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Journalism Education is the journal of the Association for Journalism Education a body representing educators in HE in the UK and Ireland. The aim of the journal is to promote and develop analysis and understanding of journalism education and of journalism, particularly when that is related to journalism education.

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Dr Grant Hannis heads the journalism programme at Massey University in Wellington, New Zealand. He teaches news writing, grammar, journalism history, business journalism, media law and media ethics, and has published numerous academic journal articles. Prior to coming to Massey in 2003, he worked for 14 years as a senior journalist at Consumer magazine, the New Zealand equivalent of Which?. In 2010, as a Fulbright Senior Scholar, he was based at San Francisco State University, where he taught business journalism and researched the depiction of Chinese gold miners in the 19th-century Californian press.

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She is a Senior Lecturer in Journalism at the University of Roehampton, and is also working on a PhD at Goldsmiths about the involvement of NGOs in the news coverage of Africa. Her other research interests include international news, radio journalism, epistemology, and media ethics.

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In July 2012 she was elected Secretary of the Association for Journalism Education.

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Victoria Neumark Jones is course leader of the BAs in Journalism and Media, Communications and Journalism at London Metropolitan University. Before that, she spent decades as a journalist, freelancing for a range of national papers on the arts and education and also on the staff of the Times Educational Supplement. She has degrees in English Language and Literature (Oxford) and Social Anthropology (M Sc , UCL). As well as about 2,000 articles, her publications include The Magic Exercise (NAAC) and contributions to 1,000 Children's Books (Quarto). Website: victorianeumark.com.

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Jan Winter is a senior lecturer in journalism at Leeds Trinity University College. She also taught on the NCTJ-accredited fast-track and academic year courses at Sheffield College after working for 14 years on what were then evening papers in West Yorkshire. Her current interests include marking and moderating on the NCTJ Reporting exam, acting as external examiner for the journalism degree at Blackburn College and running a book-gifting charity, Canterbury Imagine, on a Bradford estate. She will start a Masters in Applied Linguistics in early 2013..

Editorial

Welcome to the second edition of *Journalism Education*, the journal of the Association for Journalism Education.

This comes to you at an inauspicious time for journalism; a time when UK journalism has never been under such pressure or been through such a long period of sustained self-criticism and reflection. First the press took a battering with phone hacking and revelations of the black arts leading to the arrest of scores of journalists and culminating in the Leveson Inquiry. Then whilst we steeled ourselves to hear his lordship's recommendations, broadcast colleagues faced their own horrors as the allegations about Jimmy Savile erupted together with allegations of poor editorial judgment at the BBC causing several executives to "stand aside" and a brand new Director General to resign – phew, you couldn't make it up.

All of this of course underpins just how important journalism education is. Our own industry has long enjoyed pouring scorn on journalism degrees claiming that they are a waste of time and that all a good journalist needed was a plausible manner and a steady push-bike. Those of us moved to teach after long, usually successful careers as journalists are labelled as failures – "those who can't do, teach" – but we can easily dismiss these as the comments of those fearful they would not be able to cut it either as teachers or students. More serious is that the revelations of the past two years prove beyond doubt that anyone hoping to work in journalism in the next 20 years or more is going to need excellent and rigorous higher education allied to some quality journalism training; what better place to get that than in an AJE-membership journalism school?

So what will Leveson have to say about journalism education? He has certainly taken an interest. The AJE evidence is published on the inquiry website and whilst we were not asked to give oral evidence, several colleagues from AJE member schools, Westminster, City, Kingston, Goldsmiths, Cardiff and Brunel were invited along to talk about ethics, accreditation and journalism training within universities.

Leveson is due to report on November 29, just days after this journal goes to press. Tempting though it is to yell "hold the presses" until we have read the report, this is a learned journal not a newspaper. We will leave consideration of his recommendations until our next issue in the Spring (papers and articles welcome). What we do need to consider in the meantime is how training and education of journalists may change in light of Leveson. Will he call for some form of accreditation of ethics teaching? He was certainly interested in the idea during the hearings and counsel to the Inquiry Mr Barr asked the academic witnesses: "perhaps I could invite you to focus on ethical training and whether there ought to be any over-arching accreditation of ethical training?"

The Inquiry was also interested in the systems of accreditation and so he may consider recommendations in this area, although it would be foolish to speculate about them just days before the report is published. However all the witnesses said they felt there was a lack of focus on ethics by accreditation bodies and several expressed their concern that the NCTJ was too rigid and inflexible in its approach. Prof. George Brock of City University told the inquiry:

> "We are not accredited to the NCTJ and for broadly the same reasons as Steve's [Prof. Steven Barnett of Westminster] colleagues decided, so I won't labour the point, it's too rigid, it's too difficult for us to operate, and we did not think that it would improve our courses by doing it. And that continues to be the case and we keep that under review but we are in the broadcasting one [the BJTC] and we're also in the Periodicals Training Council."

Our colleagues' evidence is run in full on the Leveson Inquiry website and is well worth reading if you have not already done so (it's day 13, Dec 8, 2011) but it's clear from this and other evidence that the Leveson report will have implications for us as educators because Leveson told the Inquiry that while he understands that we are only one part of the system that builds good or bad journalists and therefore good and bad journalism, we are an important part: "The discussion about what goes on in universities is a good run up to the wicket, but it isn't bowling the ball, is it?"

Whatever part we play, we certainly need to be at the top of our game if we are to help journalism's future get a good run up. We hope you find this issue of Journalism Education helps with that in some small way.

Chris Frost, Jenny McKay, Mick Temple and Stuart Allan

Issue 2-1 of Journalism education will be published on April 10, 2013. Papers are invited for this and subsequent issues. The deadline for the next issue is March 10th. Papers on any topic concerning journalism education from any source are welcome but we would be particularly interested in any that pick up on issues raised in the Leveson Report or the future of journalism education post Leveson.

Articles

All papers in the Articles section are peer reviewed and discuss the latest research in journalism and journalism education. These are intended to inform, educate and spark debate and discussion. Please join in this debate by going to www.journalism-education.org to have your say and find out what others think.

Educating 'rookies': might guided problem-based learning help first year journalism students begin to inter-relate theory and practice?

Kate Wright, University of Roehampton

Introduction:

Researchers for the Higher Education Academy in the UK have criticised Journalism educators for failing to clarify what they 'actually mean' regarding their claims to link theory and practice on their degree courses, as well as the broader theoretical implications of their stance (Kent, interview with author, 2007; Mallinder, interview with author, 2010).

But although there is a growing body of work on the problematic nature of the theory/practice divide in Journalism Studies, there is something of a black hole when it comes to research about students' actual experiences of the split – as well as their experiences of the pedagogic methods which might counter it. As the effect of teaching on student learning is often not what lecturers expect (Ramsden 1991:6), this means that Journalism educators often lack the kinds of evidence they need to make sure that their teaching strategies are effective. Indeed, Journalism educators have even been accused of lagging behind other subjects in this regard: failing to make use of, or build upon, existing pedagogic research regarding the relationship of theory and practice to inform their approach to teaching and learning (Seamon 2009).

