, 2008). Such power asymmetries have affected the relationship between Canada and Mexico (Cooper, 2008), which has not developed to its full potential because they are both more concerned with strengthening their particular relationships with the United States (Abizaid, 2004, Goldfarb, 2005). Despite the economically fruitful partnership, the relationship between Mexico and Canada continues to be characterized by a lack of common goals (Randal, 1995; Cooper, 2008). Thus, Canada and Mexico remain “distant neighbours” (Wood, 2003) and their relationship has not fully realized its potential (Abizaid, 2004).

Postcolonialism is relevant for determining the ways in which imperialism is involved in the construction of contemporary relations of power, hierarchy, and domination (Chowdhry and Nair, 2002). It provides a framework for studying neo-colonial international relations, taking into account the gaze of the subaltern, while challenging Western dominant discourses, forms of representation, stereotypes and notions of center and periphery (Slater, 2004; Chowdhry, 2002). In the press, neo-colonial representations suppose the depiction of other groups and nations as less civilized, emphasizing difference and constructing them as the “Other” (Dury, 2007).

Media discourses of minorities

The mass media are important sources of discourses as they produce and reproduce dominant ideologies, and offer social constructions of reality that reinforce the common-sense stock of knowledge through the selection of stories and the use of frames, filters and stereotypes (Jiwani, 2006; Hall, 1995; Henry and Tator, 2002; Richardson, 2007). Neo-colonial representations of minorities or otherized groups in the media are based on the ambivalent colonial discourse (Hall, 1990 cited in Jiwani, 2006). The Other is defined as “excessively sexual, physically different, inferior in mental and social capacities, threatening, alien, savage-like, ignorant, primitive, and beyond the pale of civilization,” while “exotic, erotic, mystical, innocent, majestic, and a noble relic of a bygone era” (Jiwani, 2006: 33). In that sense racialization is articulated in media discourses with “other systems of oppression” like gender, immigration status, religion and sexual orientation, and this prompts misrepresentation and underrepresentation of minorities (Adeyanju, 2010). The concept of “race” has expanded to incorporate not

only imputed biological characteristics, but cultural ones as well (Siapera, 2010). In the media, this new racism is usually not explicit but has to be inferred from words or sentences in the text, for example from the use of euphemisms to make reference to non-Whites or by offering one-sided coverage that systematically excludes the Other (Adeyanju, 2010).

Coverage of disease in the North American press

News media are important sources of health-related information and influence the way in which diseases are perceived, understood, and discussed (Houston et al., 2008; Gasher et al., 2007). Specific diseases, such as cancer or AIDS, are covered by the news media with particular frames or interpretations (Valenzano, 2009) that have an impact on how the public assess the risks related to them (Dudo et al., 2007). In the case of shorter outbreaks of a disease, the media uses “outbreak narratives,” which follow “a formulaic plot that begins with the identification of an emerging infection, includes discussion of the global networks throughout which it travels, and chronicles the epidemiological work that ends with its containment” (Wald, 2008: 1).

During the coverage of SARS the North American news media followed the geographical expansion of the disease and focused on the death toll, the number of infected people and the measures taken to control the disease, like quarantines and isolation (Houston et al. 2005). “Outbreak narratives,” like the one caused by SARS, tend to promote the stigmatization of individuals or groups, behaviours and lifestyles, by associating the disease with determined places (Wald, 2008). For example, Wald (2003) argues that by tracking the routes of SARS from a duck pen in China, the media suggested lack of cleanliness as a motive for the outbreak and depicted the people close to it as living in preindustrial times, which blurs the understanding of certain practices – like living close to poultry and pork farms – as expressions of poverty. Furthermore, looking at the one-way direction of the disease from an underdeveloped place to a developed one stigmatizes impoverished places as it “obscures the sources of poverty and of the ‘uneven development’ that characterizes globalization” and presents the disease as a threat that could “transform a contemporary ‘us’ into a primitive ‘them’” (p. 45). Through this type of coverage, people who live where the outbreak began become a threat.

In a neo-colonial context, when articulated with immigration and race, coverage of contagious diseases tends to generate panic and attempts to minimise the perception of threat by othering those who are sick and linking the disease to identity and origin (Ungar, 1998 cited in Adenyahu and Neverson, 2007). Othering those who are sick

involves rendering them primitive and underdeveloped, while ignoring the problem of poverty (Wald, 2008: 8). The articulation of threat and foreignness is constant in the coverage of disease.

By comparing media representations of avian flu and terror, Muntean (2009) found that both were constructed in the United States as threatening deadly alien forces that go beyond national borders and disregard conventional modes of engagement. By articulating disease with the concept of a foreign origin and an imminent threat --like terrorism-- the American news media contributed to a xenophobic discourse, thus to a colonial discourse of panic, racism and anxiety about racial minorities. Similarly, examining the SARS outbreak coverage, Leslie (2006) found that the *Globe and Mail* used a pollution risk logic, which attempted to establish who is *us* and *clean* and who is *them* and *dirty*. Despite the newspaper's attempt to prevent readers from using racial profiles to determine SARS risk factors --mainly against Asian people-- its use of a risk logic when dealing with the Chinese government contradicted its good intention and constructed China as *them*, not *us*. Another case of racism in the Canadian press when covering a disease is that of the "Ebola panic" generated in 2001 after a Congolese woman got ill while visiting Canada. Adeyanju (2010) argues that the media used this case of "non-Ebola" -- test results discarded Ebola -- as a proxy for expressing the anxiety and insecurity that Canadians feel over the changing racial composition of Canada.

Method

From hogs to humans: the outbreak of H1N1

The 2009 A H1N1 influenza originated in pigs and its outbreak is associated to the Mexican pig farming region of Veracruz (Gatherer, 2009). The virus quickly spread to Mexico City and the states of Mexico, Veracruz, San Luis Potosí, Hidalgo, Querétaro, and Oaxaca (central Mexico). All public places in Mexico City, a highly populated metropolis, were shut down as a measure to contain what seemed to be an epidemic. Public health officials asked residents to wear masks and avoid unnecessary contact with other people. Other countries banned food imports from Mexico and recommended their citizens avoid travelling there, while the international press pointed out that there was no safe place in Mexico. In most airports, travellers arriving in flights from Mexico were screened for flu symptoms, and in some countries, Mexicans were put under quarantine.

But soon the first cases of H1N1 flu appeared in the United States and Canada, causing panic in the international community. Within a month, the flu virus had spread to more than 40 countries. This outbreak was the first of porcine influenza capable of human-to-human transmission and raised serious concerns about the possibility of a global pandemic. During the swine flu pandemic, Mexicans lived with fear and uncertainty as their country was not prepared to deal with the disease, and the national and international media contributed to the panic by depicting an apocalyptic situation. Furthermore, the flu caused enormous economic losses to Mexico and the stigma imposed on Mexicans as carriers of the virus remained for several months.