Most importantly, nothing has been written about first year Journalism undergraduates' perceptions of the links between theory and practice – or their perception of the lack of any such links. This is unacceptable given that the first year is now believed to be crucial in shaping students' approaches to their learning throughout their degree, as well as their overall enjoyment of it (Ballinger 2003; Booth 1997; Smith 2004; Reason et al 2006; Trotter and Roberts 2006; Yorke et al 2008). Therefore, students' perceptions of learning in their first year have a critical bearing on their satisfaction and persistence with their course (Tinto 2001, 2006). Addressing the lack of research about Journalism students' experience of their learning in the first year at university can thus be seen to be a matter of financial, as well as pedagogic, importance for Higher Education institutions.

British universities now have particularly pressing financial reasons for examining the ways in which they might be able to help first year students make a successful and fulfilling transition into Higher Education. This is because this academic year is the first in which a new fees regime has come into effect, which makes universities far more reliant on student tuition fees, rather than government funding. This new regime has been brought about because of a decision which the UK government took two years ago to phase out the grants which had hitherto supported teaching in English universities, with the exception of a few high priority and high cost subjects, such as science, medicine and mathematics (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2012). In order to make up some of the shortfall caused by the withdrawal of eighty per cent of government funding for teaching (Fenton 2011), the UK government then passed a law which enabled English universities to nearly triple the level of student tuition fees[1] (Higher Education (Higher Amount) Regulations 2010).

The devolved nature of political decision-making in the UK means that the Scottish Parliament, as well as the Welsh and Northern Irish Assemblies, were free to make their own policies on the funding of Higher Education, albeit to differing degrees, given the extent of the powers devolved to them. These political bodies decided to raise the fees which English students would be charged at their universities, whilst simultaneously implementing a range of measures to protect their own students from bearing the full costs of university education (Scottish Government 2010; Stuart 2011; Welsh Assembly Government 2010). So how tuition fees are levied across the UK is quite complex, with different fees being charged according to where the student in question was living prior to application, as well as the location of their chosen institution[2].

What is clear is that the introduction of higher tuition fees has prompted a marked decrease in applications for university places across the UK. The final applications statistics for this academic year had not been released at the time of writing because the post-result application process known as 'Clearing' had only just finished (Davies 2012). But the results of the main part of the application process, which takes place on the basis of students' predicted grades, showed that number of British people applying for a place at university had fallen by nearly thirty thousand (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service 2012b). Thus the environment in which all British universities operate can be seen to have become much, much more competitive.

Improving and demonstrating 'student satisfaction' has long been seen as playing a key role in enabling universities to compete with one another to attract and retain students both within and outside of the UK (Douglas et al 2006; James et al 1999). For British institutions, concern about such matters came to the fore in 2005, when entering the National Student Survey - which seeks to measure students satisfaction with both their courses and their institutions in a largely quantitative manner - became mandatory for all English, Welsh and Northern Irish universities[3]. Obviously

1 Although these fees are only payable by graduates once they are earning in excess of £21,000pa.

2 For example a Scottish student studying at a Scottish institution will pay no tuition fees at all, but an English or Northern Irish student studying at the same university will be charged the full rate. Likewise a Northern Irish students studying at a Northern Irish institution can be charged the maximum of £3,465 but if they study at an institution elsewhere in the UK, they will be charged the full rate. Finally, a Welsh students studying anywhere in the UK will be offered a fee loan up to the total of £3,465, but will be offered an additional fee grant by the Welsh Assembly to help them pay for the increased cost of tuition anywhere in the UK..

3 Scottish institutions are not obliged to take part, although a number of them do so voluntarily

now that far fewer British students are applying to university, and now that universities are more financially reliant upon student tuition fees, concerns about being seen to ‘do well’ in the National Student Survey have become acute.

Yet the prominence given to the National Student Survey is highly controversial, not only because of questions about the adequacy of the methods employed (Swain 2009, discussed in Ramsden et al 2010), but also because of the ways in which stressing ‘student satisfaction’ as a measure of universities’ success appears to frame the student as little more than a ‘customer’ whom institutions must provide with a pleasant ‘experience’ to consume (Sabri 2010, 2011). The erasure of academic identities and values this entails may also be seen as detrimental to students: subsuming their actual, complex and lived experiences to a generic, over-simplified and disembodied account of them (Sabri 2011). Such arguments have a particular resonance for Journalism Studies in the UK as Journalism courses usually operate in poorer, newer universities here, which have a longstanding history of expecting Journalism teams to effectively subsidise less popular subjects by attracting and maintaining very large student cohorts (Errigo and Franklin 2004:46; Harcup 2010: 41).

In addition, arguments about the involvement of ‘student satisfaction’ in market logic clearly have their roots in much broader political debates about the nature and purpose/s of Higher Education which have repercussions far beyond British borders (Bailey and Freedman 2011; Nussbaum 2012; Rhoten and Calhoun 2011). So although this paper does explore first year students’ experience of the inter-relationship of theory and practice, and although this does have a bearing on student engagement, enjoyment, and persistence with their studies, it attempts to tread a fine line between acknowledging the importance of such issues in Journalism pedagogy and remaining wary of much of the commercially-driven discourse in and about Higher Education. It will begin by considering the pedagogic and epistemological implications of ‘inter-relating’ theory and practice[4] - the term used by the Journalism team at the University of Roehampton - before going on to outline the findings of a two-year project which I, as the First Year Tutor in Journalism at Roehampton, conducted into how Guided Problem-Based Learning affected first years’ perceptions of these issues.

Inter-relating Theory and Practice:

Most British universities now claim that their Journalism degrees ‘integrate’ theory and practice (Greenberg 2007:299; Mallinder, interview with author, 2010). This ‘promise’ may appeal to university applicants (Poerksen 2010) but it is misguided, as it implies that the two will complement one another - when they often don’t. This is because the majority of theoretical work on Journalism curricula in the UK is still drawn from the canon of Media and Cultural Studies, and the constructivist stance towards reality found in much of this work, as well as the scepticism about individual journalists’ agency, does not sit comfortably with the teaching of best practice (Greenberg 2007; Wright 2011).

Such an observation is not new. A decade ago, Windschuttle sparked the so-called ‘Media Wars’ in Australia (Turner 2000) by arguing that including Media/Cultural Studies theory on Journalism curricula alongside practical tuition gave students a ‘schizophrenic’ experience of education. He even asserted that such theories should be seen as dangerous to sound journalistic practice: undermining ‘the pursuit of truth and objectivity’ and ‘the ethical regard for media audiences’ (2000). The ontological and epistemological ramifications of this row are still being considered by Journalism researchers (Greenberg 2007; Wright 2011).