The coverage of the H1N1 pandemic in the Canadian newspapers the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* is analyzed in this paper from April 23rd until the end of May, 2009, when Canada had almost twenty cases of the disease. The sample is composed of 79 articles and the analysis seeks to determine what were the particular frames used in the coverage of the H1N1 flu outbreak, how was Mexico constructed in relation to the flu, and how was otherness established.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis is a multidisciplinary theory and method for studying the use of language by individuals and institutions in relation to power and ideology (Fairclough, 1995; Richardson, 2007). It analyses how dominance and inequality are enacted by language within systems of representation (Henry and Tator, 2002), looks beyond texts to take into account institutional and sociocultural contexts, and considers not only what is said and how it is said, but also what is omitted from the text (Richardson, 2007; Carvalho, 2008; van Dijk, 2000). Critical discourse analysis in this study is based on Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model: analysis of texts; analysis of discourse practice; and analysis of sociocultural practices. Although discourses convey broad historical meanings (Henry and Tator, 2002), it is possible to analyse them over a short period of time (for example Joye, 2010; Parisi, 1998; and Landau, 2009).

The "swine flu" pandemic in the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*

The main patterns of coverage of the swine flu pandemic in the Canadian national press were the use of Canadian and American sources and the absence of Mexican ones, which reinforced a Western perspective of Mexico; and the construction of Mexico as different from Canada and the West. By stressing the differences between

virulent Mexican cases of the flu --or cases in the Third World-- and milder ones in Canada --or in developed countries-- the newspapers tried to reduce their readers' anxiety and contributed to the stigmatization of Mexico, while suggesting that its underdevelopment and *different* lifestyle made it biologically and culturally weaker (Ungar 1998 cited in Adeyanju et al. 2007).

Use of loaded terms

Journalists chose particular words and phrases for the depiction of Mexico and Mexicans during their swine flu coverage, frequently referring to the country's inability to perform laboratory tests; its need for international help, the deadly cases of the illness in that country, and the screenings Mexican seasonal workers travelling to Canada had to undergo. For example: Immigration Canada, which screens Mexicans for the farm-labour program, is working with the Public Health Agency of Canada and other agencies to assess current risks (*Globe and Mail* April 27, 2009a); "Experts don't yet know why the virus has only killed people in Mexico" (*Globe and Mail* April 28, 2009a); "Mexico has no ability to conduct such tests itself" (*National Post* April 30, 2009).

These depictions, which situate Mexico in a vulnerable position and emphasize a sense of Canadian physical and technological superiority, were consistent throughout the H1N1 flu coverage in both newspapers. The concept of "screening" is particularly problematic as it articulates immigration with health risks. While Canadian tourists returning from Mexico were not forced to undergo a screening, Mexican workers did and they were depicted in the Canadian press as a threat.

Other common words and phrases used for describing Mexico in the *Globe and Mail* were "risk," "unsafe," "shuts down," and "hopes to contain" the virus. Mexicans were described as "having other infections," "carrying the virus," not having "good resistance," and being "susceptible because of genetic factors." All these words and phrases convey a racist ideology that depict Mexicans as the "primitive 'them'" (Wald, 2008: 45) by pointing to an alleged physical inferiority which would make them disease prone and differentiating them from Canadians. For example: "It is also possible that the Mexican population does not have a good resistance to this particular virus" (*Globe and Mail* April 28, 2009b); "Mexicans may be more susceptible because of genetic factors or medical conditions" (*Globe and Mail* April 29, 2009).

The *National Post* referred to Mexico as "filthy," "underequipped," provides "sketchy data," and "is likely to introduce a disease to Canada." These words not only suggest underdevelopment and threat, but construct an entire country in demeaning terms, foregrounding only negative aspects instead of also informing about the efforts it made to control the spread of the flu. For example: "Evidence of its virulence comes

from the somewhat sketchy data emerging from Mexico” (*National Post* April 28, 2009); “Mexico is one of the 13 places around the world most likely to introduce infectious disease to Canada” (*National Post* April 29, 2009).

Finally, both newspapers characterized the flu as “mysterious” and emphasized the fact that it came from Mexico by calling it “Mexican flu” or “Mexican swine flu.” The term “mysterious” applied to a disease relates to anxiety, “an unknown enemy, with no cure, which strikes without warning” (Adeyanju, 2010: 48). And by assigning an origin to the flu, the identity of that place --in this case Mexico-- is also associated to it. According to Adeyanju (2010) “the Othering of a disease by the Western press reassures its audiences but also reinforces the notion of Western superiority in hygiene and medicine” (p. 26). Thus, people who “look” Mexican could be subjected to racialization and discrimination.

Depictions of Mexico and Canada

Depictions of Mexico and Canada were contrasted in the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*. The most frequent words used when referring to Canada were “helped,” “researched,” “tested,” “is prepared” or “better prepared,” “has mild cases,” “is developing a vaccine.” The *Globe and Mail* also employed words such as “concerned,” “at risk,” “calm,” following “basic rules of hygiene,” and being “internationally praised.” For example: “The adoption of pandemic plans by thousands of organizations across the country also makes us better prepared” (*Globe and Mail* April 28, 2009c); “Most patients outside of Mexico have suffered only mild illness” (*National Post* April 28, 2009); “Canada earned international praise at the same time for the scientific support it has lent to the WHO and Mexico” (*National Post* April 30, 2009).

In general, the representation of Canada and Canadians was positive, emphasizing the help it provided to Mexico and the preventive measures taken. According to Richardson (2007) the words used in the media to represent ourselves and the other is an ideological one; and the word choice for describing Mexico and Canada is consistent with a neo-colonial discourse which supports a positive self-representations and negative depictions of the Other (Hall, 1995; Slater, 2004; Chowdry et al., 2002). Both newspapers used terms that depicted Mexico as a threat and as incapable of dealing with the health crisis, filthy and culturally inferior; which contrasts with the depiction of Canada as superior, helpful, scientific and organized. A revealing example is an editorial published by the *National Post* where the town of La Gloria, Mexico, where the first known case of swine flu appeared, is described by the editorialist with sarcasm:

La Gloria is home to a massive pig farming operation whose charming infrastructure includes acres of manure lagoons. (“No one knows for sure how the disease made the jump to little Edgar, but a good guess is that it involved the feces-feasting flies that swarm the very inaptly named Mexican town”) (*National Post* April 27, 2009).

This demeaning representation of La Gloria contributes to the stigmatization of Mexicans as preindustrial, while ignoring the link between their poverty and the impact of globalization in underdeveloped countries such as Mexico. This pattern is consistent with Wald’s (2008) “outbreak narrative,” which constructs the other as a threat to industrialized societies and their lifestyle.

Racialized groups tend to be represented by the media in passive roles (van Dijk, 2000), and Mexican seasonal farm workers in the *Globe and Mail* were portrayed as suspects, possible carriers of the flu virus, and passive actors who lacked agency: as soon as the workers presented symptoms they were taken to the hospital by their Canadian employers; the workers did not decide when to go to the hospital and did not go by themselves either. Concerns about his labour supply are coupled with vigilance toward the dozen Mexican labourers who already arrived on his farm. “Every time a worker coughs I don’t take any chances – I bring him to a clinic,” Mr. Notaro said yesterday (*Globe and Mail* April 27, 2009a).

Both newspapers also mentioned doubts about the data supplied by Mexico on the cases of swine flu and the death toll, either accusing Mexico of downplaying the impact of the illness or exaggerating it, sometimes both on the same day: “The number of Mexicans who are suspected to have died of the swine flu is much higher than the confirmed toll” (*Globe and Mail* April 30, 2009b); “The close to 1,900 cases and 150 or more deaths linked by Mexico have inspired much fear” (*National Post* April 30, 2009).