For these reasons, the University of Roehampton, where I teach, encourages students to ‘inter-relate’, rather than ‘integrate’, theory and practice, as ‘inter-relatedness’ covers a wide range of potential relationships - including contrast and conflict. We believe that such a stance indicates an honesty about the nature of Journalism Studies as it is currently articulated in the UK, as well

4 I have addressed the ontological aspects of this issue elsewhere (2011).

as a pedagogic resistance to pre-empting students' relationship to both theory and practice. For, after all, might potentially fruitful, understandings not arise from a consideration of the friction between journalistic practice and Media/ Cultural Studies research (Zelizer 2004; 2011) - as well as from a consideration of their 'common ground' (Skinner et al 2001)?

Moreover, are there not still valid arguments to be had about the definition/s of 'theory' itself, given practitioner-theorists' exploration of the kinds of fluid, and often unwritten forms of knowledge possessed/practised by journalists (Greenberg 2007; Niblock 2007; Poerksen 2010: Wright 2012)? Certainly it seems foolhardy to me to foreclose such complex arguments by accepting Skinner et al's proposal that media and communications theory be seen as the (only) 'why' to the 'how' of journalistic method (2001).

However, admitting the radical epistemological uncertainty that exists in Journalism Studies has far-reaching implications for pedagogy. For if we must admit that we, as a body of teachers/ researchers, do not have a substantial body of 'shared assumptions' (Wingate 2007) about the kind/s of knowledge that it is possible - or desirable - to attain in our discipline, then rather than knowledge being conceptualised as something which has been finalised and which we, as scholars, possess, it must be seen as something which is 'under construction' - and indeed, as something which is contested by differing interest groups, including different groups of scholars (Foucault 2002; Harrison 2007).

But accepting the existence of disputes about the nature of 'knowledge' in Journalism Studies is one thing and moving towards teaching and learning strategies which can accommodate (and perhaps even celebrate) them is quite another. For, as Ballinger (2003), Booth (1997) and Smith (2004) all argue, many students arrive at university with the expectation that successful learning will mean the reproduction of an established body of knowledge, and when these expectations are thwarted, they tend to feel extremely anxious, confused and disorientated. Students whose tutors disagree amongst themselves about the very definition of knowledge are therefore likely to go through an even rockier transition period. Failing to engage explicitly with these students' expectations and experiences in ways which will enable their transition into the strange world of Journalism Studies is therefore not just unsound from a pedagogic point of view – it's unkind.

Hanna and Sanders' extensive study of students taking Journalism courses in the UK shows that the majority of them take the course because they have ambitions to become journalists themselves (2007:407.) So the kinds of knowledge-reproduction they are likely to expect (and indeed to aspire to) are related to professional journalistic practice. They are, as one fresher proudly informed me 'proper rookies now...We just want to be told how to do it right'. However, despite the strong tradition of vocational training in the history of Journalism education, this is an attitude with which many British Journalism lecturers - myself included - would be uneasy. For I remain committed, as Cole put it, to the idea that independent, critical thought should be upheld as the hallmark of 'graduateness' (2003; see also de Burgh 2003). Therefore the idea of churning out students who can replicate journalistic practice efficiently, but who cannot challenge or improve upon it, is repugnant to us.

For these reasons, there is a growing call in Journalism Studies for students to learn to engage in 'critical' or 'reflective' practice (Beliveau 2009; Burns 2004; Niblock 2007).Yet, as Niblock found, there is little consensus amongst educators about what this actually involves (2007). The only thing Journalism lecturers do seem to agree upon is the need to nudge students towards 'higher order' forms of learning - usually expressed as the ability to 'analyse, understand, appreciate significance [and] interpret' (Ramsden 1991:23). In order to engage with students' existing goals, including their career aspirations (Howells 2003), such a pedagogic strategy would need to put journalistic practice at its heart, but it would also need to avoid making competent repetition its only measure of success (Wilkins 1998), if it is to preserve the progressive, and even the transformative, potential of Higher Education.

Problem-Based Learning:

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has long been associated with the goal of producing 'critical practitioners' in many fields (Albanese and Mitchell 1993; Boud and Feletti 1997; Savin-Baden 2000), and a number of internationally respected Journalism educators, such as Burns (1997, 2002, 2004), Meadows (1997), Robie (2002), have been highly enthusiastic about its capacity to prompt students to become 'active' learners: considering 'what they do and why they do it' (Burns 2004:7) in the context of real situations encountered in professional practice (Robie 2002), or realistic simulations of them (Burns 1997; Cameron 2001; Meadows 1997).

PBL differs from problem-solving approaches in that it presents the problem first: asking students to work in teams to identify and explore the resources and approaches they will need (Burns 1997; Jones 2005). So the curricula is organised around the problem rather than around content, and tutors become 'facilitators', coaching students to criss-cross different fields of knowledge according to what they think they will need to address the problem (Savoie and Hughes 1994; Wilkie 2000). Thus, PBL should enable students to formulate their own ways of inter-relating theory and practice whilst offering them

> ... an obvious answer to the question…"What does what I am learning...have to do with the real world?
> (Anderson & Biddle 1970, cited in Burns 2004: 12)

In so doing, it should also help them move towards 'deep learning' (Meadows 1997; Wilkie 2000). That is to say, it should help students to shift along Säljő's scale from a point at which they conceptualise knowledge as quantitative increase or reproduction, thtough the mid-point where they perceive knowledge as the acquisition of facts, skills and methods, and then on to more complex forms of engagement where they are able to relate parts of the subject matter to each other and the wider world thereby eventually gerenating new understandings and perspectives (Säljő 1979:443-51).

As Yorke and Longden's recent, seminal work on students' experience of their first year of Higher Education in the UK stressed the importance of 'active' learning and the need to consider undergraduates' social, alongside their academic, integration (2008), there seems to be a strong rationale for using PBL as the stimulus to small group work with first-year students. But even ardent fans of PBL like Meadows concede that its success depends on students' ability to 'relate new ideas to existing knowledge and understanding' (1997:98-9). Tan has also argued that those who lack a foundational knowledge of their subject, as well as basic research skills, can become overwhelmed by PBL (2004:181). Finally, Newman's empirical work demonstrates that students used to more didactic teaching/learning methods continue to struggle to adjust their expectations to the kind/s of learning involved in PBL, sometimes to such an extent that it results in low student satisfaction with the course, heightened staff/student conflict and high numbers of drop-outs (2004). Given British institutions' increased stress on proving 'student satisfaction' and retaining their student body for financial reasons, such consequences could be extremely damaging.