Doubts about the information on Mexican cases of swine flu generated speculation about possible factors that contributed to the epidemic. A front page story in the *Globe and Mail* quotes a Canadian health expert saying that “maybe there’s more than one thing wrong in Mexico,” and that “Mexico City’s air quality may be a ‘key question’ in explaining why the virus is more severe there” (*Globe and Mail* April 27, 2009b). This article contains some presuppositions – or taken-for-granted, implicit claims (Richardson, 2007) – based on the readers’ previous conceptions and experiences of Mexico. The source speculates that there may be “more than one thing wrong in Mexico” without any details being given on what he means. This claim appeals to the common-sense knowledge of Canadians about developing countries as plagued by all sorts of problems.

Sources

Regarding the use of sources, Richardson (2007) argues that the way in which they are named in the news implies a choice made by journalists, and the social categories they choose to foreground when referring to the actors of the story have a significant impact on how they are viewed by the public (p. 49). The *Globe and Mail* used Mexican sources in 11 stories (24%) and the *National Post* did it in 11 stories (33%). Both newspapers clearly identified Canadian officials, most American sources and those from the World Health Organization. However, Mexican sources tended to be named in general terms, such as “Mexican authorities.” An example of the underrepresentation of Mexican sources is a story about the federal seasonal farm workers’ program and its possible interruption due to the flu (*Globe and Mail* April 27, 2009a), where Canadian farmers were not only identified but also directly quoted. However, no Mexican workers were quoted or even mentioned despite the fact that many had already arrived to Canada.

The choice of the journalists to include certain sources and leave others out impacts the way the story is constructed by giving only some opinions and perspectives while neglecting others. Speaking in the news is power in itself according to Richardson (2007: 87), thus, it is important to consider who are given a voice and who are not. The *Globe and Mail* preferred Canadian officials and experts, American officials, and spokespersons for international organizations. Some of the sources used and quoted by the *Globe and Mail* were the Deputy Minister of the Public Health Agency of Canada, Canada’s chief Public Health officer, the Director of infectious diseases at the Ontario Agency for Health, Protection and Promotion, an infectious-disease expert at Toronto’s Mount Sinai Hospital, and a spokesperson for the U.S. Center of Disease control. Mexican sources were few and usually indirectly quoted and identified in general terms.

The lack of Mexican sources is problematic, especially when many stories are about the epidemic in Mexico and the measures taken by this country. When referring to the spread of the disease in Mexico and the possible factors that prompted it, the *Globe and Mail* preferred to consult Canadian sources, even provincial sources like Nova Scotia’s chief public health officer and an epidemiologist with the British Columbia Centre for Disease control, than talking to Mexican officials and experts, or even to health professionals of the Mexican community in Canada.

Mexican authorities in the *Globe and Mail* usually are not directly quoted. According to Richardson (2007) quoting sources indirectly could lead to potential distortion and misrepresentation; and thus, sources who are directly quoted have a greater influence than those who are indirectly quoted, and who the journalists chooses to quote can reveal bias. For example, when referring to the travel advisory issued by

Canada advising not to make unnecessary trips to Mexico, the *Globe and Mail* quoted indirectly a Canadian federal official against a travel ban and quoted directly a provincial official in favour of a ban against Mexico (*Globe and Mail* April 25, 2009). This suggests bias in favour of a travel ban that would inevitably damage Mexico's economy.

A problematic direct quote is that of a Dr. André Corriveau, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, stating that "there really is no part of Mexico where you can say is free of disease" (*Globe and Mail* April 29, 2009b). This quote not only misinforms --flu cases were only found in central Mexico-- but also projects an image of Mexico as unsafe, which contributes to xenophobia. However, the journalist did not include another source that could counterbalance this opinion.

In the *National Post's* coverage the preferred sources were Canadian researchers and experts, like the president of the Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada; a McGill University infectious-disease specialist; an expert University of British Columbia; and an infectious disease specialist at Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital. Canadian and American officials were also consulted, although less frequently than in the *Globe and Mail*. Mexican sources were also used but in this case they were residents of Mexico City telling their personal experiences (*National Post* April 27, 2009). The lack of Mexican researchers and experts in the *National Post's* coverage shows that these sources probably were not trusted or considered worthy enough to be consulted. By discriminating Mexican experts as sources, the *National Post* reinforced the notion of Canada as scientific and rational and Mexico as unable to handle crisis.

Discussion and conclusion

The coverage of the H1N1 flu outbreak in the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* reveal repeated references to three key aspects of a neo-colonial discourse: (1) racial and cultural superiority/inferiority; (2) otherness; and (3) xenophobia. This was achieved by under-representing Mexico and constructing it as a threat to Canadian security, incapable of dealing with the crisis, and stigmatizing it as carrier of the virus; while depicting Canada in positive terms -- rational, in charge of the situation, and dealing with the problem.

The subordination of Mexico in the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* was also achieved by constantly relating Canada to the United States, emphasizing their similarities, while pointing out Mexico's differences. This was reinforced by emphasizing the similarity between mild cases of swine flu in Canada and the United States, while cases in Mexico were lethal; or by stressing the superior technology available in Canada and the United States.

At first, the newspapers centered their coverage of the A H1N1 flu on the situation in Mexico and how it was developing. They constantly emphasized that Mexicans were “different” culturally, biologically and environmentally than Canadians in order to reduce the perception of risk in their readers. However, as the first cases of swine flu appeared in Canada, the coverage began reflecting the anxiety of Canadians over the growing presence of non-White immigrants (Adenyanju, 2010) and constructed Mexicans as an imminent threat to Canadian society, by assigning a clear origin to the virus and relating it to temporary immigrants from Mexico, which contributed to a xenophobic discourse (Muntean 2009). The fact that swine flu was considered a Mexican illness instead of a North American one --despite cases in the U.S. --, and that neither newspaper mentioned the role of NAFTA in the pork industry --and on the extreme poverty in which some people in Mexico live in --, is also a strategy for distancing Canada from the source of the illness (Wald, 2008).

The use of Mexican sources in the coverage of the H1N1 flu in the Canadian newspapers was very limited (between 22% and 33% of the stories used at least one Mexican source). Most of the Mexican sources used in the sample were officials, while no alternative sources were consulted by the Canadian journalists. This is consistent with the tendency of North American news media to cover developing regions based on official versions which coincide with Western or Eurocentric views.

The analyzed coverage of the A H1N1 flu in the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* shows how asymmetric power relations between Canada and Mexico are reflected in the news media through the use of a neo-colonial discourse that emphasizes difference, stereotype, and a perceived sense of superiority over the racialized Other. By reinforcing existing stereotypes against developing nations, and particularly against Mexico, the Canadian press is contributing to a Eurocentric ideology that has a negative impact on the public perception of Mexicans in Canada, and which could also affect the bilateral relation.