In addition to this, it is still rare for students in the UK enter Journalism degrees having taken a previous academic qualification in Journalism[5], and rates of academic failure and attrition are highest in the first year. So it may be advisable to use a more 'graduated' or 'structured' approach to Problem-Based Learning with new Journalism undergraduates (Tan 2004). These more heavily 'guided' forms of PBL (thereafter referred to as GPBL) involve tutors selecting a more clearly defined problem to start with, as well as offering students different kinds of 'scaffolding' to support their learning. For example, Greening (1998) and Armstrong (1999) suggest incorporating lectures and/or other resource material; offering learning objectives, study questions, or other 'hints'; and giving students assistance with breaking the task down into manageable 'chunks'. Stepien and Gallagher also recommend that students and tutors new to PBL try utilising much shorter 'tasters'

5 Currently the only pre-degree qualification specifically in Journalism which it is possible for British students to take is the BTEC Higher National Diploma (Journalism) and entrants to Higher Education with a BTEC background are still in the minority.

or ‘post-holes’ inserted into a more traditional curriculum, in order to give students the time and opportunity to get used to their new roles and responsibilities in a relatively low-risk way (1993; see also Ertmer and Simons 2005). What follows, then, is an account of our attempts to assess whether ‘postholes’ of GPBL made a difference to first year undergraduates’ perceptions of the inter-relationship/s of theory and practice at the University of Roehampton.

Introducing Guided Problem-Based Learning at Roehampton:

To begin with, it is worth stressing that this project was not originally envisaged as an experiment leading towards external academic publication, but was constructed and written up as part of the Journalism team’s ongoing internal efforts to inform the revision of the Journalism course, and particularly the first year curricula, with the aim of moving towards the launch of a new Journalism single honours degree (starting 2012-13). This is in keeping with Roehampton’s status as a nationally renowned centre of teaching and learning and its emphasis on the importance of research-based teaching. However, following the introduction of vastly increased tuition fees and the organisational, political and attitudinal changes which have accompanied it in Higher Education, the Association of Journalism Education indicated that other Journalism lecturers would be interested in, and could benefit from, our work in this area.

Therefore, this article focuses exclusively on reflections about the experiences of Roehampton students and the team themselves as GPBL novices. Therefore the investigatory methods used are flexible, incorporating my own and other tutors’ observations about students’ behaviour in seminar groups, alongside questionnaire data, when it seemed pertinent to do so. The specific circumstances relating to the Journalism course at Roehampton also means that it would be hard to generalise in any definitive way from this project. There are two main reasons for this: firstly, my intention was to research pedagogic strategies which might ‘work’ for Roehampton’s students meant that I composed a sample at the beginning of the project whose participants exhibited a range of academic abilities which broadly reflected that of the overall year group at Roehampton at that time. As only one in nine first year students in that year group achieved an average of sixty per cent or higher in their first term, and as that was more or less representative of the abilities of the students which Roehampton attracted then, more able students are under-represented in this study.

Secondly, this project cannot be seen as having taken place in a controlled environment, as the entry grades increased slightly (by twenty UCAS points) over the two-year period of the study. Steps were taken to minimise the impact of this issue by sourcing participants for the second study who had achieved a range of grades for their work in the Autumn term which was similar to those in the first sample. Indeed, even if this were not the case, the range of approaches taken by academics working in Higher Education institutions to Journalism, not least in the form of offering professionally-accredited, or unaccredited courses, when coupled with the changes in the broader political and economic environment which I outlined earlier, would make me very reluctant to present the findings of this study as if it somehow ‘proved’ the impact of GPBL on all first year students’ experiences of the relationship of theory and practice in Journalism. Instead, I would prefer this paper be read as a kind of ‘learning journey’ which attempts to explore some of the ‘demi-regular’ patterns found in a particular time, place, and with a particular kind of student group (Lawson 1998) in the hope of highlighting potential areas for future research, as well as potential pedagogic pitfalls, for others interested in investigating GPBL within their own institutions.

Procedure:

In February 2008, a sample of first year undergraduates was drawn from a pool of volunteers in ways which represented the composition of Roehampton’s student body. Since Roehampton attracts far more women than men, this involved selecting fifteen female students and three male students. Roehampton is also a very mixed campus ethnically, as well as recruiting strongly from some foreign countries: so a sample was chosen which broadly reflected the proportion of our students who are White British, Black British and Asian British, as well as the proportion who come from other EU countries, as well as African, Arabic and Scandinavian countries. In addition, Roehampton attracts many dyslexic students, as well as a number of students who are non-traditional entrants to Higher Education: for this reason, one dyslexic student was included in the sample, along with two students who had taken BTEC, Access, or National Diploma qualifications prior to university entry, rather than taking the more traditional route of A-levels.

As Roehampton's authorities do not make data about individual students' entry grades or points available to academics, students were selected whose grades in the autumn term broadly reflected those achieved across their year group in the core first year module, Producing and Debating Journalism. This involved selecting five students achieving a grade average which fell within the lowest classification of degree, a 3rd (40-49%); eleven achieving a grade average within the 2:2 range (50-59%); and two achieving a 2:1 or higher (from 60% upwards). The total sample amounted to eighteen students, which was twenty-two per cent of the year group.

A questionnaire was prepared containing a range of non-directive, open-ended questions, including questions about what why students were taking the course, and two other key questions:

•'How do you see theories about journalism relating (or not relating) to journalistic practice (i.e. doing journalism)?

•'How do you see the practice of journalism (i.e. doing journalism) relating (or not relating) to the theories about journalism'?

Participants then returned their answers anonymously - using participant numbers so that the researcher could cross-reference their responses to profile data. Students in the sample were asked to complete in the February following their Autumn term: this month was chosen because students' grades from the first semester are not finalised until the Exam Board sits that month, and it is not near any assessment deadlines so that students would not be deterred from participation.

When clarification was required, and/or when patterns emerged which begged further exploration, follow-up questions were sent by email to students via one of the university's administrators, who ensured that participants' identities were kept concealed from the researcher by using participant numbers on forwarded replies. Whilst it is acknowledged that these were not ideal conditions for ensuring anonymity, initial requests that students return responses using a 'drop' box led to them going astray. This method was therefore suggested to students who were happy with the degree of concealment it offered.

The following academic year (2008-9), the Journalism team introduced a series of four GPBL 'post-holes' run in consecutive weeks during the first semester of the core module, commencing in the third week of teaching. The problems the students were set were in order of ascending difficulty, in terms of the complexity of the scenarios and theory they were given, as well as in terms of how open-ended and multi-faceted the problems arising from it were. Their purpose was to help students develop the skills and critical thought-processes they would need for their first assessments in the Autumn term: an individually-prepared profile interview and background 'brief', which had to involve the careful choice and use of sources; and an academic essay or news-related project. They were also linked to our central aim of getting students to consider what they thought the nature and purpose of 'good' journalistic practice might be.

At the beginning of the series, material was incorporated into lectures regarding the aims and processes involved in GPBL, linking it to the professional practice of journalism, research about learning and forthcoming assessments. Students were then encouraged to form their own small working groups and spent time in seminars discussing how they wanted to handle any difficult issues that might arise, drawing up group agreements or 'ground-rules' if desired. However, given staff concerns about adopting what was perceived to be a 'high-risk strategy' less than a month into students' time with us, we decided to provide substantial 'scaffolding' in the form of weekly lectures which would outline some (but not all) of the more difficult concepts, as well offering a selection of readings for students to explore at will, and study questions designed to prompt group discussions[6].

In order to retain the spirit of GPBL, we made it clear that these should be regarded as a 'jumping off' point for further exploration, and that the problems would be given out a week beforehand to enable groups to get going independently. Weekly seminars were then used for groups to report back on their progress and discuss any issues/ questions which had arisen. A week-by-week summary of these problems and a description of the kinds of 'scaffolding' offered to students have been included at the end of this article.

However, it should be stressed that much of the theory these students encountered during these weeks was the same as in the previous year: such as Allan's introduction to critical work on sources, which explains Hallin's sphere of deviance and Hall et al's work on 'primary definers (Allan 2004:62-76), as well as excerpts from Harcup's Journalism: Principles and Practice (2004) and Burns' Understanding Journalism (2003). The second year in this study also encountered much of the same theory outside of the GPBL 'postholes': being taught about 'news values' in the first couple of weeks on the course (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Harcup and O'Neill 2001) and going on to explore issues to do with normative theories of the media, and media ownership towards the end of the Autumn term and in the January of the Spring term. The main differences between the two years then, were that more practical texts were included as GPBL 'scaffolding' alongside academic theory, and that students had a choice about which texts to consult.

The questionnaires distributed in February 2009 were very similar to those in February 2008, using exactly the same wording for the three questions mentioned earlier. But a number of other questions were added based on the findings of the previous year. These included multiple-choice questions about when students looked at the problems and began their own research, as well as about how much independent work they did, and whether they did this alone or with peers. Open-ended questions were also added about their reasons for doing this. Finally, given the spatial terminology students used in the 2008 study, students were asked to 'draw a diagram of how you see journalistic theory and practice relating to each other (or not relating to each other)' and to 'feel free to put labels on your diagram so we can understand clearly what you have drawn.'

One potential problem with this sample was that I found the ethnic composition, educational background and grades of the 2008-9 year group were substantially different to those of the 2007-8 group - something which may be related to the slight increase in entry points. Rather than skew the study by using respondents with different profiles, I took the difficult decision to select students to match the profiles of the previous year group as closely as possible. Unfortunately, no volunteers of colour and/or with non-traditional educational backgrounds were forthcoming, so I re-advertised for participants, making it clear that all of those who were selected would be paid the minimum wage for completing the questionnaire[7]. In an effort to counter some of the concerns that have been raised in relation to participant payments (Head 2009), I repeatedly stressed to respondents that they were being paid for their time and honesty, rather than to tell me what they thought I might want to hear. Finally, in order to ensure confidentiality, I approved student payments according to participant numbers, using a recruitment agency to release cheques

First phase (2008):

The findings of this phase of the project support Windschuttle's claim that perceptions of a theory/practice split can cause Journalism students serious cognitive and motivational difficulties (2000) – but only some students. For whilst all participants in this sample responded by saying that they could not, or struggled, to see any relationship between 'doing journalism' and 'studying journalism academically', the students who did not wish to become journalists (22% of our sample) were untroubled by this, accepting the study of academic texts as an appropriate 'balance' to

6 As recommended by Armstrong (1999)

7 These payments were kindly provided by the University of Roehampton's Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund

practical work within the context of a university course.

However, those who did wish to become journalists were concerned, articulating this in terms of a 'gap' which they saw as existing between 'doing journalism' and 'studying it academically'. Interestingly, the width of this 'gap' appeared to have an inverse correlation to their level of academic achievement. So those achieving 2:1 grades or higher tended to describe the academic study of journalism as being 'slightly removed' from doing journalism, or to make allusions to there being 'a bit of distance' between the two. Those achieving 2:2 or 3rd class grades saw the separation as being much greater. Indeed, the gap appeared to 'widen' the lower students' grades got: until the lowest-achieving students of all described it as 'a f*****g great hole' and even a 'yawning chasm'.

One of the reasons why higher-achieving students may have described the 'gap' as being 'narrower' was because they seemed to suffer less distress because of it, due to their intrinsic interest in academic theory (evidenced by their use of positive emotional language about it, such as 'amazing' and 'brilliant'). In contrast, students regularly achieving under 55% did not mention any such interest. Instead, they tended to have quite intense emotional reactions to what they saw as the 'irrelevance' of academic study to their external ambition of becoming a journalist: either blaming themselves ('I must be really stupid') or their lecturers.

As Taylor has explored, a pattern of hostility and withdrawal is a common stage which students often go through as they move towards more self-directed approaches to learning. The reason for this, she claimed, was the discomfort and confusion which learners experience when their existing frame/s of reference begin to crumble, but have yet to be replaced by more thought-through paradigms of perception and meaning (1986). Boyd and Myers have also likened this process to 'grieving', with its attendant feelings of despair and rage (1988).

However, many of these students did not appear to be moving through their negative feelings towards more 'self-directed' modes of learning. Instead they seemed to have 'got stuck' in a vicious cycle of low grades, cynicism and withdrawal, adopting 'surface' 'strategic' learning approaches and/or lapsing into apathy altogether (Cassidy and Eachus 2000; Tait and Entwhistle 1996). As two wrote:

> I'll read and write about theory if it it's what gets me a degree, but I don't see the point of it beyond that. What I really want is to be a journalist and [studying Journalism academically] is only jumping through hoops really – like a little circus dog.

> [Lecturers] know that [academic theory is] not what we want to study, and it has nothing to do with becoming journalists [sic]. But they don't care – they just want to teach what they're interested in. I just can't be bothered any more...Most of the time, I don't even go [to classes]...

It might be argued that what was needed here was for tutors to engage with students' cynicism, encouraging them to reflect more thoroughly on the issues of purpose, power and control in Higher Education, so that they could move towards more satisfying forms of learning in, or outside, of the university context (Mezirow 1997: 5-12). However, these particular students would have struggled to realign their ideas about learning because of their misperceptions about Journalism. For perhaps the most striking pattern to emerge from this phase of student feedback was that, when asked about the 'processes or activities involved in doing journalism', all of the participants listed purely physical activities (like interviewing, editing broadcast pieces, presenting and using specific soft and hardware). None gave any indication that journalism involved any kinds of decision-making processes or forms of 'thinking-in-action' at all (Burns 2002: 31-48).