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“THE CASE FOR NGO NEWS”

Kat Borlongan

Introduction and Context

The [2013 Milton Wolf Seminar](#) discussed the role of journalists and diplomats in constructing the narratives surrounding major geo-political events (i.e. pivots). During the discussions, professional journalism was often associated with, and at times even equated to, objectivity. Invoked conventionally within the newsroom, objectivity can be defined as “a faith in ‘facts,’ a distrust of ‘values,’ and a commitment to their segregation.^[1]” Within the purview of “witnessing,” the image of the bystander most closely approaches this definition of objectivity. Cohen^[2] talks about the bystander as “a person who is present at an incident but does not take part.” This notion of bystander-as-objective-witness hinges on the idea of neutrality and non-involvement, even what might be seen as passivity or impotence – hence the synonym “onlooker.”

An NGO, by this definition, is not objective bystander because its very presence at a conflict or calamity site is borne out of an intention to assist or intervene. For this reason, critiques have emerged about NGOs and their lack of journalistic neutrality and objectivity. One common critique, for instance, contends that NGOs and their open pursuit of certain goals and values cannot guarantee objectivity. The growing influence of NGOs has generated further critiques with regard to the nature of their funding and its impact on their autonomy in newsmaking practice. Reimann^[3] goes so far as to say that funding from government aid agencies, multilateral donors, and private foundations have turned NGOs into mere subcontractors or policy instruments for their benefactors.

If we hold fast to the idea that objectivity is an indispensable criterion for newsmaking and that professional journalists are, in fact, neutral bystanders, then it follows that NGOs cannot be considered true newsmakers. Yet two questions must be addressed before making this conclusion: **To what extent do media organizations satisfy the objectivity criterion? And, why should we be so ready to assume that the ideal of objectivity is universally absolute and, consequently, dismiss NGO news?**

* * *

To address the first question, I draw on media studies literature that details the way current modalities of news production are imbued with ideologies, calling into question the standard of absolute objectivity in professional journalism. It seems absurd to assume that such a standard of objectivity ought to be applied to NGO newsmaking practices when news organizations themselves do not faithfully adhere to this standard.

A number of scholars^[4] believe that the media play a pivotal role in transmitting the symbolic and economic values underlying the ideology of dominant groups. Similar to NGOs, media institutions are subject to high levels of instrumentalism, both for commercial and political interests. Questioned about the [Democratic Voice of Burma's](#) (DVB) agenda during an anonymous interview, for example, one of the DVB's reporters made an insightful [comment](#) in this regard:

“Yes, in a way, we are trying to achieve a regime change. But this is not our main goal. It most important for us is to educate the populace, provide information about democracy and rights. All media corporations have an agenda: Al Jazeera, BBC, Fox. This is something we can also have.”

Indeed, media institutions are in many instances part of large conglomerates organized to pursue strategies designed to enhance profit, contain costs, and reduce risks. One of the most well-known examples of this is media baron Rupert Murdoch's well-documented proprietorial intervention across News Corporation to “pursue his own interests, willing to sacrifice ethical, political and journalistic standards for profit”.^[5]

With regards to the second question about objectivity being a universal yardstick for journalism, there is an argument that objectivity is a strategically employed construct and that it is relatively dispensable. To begin with, the very foundations of the concept of objectivity are already quite rocky; it implies the following:

“[T]hat there is indeed a world “out there” and that an account of a given event reflects that world, or a piece of it, with some degree of accuracy. The “objective assumption” states not only that the media are objective, but that there is a world out there to be objective about.^[6]“

Several scholars argue that in making claims of journalistic objectivity on behalf of the media, there is a failure to consider newsmaking practices such as news story selection, treatment, context and display – activities require the interpretation of public events by journalists serving as decision-makers.^[7]

Moreover, objectivity appears to have become a tool for creating a jurisdiction for professional journalists. Drawing on Abbott's understanding of a profession's jurisdiction as the area of expertise and set of problems each profession claims and protects, it seems that journalism's stake on the authority to produce witness-based news serves to draw boundary lines between those on the "inside" and those on the "outside" of the profession^[8]. This creates a distinction that sets apart journalists as a group with claims to a unique professional knowledge that makes them trustworthy in the eyes of the public. Part of this claim involves asserting themselves as necessary intermediaries between NGOs and the public, thereby discarding NGOs as unauthorized media witnesses. Ashuri and Pinchevski characterize witnessing as a "game of trust"^[9] in which agents scramble to gain the trust of their publics. Before one can participate in this game however, s/he must first be admitted into the field, or arguably, the genre of newsmaking. "[T]here will always be those who à priori remain — or are kept — outside the field, those who are barred from entering." To this, they later add that being excluded from the game of witnessing, implies being relegated to silence.

In sum, there is no field of pure or independent journalism that NGO newsmaking risks contaminating; news organizations themselves are unable to truly adhere to the standard of objectivity they lay claims to as the distinguishing characteristic of professional journalism. Furthermore, whether or not NGOs are deemed as worthy successors of legacy media reporting in disaster and conflict zones, it seems that they are here to stay in order to fill the void that the decline of the witness-based foreign journalist has left behind.

The commercial model for international reporting is broken, resulting in a steep decline in witness-based reporting from disaster and conflict zones, especially in legacy newspapers and network news programs^[10]. Conflict and disaster reporting, with its astronomical costs, has been at the forefront of budget cuts necessitated by economic pressures. As Andrew Currah underscores, "no matter how powerful the philanthropic spirit or quest for power, the practical costs of journalism demand a robust economic model (which is looking increasingly unstable in the present context)"^[11].

One of the meager compromises to a fully-operational foreign news bureau is the parrn a major international story breaks, news organizations will often splurge on parachute journalism, sending their own journalists into an area to report on a story that he/she has little knowledge or experience of. More often than not, however, the situation is direr when no journalists are sent at all. As a result, some of the most pressing crises receive

little to no news coverage. Human Rights Watch (HRW), a global NGO, has critiqued the “commercial yardstick” used by these newsmakers to measure the newsworthiness of crises that they do not have resources to cover. Moeller observes that this practice “is what attracts an audience—an audience that can be delivered to advertisers . . . Media institutions do not have any inherent business instincts to cover even major disasters beyond the initial cataclysm”[\[12\]](#). She further explains that journalists often neglect ongoing emergencies such as wars or famines—no matter how urgent—due to the massive logistical complexities involved in covering them, but also because stories of chronic tragedy in distant places are simply less appealing to their audiences.

Dwindling to non-existent media coverage has prompted many frustrated NGOs to cross the exclusionary boundaries established by conventional journalism organizations such as The Guardian or CNN, in order to play a role in providing news as well. While these NGOs differ greatly in many respects from professional newsmakers, “they can rightly claim to cover the world in a more systematic way than do most broadcasters and newspapers”[\[13\]](#). Whereas foreign news bureaus are closing one by one, many NGOs are logistically capable of “being there”, and also being better equipped than most news organizations to gather information and testimony in places where few journalists go.

[Médecins Sans Frontières](#) (MSF) invests heavily in pre-mission exploratory onsite research, gathering in-depth information on security-related but also political and cultural dimensions of their site of intervention. The organization also operates independently from local authorities by using their own communication equipment, transportation, housing structures, and even power sources. Moreover, MSF benefits from the support of experts such as communication officers, emergency coordinators, and security logisticians that are key to obtaining information in high-risk areas where MSF and allied NGOs are the only actors left.

It seems that foreign correspondence from disaster and conflict zones is no longer the bounded generic practice it once used to be; nor is it the protected zone or professional province of traditional news organizations.