Second phase (2009):

The next batch of findings show that GPBL went some way towards breaking down this compartmentalization of study into 'doing' and 'thinking' categories, assisting students to move towards articulating relationship/s between theory and practice, although rarely in the ways we had anticipated. Indeed, it is debatable whether our problem 'post-holes' can be defined as GPBL at all, rather than as a form of 'problem-solving', in recognition of these students' 'experienced curriculum' (Barone 1980: 29-53). For although two thirds of the sample did look at the problems before the lecture, half did not start independent research until afterwards. In addition, less than half of the sample met with their peer group outside of class-time to discuss the problem, and only three students (16% of the sample) used sources which were not 'suggested readings'.

The teaching team also noted that the 'postholes' led to a degree of inter-student conflict, which some group members were unable to solve without separating. Student responses to the questionnaires may shed some light on this, as a third of the sample said they did 'less' preparation than usual because they found it difficult to cope with the self-organization required alongside the demands of their other modules – especially assessments. So they described themselves as having become 'too busy' or having 'genuinely forgot' to meet with team-mates and/or conduct independent research. In contrast, the third who said they had done 'more' preparation than usual often wrote spontaneously about their resentment of peers whom they perceived as having 'taken advantage' of them: failing to respond to their efforts to get in contact and then arriving in class with comparatively little to contribute.

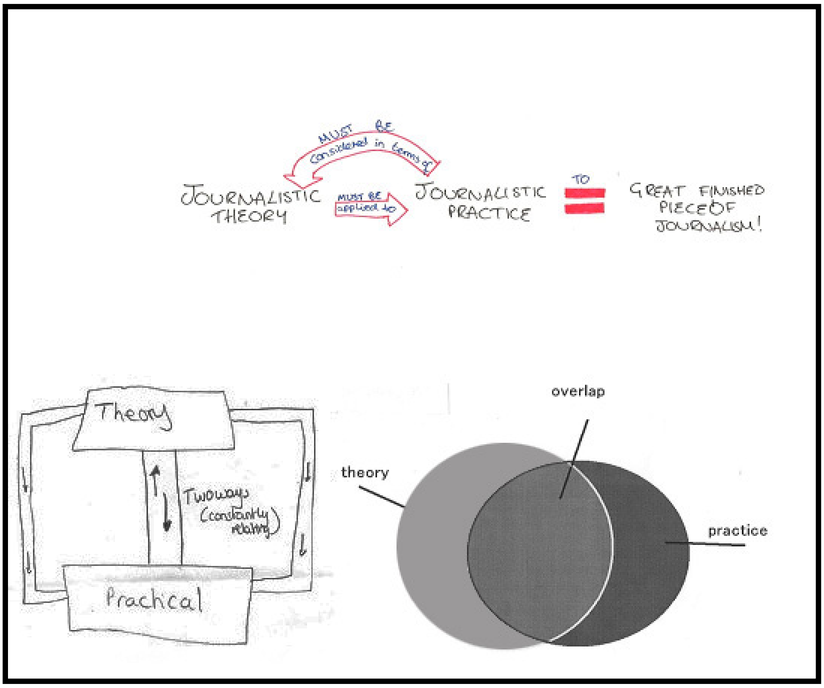
With hindsight, given the difficulties known to be experienced by first year students in adapting to even moderate forms of self-directed study, the extra strain of GPBL may have just been too much for some new undergraduates to manage outside of scheduled class-time – especially so early into their first semester. Longer-duration 'postholes' with more scheduled GPBL workshops, as well as a more direct tie to assessment, may have helped them contribute more to group-work. In addition, holding back some subject-specific resources, and adding in more 'scaffolding' to support group-work, might have encouraged more self-directed learning. Either way GPBL - as this team of novices attempted to implement it - did not always lead to simultaneous social/academic integration. Indeed, staff wondered whether the degree of inter-student conflict involved may actually have hindered, rather than helped, some students' transition into university life.

But in spite of these difficulties, the 'post-holes' seemed to have had some significant benefits. For although a far greater proportion of the 2009 sample said that they had chosen to take the course because they wanted to become journalists (94%), perceptions of a 'gap' between 'doing journalism' and 'studying journalism academically' vanished from students' response sheets - along with the cynicism, anger and disenchantment with academic learning which had accompanied it in 2008. This appeared to be associated with a shift in student perceptions of the 'processes and activities involved in 'doing journalism', as over half of the 2009 sample mentioned a 'thinking' process – most commonly the need to research a story thoroughly. Indeed, many students were insistent on this point, detailing several different kinds of research, such as: fact-checking, investigating context, and finding out about target audience/s. Accompanying this was evidence of students' growing understanding of editorial decision-making, as about a third also cited the need to engage in selecting, analyzing and evaluating thought-processes: one student even wrote about the need to 'continually question oneself and one's sources'.

Something of a virtuous circle seems to have started, with even lower-achieving students' reporting a new-found persistence and intrinsic interest in 'thinking about journalism' . This, in turn, seems to have been associated with perceptions of a closer relationship between 'doing journalism' and 'studying it academically' , as most respondents described the two as being closely related, using phrases like 'overlapping' or working 'hand in hand'. One participant achieving 3rd class grades elaborated on this:

> The journalistic problems helped me understand what the lecture was teaching [sic] … It [sic] made the theory understandable. But learning the theory also allows us to better understand the practice, as we understand the processes involved.

Accordingly, the spatial patterns which most respondents described in relation to 'theory' and 'practice' changed from those associated with a 'gap', to those associated with more of a 'flow' in a closed loop, or to a Venn diagram with a substantial degree of overlap. See diagram below for example.



However, although these students seemed to have moved past the total disconnect experienced by the 2008 sample, the relationships they articulated between theory and practice were not as indicative of ‘deep learning’ as might have been hoped. In particular, students achieving lower than 55% tended to remain, at best, at the mid-way point of Säljő’s scale: that is, acquiring facts, skills and methods that can be retained and used as necessary (1979:443-51.)

Indeed, they even conceptualised ‘theory’ - and its role in relation to ‘practice’ - solely in terms of its function in assisting them to achieve this end. As two students gaining low 2:2 and 3rd class marks wrote:

> I can clearly see that the theory relates [to practice]. The theory told me what I needed to do and how to go about it.

> Theory is like a step-by-step guide…Practice is like a test - if you’ve made too many mistakes you know that you’re missing some of the basic points and need to go back and read.

Part of the reason for this narrow definition of ‘theory’ may lie in the study methods they used. For in the discussions which arose in my seminars, most lower-achieving students described themselves as having ‘selected’ or ‘focused on’ the ‘information’ they believed to be ‘the most relevant’ to the problem. Thus, although they had consulted some of the more accessible academic texts which contained critical arguments as well as practical guidance, they adopted reading and note-taking strategies which filtered out the critical content: ‘skim-reading’ to find the practical guidance ‘boxes’ and then ‘jotting down the how-to tips’[8]. Furthermore, they disregarded study questions prompting them to consider issues of meaning: so they didn’t move beyond ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions towards any reflection on ‘why’ journalists do what they do - let alone whether they might like to do things differently.