* * *

Jeff Jarvis, in the 2011 documentary [Page One](#), makes the following statement: “The old newspaper model is dying. News is not dying.” As we have seen, despite apocalyptic forecasts, this is also the case with regard to conflict zone reporting thanks

in part to the emergence of NGO news. In his paper on the future of foreign correspondence, Sambrook^[14] concludes that “Whatever the economics of international news, the [responsibility to bear witness] is something which all news organizations must strive to preserve”. It would seem, then, that what we have on our hands is, in fact, a survival story. Witnessing has indeed been preserved, albeit through less conventional newsmakers: NGOs. In the process of this transition, the generic practice of witnessing has been actively repurposed so as not to depict a world “as it is”, as journalists are expected to do, but to help construct the world as NGOs believe it ought to be.

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“THE PRECARIETY OF THE JOURNALISM DEGREE AT A TIME OF
INDUSTRY UPHEAVAL”

Paul Fontaine

Abstract

This article aims to explore the various approaches to journalism education prevalent in Canada and the U.S. currently. The article will put recent academic work in conversation with news commentary and industry reports. The questions that my article will explore are: is a journalism degree useful at a time when tuition costs and ever-changing industry standards make a future in journalism so tenuous? What new or proposed models of journalism education that point toward shifts in the ways that journalism is practiced and discussed in an academic setting? The proposed article will provide an overview of the debates between both industry professionals and those interested in journalism's place in North America. Some of the models to be discussed include: the medical school model of journalism education, which puts a premium on the interaction between students and practicing journalists, and the entrepreneurial approach which encourages creativity and self-promotion along with a knowledge of new media communication. The article will provide insights into the place that journalism education has historically occupied within Canadian and American universities, before moving to a final discussion about how that space has been made problematic by the monumental changes to journalism practice. As newsrooms tackle the problem of creating revenue and communicate effectively in an online news environment, this article explores how journalism schools are attempting to create curriculum that meets journalism's needs but also allows students to think critically about the industry many of them hope to enter.

Keywords: journalism education; journalism; new models; journalism degree

*Teaching good old-fashioned skills such as reporting and editing is no longer enough. We need to better prepare students to meet the needs of the rapidly changing world of the media. We need to rethink not only what professional skills are taught but how they are taught.*⁴

⁴ John Soloski. "On Defining the Nature of Graduate Education," *Journalism Educator*. 49.2 (1994): 8.

This article aims to engage with current debates around the role of journalism programs in Canadian and American universities. It aims to provide an overview of the recent scholarship in the area of journalism education, and to put that scholarship in conversation with recent popular accounts and opinions about the state of the relationship between journalism processes as they are being taught in the university and journalism as it is being practiced. As Stephen Reese argues, because of the pivotal role that the academy and the press play as ‘cultural authorities, both spaces experience “significant struggle during institutional crisis.”⁵ Even in the face of such crisis, undergraduate and graduate degrees in journalism and mass communications are found in almost every country on earth, with more than 500 journalism schools in North America and 3,500 worldwide.⁶ It is in university journalism departments that these two worlds come together and where the struggle to maintain authority demands a consideration of journalism as theoretical fodder, as practice, as an academic discipline, and as a profession. Even as the problems of industry guide the conversations in journalism department classrooms, the sense of urgency to make changes may be lacking. As Camp writes, “as long as enrollment remains stable, universities may lack the incentive to reevaluate their journalism programs and their place in the broader academic community.”⁷ This article hopes to serve as a snapshot of journalism education, currently, as new directions are being explored. To what degree they are new though will be a focal point for the following sections.

The article will rely on a small number of scholars, but will tease out their respective arguments and contextualize them to make the ties between historical and current evident. The overarching aim of this article is to bring into sharp relief the precarity of the journalism degree as shifts in communication technology, news production and information consumption – among other factors – have made it hard to know what training will be necessary for students aspiring to be journalists. In terms of the teaching of journalism within the university, the article will explore the historical rifts that have between journalism programs and university administration and other academic disciplines. There will be a particular focus on the relationship between journalism and communications departments. Camp explains that as the death knell continues to toll for newspapers in North America, the rise of the amateur journalist has also meant that the future of professional journalism has been called into question. With

⁵ Stephen D. Reese, “The Progressive Potential of Journalism Education: Recasting the Academic versus Professional Debate” *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 4, no. 4 (1999): 70.

⁶ Joe Foote. “Conference report: World Journalism Education Congress,” *Journalism Studies*, 9, no. 1 (2008).

⁷ Michael Camp, “The J-School Debate: Is the Timing Finally Right for University Journalism Programs and the Rest of the University to Work Together?” *The Journal of General Education* 61, no. 3 (2012): 256.

amateur journalists taking to the Internet, Camp (2012) explains the plight of the professional journalist, and poses the question: “If professional journalism is in decline, what is the justification for journalism schools?”⁸

Industry and scholarly debates about journalism education

On August 8, 2013, the journalism think tank Poynter Institute published its News University’s *The Future of Journalism Education: 2013*⁹, which included a survey of members of the journalistic community as well as journalism school faculty, conveys a disparity between the two groups in terms of the value that is placed on a journalism degree. The report concludes that “journalism degrees are in danger of becoming perceived as irrelevant. This is reflected in the elimination of journalism programs or the incorporation of journalism into the wider communications curriculum in many universities.” In the wake of the report, it is useful to look at debates both within academic institutions and the journalism industry, in the U.S. and Canada, which have garnered increasing scholarly and industry attention in recent years. These contemporary opinions reflect dialogues that have existed between journalism education and practice since the first North American journalism schools opened their doors in the early 20th century. Before discussing current trends within journalism education, this section will explore the tensions that have long existed between journalism as it is taught and journalism as it is practiced.

In the early 1900s, New York publishing magnate Joseph Pulitzer foresaw that journalism programs would proliferate across America and “would be seen in roughly the same lights as schools of law, medicine, and engineering.”¹⁰ He was correct on one account, as new journalism programs and streams continue to emerge in Canada and the U.S., but journalism still struggles to achieve the status of academic discipline, for various reasons, including the hiring criteria within journalism programs – who are under pressure to strike a balance between practical experience and academic accomplishment – and the relationship journalism departments have with the public. There were early indicators that, like other programs that offer professional training, journalism education would find itself in perpetual limbo, caught between theoretical

⁸ Michael Camp, “The J-School Debate: Is the Timing Finally Right for University Journalism Programs and the Rest of the University to Work Together?,” 240-241.

⁹ The Poynter Institute, *The State of Journalism Education*. News University, 2013, www.poynter.org (accessed September 2 2013).

¹⁰ Michael Camp, “The J-School Debate: Is the Timing Finally Right for University Journalism Programs and the Rest of the University to Work Together?” 244.

concerns over the place of journalism in society and trying to fill the needs and expectations of the journalism industry.

Two competing approaches to journalism education emerged quickly, drawing a line between practical and theoretical early on in the discipline's North American formation. The first, William Bleyer's approach at the University of Wisconsin, integrated journalism with the liberal arts, while the University of Missouri's Walter Williams promoted "hands-on training in a 'real-world' environment".¹¹ Current journalism education practice usually falls into one of these two camps, although contemporary iterations have taken on myriad forms. In general, colleges and polytechnical institutions take the skills-based approach advocated by Williams, while universities usually opt to emphasize theory and critical thinking alongside courses on writing, editing and news-gathering techniques.¹² Contemporary debates around journalism education continually refer to these two opposing approaches, although current talk around the future of university and college journalism programs, whether as part of a liberal arts education or as part of a practical skills method, mirror those that are taking place within the journalism industry. But, while journalism struggles to validate its place, and find sources of revenue that will keep it sustainable going forward, journalism school faces pressure both from the industry and from the more established academic disciplines. Reese writes of journalism education's two-front battle:

Its lesser status and wealth compared to other professional programs make it potentially more dependent on outside help, while its relative immaturity make it suspect by older disciplines. Thus the academic case for journalism must be clearly thought out to help guide and withstand these crosscutting pressures.¹³

Journalism education must serve the needs of the industry it hopes to provide with journalists, while at the same time maintaining curricula and standards to guarantee its future within the university. Winning over prospective students is an added pressure, especially as the industry, and university liberal arts degree programs, provides little in the way of guarantees in the job market.

¹¹ Stephen D. Reese, "Progressive Potential of Journalism Education: Recasting the Academic versus Professional Debate," 72.

¹² Melvin Mencher. "What should be taught in journalism schools? An aspiring reporter doesn't need to learn how—he needs to learn what?," *Nieman Reports* (Winter, 2002): 102-103.

¹³ Stephen D. Reese, "The Progressive Potential of Journalism Education: Recasting the Academic versus Professional Debate," 78.

In a March 1, 2013 post on the *Maclean's* website, titled "Is a journalism degree worth doing?", Jane Switzer, a graduate of the Ryerson University's Master of Journalism program, voiced her disappointment in the department's curriculum. She argues against the liberal arts focus as part of a journalism degree, writing that, "It's a shame that some aspiring journalists think j-school is the arbiter of their professional worth, and that the journalism degree is the only route to employment. It shouldn't be."¹⁴ The argument that Switzer makes against university journalism degree-granting programs is partly based on a cost-benefit analysis. According to a 2011 survey, which Switzer cites, journalists in Ontario have seen a steady decline in pay between the years of 2009 and 2011. The survey found that those who had finished j-school in 2007 were averaging \$45,000. Two years later in 2011, those who had finished in 2009 were making just \$41,151. Over that same period, the survey found that median wages for university graduates barely changed from \$49,169 to \$49,151.¹⁵ For Switzer, and for many hoping to break into the Canadian news industry, the time spent in the classroom takes away from time in newsrooms. Switzer says the redeeming value of journalism school for her was the connections that it allowed her to make with news outlets and established journalists. It is this desire on the part of the journalism students to get out of the classroom and start establishing themselves in the industry that intensifies the already contentious relationship between journalism education and journalism in practice. This is a phenomenon experienced by any program that offers professional training, be it business, law, medical, or journalism.¹⁶

In his article, "Defining the Nature of Graduate Education," Soloski writes about the difficult position that journalism departments find themselves in, writing: "From within the academy, professional programs are often considered second-class citizens because they are thought to teach nothing but technical skills and their professors are thought to be practitioners and not scholars. From outside the academy, the professions criticize these programs for not keeping up with their needs."¹⁷ This need to validate itself within the academy and industry has a direct effect on curriculum development and faculty selection.

In terms of department hiring processes, Reese makes the correlation that many university journalism degree programs draw between professional experience and classroom authority problematic. He rightly points out that, "Professional experience in

¹⁴ Jane Switzer. "Is a journalism degree worth doing?" *Macleans.ca*, March 1, 2013, <http://oncampus.macleans.ca/education/2013/03/01/is-a-journalism-degree-worth-doing/#more-52612>.

¹⁵ "Employment Outcomes of 2009 Graduates of Ontario university Programs," Council of Ontario Universities, November 2012, <http://cou.on.ca/publications/reports/pdfs/2011-survey-highlights---ontario-graduate-employe>.

¹⁶ John Soloski. "On Defining the Nature of Graduate Education," 4-11.

¹⁷ John Soloski. "On Defining the Nature of Graduate Education," 4.

journalism, for example, need not qualify one as an academic any more than being a successful teacher means that one is ready to assume a top editorial position.”¹⁸ Faculty hiring is one of the ways in which journalism programs can maintain connections to the journalism industry. By hiring practicing journalists, editors, and publishers to teach at journalism schools, the departments can maintain relationships with news outlets and increase the number of job and internship opportunities for students. However, as Reese argues, industry experience in no way guarantees command of a university classroom. Also, it should come as no surprise that the criteria for hiring within journalism programs isolates them from other university disciplines, disciplines that equate professorial positions with years of publishing in peer-reviewed journals and books, as well as participation in funded research. It is difficult for universities to adequately access a journalist’s qualifications as a teacher, leaving journalism programs with the alternative of hiring professors who studied journalism as graduate students, but who don’t have experience working as journalists. The former option helps programs stay connected to journalism as practice, while the latter helps toward validating the programs within the university. Camp writes that universities in Canada, for the most part, have “opted for a mix of qualifications when hiring journalism professors.”¹⁹ He argues that while this approach may remedy the immediate problem of strategically staffing journalism faculty to appease the journalist industry, it also may isolate journalism programs from the rest of the university, as journalism instructors will occupy a different category than their colleagues in other academic disciplines.

Curricula development in journalism schools mirrors the tensions experienced in faculty hiring. In the following section, I will lay out some of the directions that journalism schools in Canada and the U.S are taking in attempts to meet current industry demands, as well as to fulfill university expectations. This conversation will be broken into two more manageable debates currently taking place in journalism schools. The first looks at the ‘teaching hospital’ approach to journalism education, which advocates strong ties between journalism schools and the journalism industry. One alternative to that model, is an entrepreneurial model of journalism education. I will outline the arguments for and against these two models. In the second discussion, I will explore the current versions of the trade school versus knowledge profession debates. These two disparate views of journalism education are informed by previous schools of thought, but – in terms of trade school approach – they represent attempts to provide alternatives to traditional journalism education that reflect the changes in

¹⁸ S.D. Reese, “Progressive Potential of Journalism Education: Recasting the Academic versus Professional Debate,” 87.

¹⁹ Michael Camp, “The J-School Debate: Is the Timing Finally Right for University Journalism Programs and the Rest of the University to Work Together?” 255.

communications technology. As for the knowledge profession approach, many programs want their curriculum to include reflections on, and critiques of, journalism's role in society.

The “teaching hospital” approach to journalism education

Lemann (2009) introduced the term, “teaching hospital,” as an approach by which journalism schools would be in a position to “provide essential services to their communities while they are educating their students.”²⁰ Lemann argues that because of the Internet “doesn’t support the kind of journalism that covers production costs,” university journalism programs are in a position to provide the kind of reportage that isn’t financially viable with the emergence of online journalism as the primary medium by which many news readers get their content. With their close proximity to experts and innovators in other academic disciplines, Lemann writes that journalism programs can produce more sophisticated coverage than their professional counterparts. As well as providing communities with another news source, the “teaching hospital” approach, as a part of the lineage of practical-minded journalism programs, gets students on-the-job experience instead of time in the classroom. Lemann does talk about the importance of instruction in “news literacy” courses, explaining that such courses serve to “educate civilians about how journalism works,”²¹ but, he writes, original new production in journalism in the department should be the priority. According to its detractors, the “teaching hospital” approach lacks critical awareness, which doesn’t adequately account for the scale and pace of change within the journalism industry. It also assumes too much in its assertions about the correlations between journalism and other professions²² – including medicine and law.