Therefore although perceptions of a total disconnection between theory and practice can be seen to be highly demotivating for students, perceptions of a ‘close’ relationship between the two does not necessarily indicate a greater degree of critical awareness. These students’ ‘surface’ approaches may have been caused, in part, by our inexpert implementation of GPBL, but they may

8 This is strongly redolent of the seminal work on ‘surface’ study approaches explained by Marton and Saljő (1976: 4-11)

have also arisen from students' own 'framing' of their learning experience according to dominant discourses in society about the nature of education and/or Journalism.

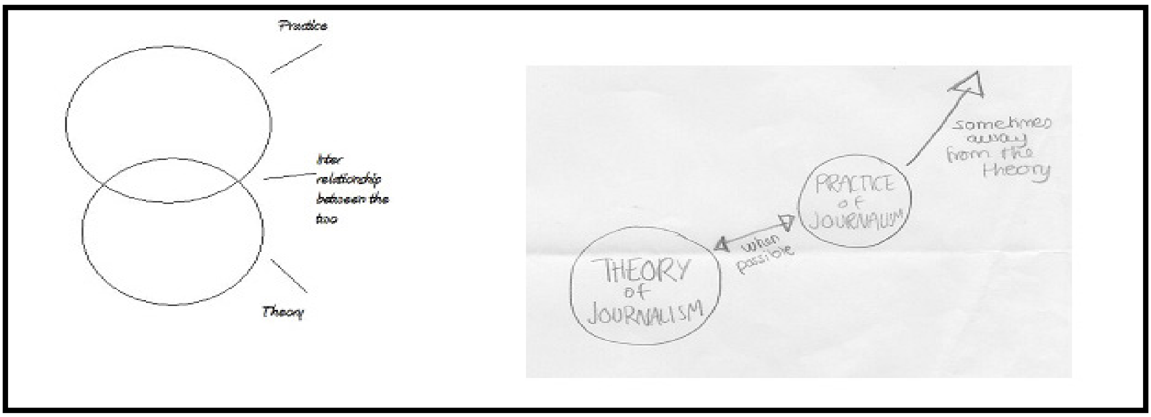
As such, they present tutors with what Jacobsen calls a 'democratic paradox': for what can you do when students, given the comparative freedom of GPBL, choose to reproduce existing norms (2004)? How much steering towards 'why' questions can tutors do before they make a mockery of the student-centered philosophy of Problem-Based Learning, even in its modified, more heavily guided form? Finally, it is worth noting that Clark's work (1982) offers evidence to suggest that although students tend to enjoy more permissive styles of teaching (and might therefore register higher levels of 'satisfaction' with their course), lower-ability students may not learn as much as they do from directive methods. This is because low-ability students seem to believe that permissive methods require less effort to get the same kinds of results - and act accordingly. In contrast, Jacobsen argues that higher-achieving students tend to learn more from permissive methods, because they don't replicate teaching/learning patterns which they have already mastered.

Few students in this study achieved 2:1s or higher, but those who achieved over 55% certainly seemed to benefit far more from GPBL, relating what they read and did in ways that seemed redolent of both 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action'. Two (11% of the sample) used specific academic works to put their own journalistic work into context and/or to question their assumptions, as recommended by Burns (2004):

> I think now we have covered the theory, it is easy to see that journalism isn't just journalism. Ideas like news values make journalism what it is today. But these values have changed over time and will probably change again. It's interesting to have in the back of your head when you're writing a news story – where is it going to go next?

I can think of good examples [of theory relating to practice] – like Hallin's deviance theory... although I didn't consciously think about it [when writing my article], when I collated my sources later, I could really see an influence.

A further four (22% of the sample), achieving marks across a similar range, appeared to have a nascent understanding that the kinds of knowledge prized in academic theory and journalistic practice might be different, and that this could cause some friction between the two. These respondents repeatedly stressed phrases like 'reading helps, but it can be different in practice': citing the importance of context-specific judgements ('each story is an individual [sic]'), the need to think flexibly ('on your feet'), as well as being willing to bend or break 'the rules' of genre in order to achieve something remarkable – descriptions of journalistic knowledge which bear a striking similarity to those discussed by critics (Niblock 2007: 25-6). Accordingly, the spatial diagrams these students produced tended to indicate a more 'distant' or complex relationship between theory and practice, such as Venn diagrams indicating only a moderate degree of overlap, or 'flow' models with arrows indicating that practice sometimes leads 'away' from theory. For example:



Indeed, three students said they wished that they could 'prove theories wrong' using their own (and/or other practitioners') experience, although they had not tried to put any of these arguments into a university assessment – even though assessments were designed to stimulate students' consideration of different ways of inter-relating theory and practice. The first reason respondents gave for that they thought they 'wouldn't have enough word count' to include much about practitioners' (including their own) experiences as well covering the minimum number of academic sources required by the university.

The second – and perhaps more significant - reason was their difficulty in finding an appropriate register with which to address the issue, without making their work sound 'less academic and more of a review'. Such an observation shows admirable self-awareness, because although these participants showed a promising inclination towards independent thinking and 'deep learning' - 'relating parts of the subject matter to each other and to the real world' (Saljő 1979:443-51) as well as engaging in meta considerations about the nature of learning - they clearly lacked the critical vocabulary with which to analyse their ideas in detail. So they fell back on unexamined clichés about the 'natural-ness' of journalistic judgement like 'gut instinct' and 'raw talent' (Niblock 2007:25).

This is not just a case of first year inexperience: the discipline itself lacks a body of research illuminating ways of critiquing specific theories using journalistic practice. As Greenberg has written:

> One gets the impression that it is the practitioners who are doing all the work in this marriage: there has been a good deal of effort to show how theory can transform the teaching of practice, but not so much that asks how practice, and the perspective of practitioners, might influence theory (2007: 295-6).

Nevertheless, since most students commencing a Journalism Studies course are doing so because they want to become practitioners, journalistic practice is bound to be central to their critical development. Thus developing appropriate critical models to 'put practice to theory' should be seen as a pedagogic, as well as theoretical, priority.

Closing Remarks:

The Journalism team at Roehampton are currently monitoring the responses of our new student intake to issues of 'theory' and 'practice' with a view to considering whether to implement GPBL at all in the first year of the single honours degree which we launched this academic year. This is because so many factors have changed for us, including a substantial increase in the number of international students who do not have English as their native language.