In their 2013 publication, Mensing and Ryfe, write that the metaphor of the “teaching hospital,” makes it harder for students to “think differently” about journalism. They write:

²⁰ Nicholas Lemann. “Journalism Schools Can Push Coverage Beyond Breaking News,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 15, 2009, para. 15, <http://chronicle.com/article/Journalism-Schools-Can-Push/49115/> (accessed September 3 2013).

²¹ Nicholas Lemann. “Journalism Schools Can Push Coverage Beyond Breaking News,” para. 10.

²² Doug Fisher. “Dear Eric Newton, good ideas, but now some reality,” *Common Sense Journalism*, May 16, 2012, <http://commonsensej.blogspot.com/2012/05/dear-eric-newton-good-ideas-but-now.html> (accessed September 2, 2013).

Rather than creating conditions for students to help re-think journalistic practices, the teaching hospital model reinforces the conviction that content delivery is the primary purpose of journalism.²³

Instead of thinking about journalism in new ways and engaging in critical explorations of journalistic practice, the “teaching hospital” model is all about producing quality content. Lemann’s description of the purpose of “news literacy” provides of useful site of tension between advocates and critics of the “teaching hospital” model. Lemann assumes a fixity in journalism, stating that such courses will help to encourage people to read the news everyday, while the counterargument is that journalism schools should provide spaces in which students can critically examine news production and consumption. In this way, the “hospital approach’ implies that journalism just needs to be practiced more rigorously, rather than approaching journalism as a field, profession, and practice that has been witness to its fundamental values being called into question.²⁴

Broadening the definition of what it means to be a journalist

Mensing and Ryfe argue for an entrepreneurial model that urges flexibility in the wake of major changes that continue to occur in journalism practice. They lay out a entrepreneurial curriculum for journalism education that differs from the “teaching hospital” model, in that it would include considerations of what journalism means to society, and taking into account a diverse range of journalistic practices. They argue that this would include, at the pedagogical level, “giving students a way of thinking about the purpose of information in society, with concrete examples, would help them figure out for themselves what journalism means and what it is for.”²⁵ The authors say the biggest challenge to implementing an entrepreneurial approach is orientating journalism education so the primary foci become ‘community and individual,’ instead of the journalism industry. The result, according to Mensing and Ryfe, is that the first consideration by the journalism programs would be how to better serve the communities in which they are situated. The barrier to such an orientation lies in the fact that meeting the needs of audiences and building long-lasting relationships with communities, “is

²³ Donica Mensing and David Ryfe. “Blueprint for Change: From the Teaching Hospital to the Entrepreneurial Model of Journalism Education,” *International Symposium on Online Journalism* (2013): 2.

²⁴ David Ryfe. *Can Journalism Survive: An Inside Look at American Newsrooms*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012.

²⁵ Donica Mensing and David Ryfe. “Blueprint for Change: From the Teaching Hospital to the Entrepreneurial Model of Journalism Education,” 10.

exceedingly difficult to do in an academic setting with students who come and go, semesters that begin and end and faculty who are neither paid nor rewarded for community service.”²⁶

In a similar vein, there has been turn in recent years to a critical-service learning approach in journalism education. This model of journalism education, even more so than the entrepreneurial approach, promotes a critical self- reflexivity and heightened sense of responsibility to audiences. Clark describes the approach:

As students in critical service-learning experiences are encouraged to be open to discovering the limitations of their own perspectives so that they might truly engage dialogically with their community partners, critical service learning holds great potential in relation to a journalism education program that is oriented toward supporting pluralist approaches to journalism and challenging notions of journalistic autonomy, impartiality, and objectivity.²⁷

The move in journalism toward questioning the tenets around which the practice has organized itself up until now, is a radical shift reflecting the questions being posed by groups including, news consumers, media critics, cultural studies theorists, and journalism studies scholars. Clark looks to the work of Deuze (2005), who offers a corrective to the “industry/university impasse,” by considering the connections between journalism and journalism education. Deuze’s focus is the ideology of professional journalists, which he defines as the “collection of values, strategies, and professional codes characterizing professional journalism and shared by most of its members.”²⁸ Evident in Clark’s approach – and in her turn to Deuze – is a focus on community and citizenry. She advocates that journalism students be encouraged to be self-reflexive and to be critical when considering news outlets as economic structures. She calls on journalism educators to “empower students to embrace a self-concept as a globally sensitive journalist who seeks truth, accuracy, and comprehension, but one who is also a member of that global community rather than merely a neutral observer of it.”²⁹ So, what courses can best aid aspiring journalists to reach the lofty goals put forward by scholars, including Clarke and Deuze? A possible path to critical, community-orientated

²⁶ Donica Mensing and David Ryfe. “Blueprint for Change: From the Teaching Hospital to the Entrepreneurial Model of Journalism Education,” 12.

²⁷ Lynn Schofield Clark. “Cultivating the media activist: How critical media literacy and critical service learning can reform journalism education,” *Journalism* (2013): 4.

²⁸ Mark Deuze. “What is journalism? Professional identity and ideology of journalists reconsidered,” *Journalism* 6, no. 4 (2005): 445.

²⁹ Lynn Schofield Clark. “Cultivating the media activist: How critical media literacy and critical service learning can reform journalism education,” 14.

reportage is the journalism as knowledge profession model, which shares in common with the entrepreneurial and critical service approaches an emphasis on critical thinking and flexibility.

Journalism as a “knowledge profession”

As has been stated, with the proliferation of online news content, professional journalists and the educational institutions are facing increasing pressure to validate their existence as an ever-increasing population of citizen journalists and bloggers is producing content. One way to promote journalism as a profession is to emphasize the distinctions between content creators and journalists. While advocating for the importance of educational focus on social media and mobile delivery of news, Donsbach (2013) argues that the surge of content that has accompanied changes in communication technology, makes professional journalism even more vital. He writes: All citizen journalists’ activities, bloggers, activists, or social media fans forwarding links to news sites cannot replace the two core functions that professional journalism brings to society; that is 1) sorting out the relevant parts of reality, checking assertions about these, and relating them to other parts of reality in the present and past; and 2) building a commonly accepted platform for social discourse credited with trust by society.³⁰

While I have emphasized the tension between education and industry in the previous models and debates in this article, Donsbach argument is partly a response to the emphasis placed on new technologies in journalism education. He advocates for an interdisciplinary education as a way to foster critical thinking and subject expertise. He writes that this model could include an integrative dual major at the undergraduate level; an undergraduate journalism degree followed by graduate work in a substantive field; an undergraduate degree in a disciplinary field followed by graduate work in journalism; graduate training in both journalism and a substantive field; or mid-career subject-area training for practicing journalists. He believes that a journalism education that facilitates conversations about journalism under the umbrella of other subjects (for example, politics or statistics) will prepare students to be more informed and effective journalists. As the industry attempts to keep up with current communication technologies, scholars, including Donsbach, have argued that it is the processes behind quality journalistic practice and not instruction in “how to use the latest technology of communication,”³¹

³⁰ Wolfgang Donsbach. “Journalism as the new knowledge profession and consequences for journalism education,” *Journalism* 0, no. 0 (2013): 13-14.

³¹ John Soloski. "On Defining the Nature of Graduate Education," 6.

should be the focus of journalism degree-granting programs. Reese sees particular benefits in journalism programs joining forces with other communication disciplines, which he believes will provide “greater concentration of political strength and authority on university campuses”³²

The opinion that aspiring journalists benefit from an education in fields other than journalism is widely shared – even within the industry. As Camp notes, “There are still accomplished journalists who question the value of studying journalism in university, partly because they think that any aspiring journalist would be better off studying something—in fact, anything—else.”³³ The financial constraints on those who wish to pursue a post-secondary education still apply though, and whether you are placing journalism education firmly within a skills-based tradition or allowing it to cross-pollinate with other disciplines, lack of jobs – and therefore the lack of a revenue stream once school is done – makes any kind of university journalism training a hard sell. Journalism schools in Canada and the U.S. are feeling the effects of the above-stated tensions. In his April 17, 2013 blog post on Poynter.org, Tom Rosentiel writes that in recent years U.S. universities have decided to do away with standalone journalism programs all together. The reason, he argues, is that “the trade school model of teaching journalism, which has never fit comfortably in research universities, falters when the jobs supporting it are shrinking.”³⁴ He urges journalism programs to focus on learning streams that facilitate online interaction and specialize in technology and data processing. As has been noted above, an emphasis on technology also has its pitfalls – the most blaring being the speedy rate of obsolescence for communication technologies, so that what journalism students learn now, could be out-of-date by the time they enter the job market.

The journalism school curriculum once was deemed acceptable within most Canadian and U.S. journalism departments is now being challenged by an ever-changing industry. At the same time, for the reasons listed by scholars including Camp, that trade school approach continues to be a source of tension in the relationship between journalism programs and other university disciplines. The concluding discussion will discuss some the newest approaches – some practical and others driven by a desire to form relationships with the larger university community – that have emerged in journalism education.

³² Stephen D. Reese, “The Progressive Potential of Journalism Education: Recasting the Academic versus Professional Debate,” 89.

³³ Michael Camp, “The J-School Debate: Is the Timing Finally Right for University Journalism Programs and the Rest of the University to Work Together?” 245.

³⁴ Tom Rosenstiel. “Why we need a better conversation about the future of journalism education,” April 17, 2013, para. 5, <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/the-next-journalism/210196/why-we-need-a-better-conversation-about-the-future-of-journalism-education/> (accessed September 3, 2013).

New takes on old approaches in journalism education

The current ‘innovations’ in journalism education – although reacting to contemporary changes in the journalism industry – in fact reflect new iterations of the approaches advocated by Bleyer and Williams in the early 1900s. For example, the University of Toronto’s Munk School of Global Affairs has recently begun to offer a journalism certificate program that allows students to freelance their way to a certificate, under the guidance of a mentor. The on-the-job approach is not new, but U of T’s new program moves journalism education farther from the university, which corresponds with the argument, voiced in popular and academic discourses on journalism education, that the best education comes through experience. With shrinking newsrooms though, the resources needed on the part of the industry to train student journalists may prove too much to bear for news outlets struggling to create original content and identify new revenue streams.

Camp promotes using the fundamental skills being taught (reporting, interviewing, editing) within journalism departments to form relationships with the other university disciplines. Journalism, which prides itself on its ability – not always realized – to translate the complexities of institutional decision-making and disciplinary jargon into understandable language could prove invaluable in a university setting. Disciplines that struggle to get their research findings and innovations out to a wider audiences could look to university journalism programs to make those goings-on appealing to those outside of the disciplines. This would go towards remedying a major rift in the relationship between academic institutions and the journalism programs that they are home to. The rift, identified by Camp, concerns orientation, as journalism professors and instructors are orientated to think of themselves as being in dialogue with the public, which is generally not the case in other academic disciplines. Camp argues that “universities with journalism departments would be wise to acknowledge this fundamental difference in orientation, if only because it helps explain the different values and apparent isolation of journalism programs within the university community.”³⁵ By focusing on the positives of the this orientation and using it to benefit other disciplines, universities will go a long way toward bridging the gap between journalism programs the wider university community. Based on the current academic literature on journalism education, and taking into consideration industry factors (consolidation of news agencies and outlets, the proliferation of online content, as well as the broadening definition of what activities constitute journalism), the best course of action would seem

³⁵ Michael Camp, “The J-School Debate: Is the Timing Finally Right for University Journalism Programs and the Rest of the University to Work Together?” 253.

to increase the value of a journalism education by aligning more closely with other academic disciplines. Strengthening ties to other communications disciplines, including but not restricted to, public relations, communication studies, and media studies will prepare students enter a number of different fields. The danger is that it may dilute the lessen the pool of aspiring journalists, who will choose careers in entertainment, public relations or communication officers for large- and small-scale businesses, but it may also inform their reportage as they will have a more informed view of journalism's role in society. Any viable relationship between journalism programs and other disciplines, be they in the arts, sciences, or business faculties must demand that journalism assert itself within universities. Writing in defense of graduate education in journalism, Soloski strongly states, "We should not have to apologize to our colleagues in other disciplines for offering professional training at the graduate level and we should not have to beg the profession's forgiveness for teaching theory."³⁶

Referring back to the Poynter Institute report mentioned at the beginning of this article, there appears to be gap in the value place on journalism degrees, with industry placing less value on such on journalism education than their journalism educator counterparts. Perhaps journalism education would do best not to keep in step with the journalism industry, but utilize the knowledge and expertise being produced within other communications disciplines to try and prepare students not for what journalism is today, but for what it might be in the future. Building and maintaining these kinds of interdisciplinary relationships is no longer a question of congeniality, but instead one of survival as the future of journalism programs is uncertain – particularly as enrollment drops and universities decide to abandon standalone journalism training.

In 1904, Pulitzer envisioned young journalists emerging from these university programs with the "class feeling" of true professionals.³⁷ While the scholars discussed in this article may differ in their opinions concerning journalism's relationship to professionalism, they do all agree that university can serve as an environment in which to foster the kind of critical thinking skills and curiosity traditionally attributed to quality journalism. Whether these traits are best developed through a focus on new technologies, a turn to the humanities, intensified ties to other communications disciplines, or a more learn-on-the-job approach, will be up for debate for some time to come. This article's discussions aimed to both emphasize and contextualize the current (and historical) precarity experienced by journalism programs in Canada and the U.S. If one hopes to take away any positives from the current discussions around the state of

³⁶ John Soloski. "On Defining the Nature of Graduate Education," 5.

³⁷ Michael Camp, "The J-School Debate: Is the Timing Finally Right for University Journalism Programs and the Rest of the University to Work Together?" 244.

journalism education, they could include various movements towards innovation and critical thinking about the practice of journalism. As well, there seems to be a general understanding that journalism education can no longer wait to see what lies in store for journalism as an industry.