In addition, although our entry grades are now higher than when this study was conducted (300-340 points) and this research indicates that more able students may be able to achieve some kinds of 'deep learning' through GPBL (Clark 1982), like many other teaching teams we have come under increased pressure this year to support our colleagues in less well-recruiting subjects by taking on board additional students through 'Clearing' with lower entry grades. The prospect of implementing GPBL across the board is therefore a cause for some concern because this study indicates that even the limited independence involved in GPBL may perpetuate lower-achieving students' 'surface' study habits - preventing, rather than increasing, their exposure to alternative viewpoints. Finally, there are ongoing concerns that the group conflict involved in GPBL may hinder, rather than assist, new students' ability to integrate socially.

In short, it is fair to say that this study has created an awareness amongst the teaching team that although GPBL may help to break down some of the harmful compartmentalisation between theory and practice which goes on in Journalism Studies, it is no silver bullet. Rather, if it is used at all, it must be implemented with some caution and sensitivity in relation to particular kinds of contexts. However, positioning GPBL work later into students' first year, as well as using longer duration 'postholes', and timetabling additional workshops may lead more students to engage in questions of meaning, as well as giving more support to groups struggling to resolve their differences.

Nevertheless, it is questionable how much one can increase tutor contact time and 'coaching' intervention whilst still remaining true to GPBL's philosophy of student-directed learning. What is clear is that, when it comes to student perceptions of the inter-relatedness of theory and practice, 'closer' is not necessarily better. Indeed, those students who perceived a much looser, and even a more fractious, relationship between the two exhibited much more sophisticated critical understandings.

Yet such relatively advanced students may also present Journalism educators with something of a problem. For whereas the limited numbers of high achieving students in this study appeared show promise in terms of 'deep learning', the impact of this on their submitted work seemed likely to be minimal, because of the unavailability of appropriate models through which they can critique specific theoretical ideas on the basis of journalistic practice, as well as vice versa. Therefore, should other Journalism teams wish to try out GPBL, they need to consider not only the timing, duration and 'scaffolding' of their 'post-holes' but also a much, much harder question: that is, how to develop the epistemology of Journalism Studies itself so that theory and practice can be inter-related in detail and on equal terms.

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Summary of GPBL problems

1/ In the first week, the theme was 'How do you check out a news story?' in which I used a modified version of a training scenario I had come across at the BBC as a working journalist. Students were asked to imagine that they were a Broadcast Assistant working for BBC London and that a loud explosion had just taken place in a house in Kingston-upon-Thames. They were given several mock-ups of wire copy as well as taped excerpts of people claiming to be eye witnesses, some of whom were speculating about terrorist attacks and linking their fears about such attacks to the numbers of immigrants who had recently moved to the area. The problem the students were given was to decide what to report about the explosion and how they would go about researching this from their office with access to a phone and a computer.

The 'scaffolding' students were given included readings on 'The Rise of 'Objective' Newspaper Reporting' (Allan 2004:7-24); 'Journalism as Decision-Making' (Burns 2003: 31-48); 'Researching a Story' (Frost 2002:24-47); and a hyperlink to the BBC's own Editorial Guidelines on 'Accuracy'. They were also given a series of 'thought prompt' questions to get them thinking and talking about the problem. These included: 'What facts can I report?'; 'Which sources should I use?'; 'What is meant by 'objectivity' and 'impartiality?'; and 'How might these ideals relate to my other questions about this problem?'

2/ In the second week, the theme was 'Introducing Journalistic Ethics'. I used an adapted version of a scenario in Burns' book (2002:49-62), asking students to envisage that they were working for a local Roehampton-based newspaper and that they had overheard two people talking on a bus. The gist of this conversation was that a youth group which meets in the community hall adjoining a local park is out of control, and that the group spills noisily into the park and the members take illegal drugs there. The conversationalists agreed that decent people are afraid to go to this area of the park at night and the police don't seem to be doing much about it.

The problem the students were set was to think through what, if anything, they wanted to do about what they had heard. They were told they had access to a phone, a computer and a travel card for public transport within London.
The 'scaffolding' they were given included reading on 'Why Journalism Matters' (Harcup 2007a:10-21); 'Where Do Good Stories Come From?' (Randall 2007:31-41); 'Balance' (Wilson 1996:43-5); as well as the hyperlinks to the Code of Conduct for the National Union of Journalists, the Press Complaints Commission and the broadcasting watchdog, OFCOM. They were also given 'thought prompt' questions, such as: 'Thinking back to the 'news values' we discussed in week 2 of the course: would what these people have said news for a local Roehampton-based newspaper?'; 'Can I quote the people I overheard?; 'What facts might I need to find out?'; 'How would I do this?; 'What do the codes of conduct relevant to my news outlet tell me about what I need to do and to avoid in this instance?' and ' Are journalistic codes of conduct important, and if so, why?'
3/ In the third week, the theme was 'Preparing for Interviews'. Students were asked to imagine that they were working for the popular music magazine, NME, and that their Editor had asked them to do a profile piece on Elephant Man, a Jamaican dance/reggae star who had been criticised by gay groups for writing lyrics they believed were homophobic. The 'peg' was that Elephant Man would be playing his first gig in the UK for some time next week The problem they were set was to decide upon, and carry out, the research they would need to prepare a pre-interview brief – the template for which was provided as a kind of 'scaffolding'.
The other scaffolding they were given was the following reading on 'Interviewing' (Harcup 2007b:127-139); 'Chasing the quotes' (McKay 2000: 96-105); 'Profiles and Celebrity Interviews' (Phillips 2007:155-184); and an Introductory piece about the philosophical tensions between advocating free speech and preventing hate speech (Wolfson 1997:1-8). They were also given 'thought prompt' questions, including: 'What do I need to find out about Elephant Man and why he has been accused of homophobia?'; 'How am I going to do that?'; 'Who do I need to talk to and why?'; 'What is an 'angle?' ; What is my 'angle' on this story?'; How does this relate to what a 'profile' is and the kinds of work usually published in my magazine?'; 'What questions might I ask?' and 'What might the consequences be of my approach?' Finally they were told they had access to a phone, a computer and a car.
4/ In the fourth week, the theme was 'Returning to News Sources: Considering the Impact of What you Do'. Students were told to imagine that they were journalists working for the website of the Wharf newspaper, which covers Canary Wharf and the Docklands area in London – an area where a lot of big financial companies are based in this area. They were told that their Editor had asked them to cover a major international conference being held at the premises of Citigroup, about how the banking industry can improve its public image.
Most of the time, students were told they were inside the conference building, listening to speakers from different financial institutions. But during a break they went outside for some fresh air, and saw what seemed to be a fight between some of the anti-globalisation protestors who had been demonstrating outside the conference and some of the police who had formed a cordon around the entrance to Citigroup's offices. Students were told that security officers ushered them back inside for their own safety, and later when they managed to get out the commotion seemed to be over. The problem they were set was to decide what to do next, and what kind of story they wanted to pitch to their Editor.
They were told they had a phone, a computer and a travel card for public transport within London. They were also given reading as 'scaffolding', including work on 'A hierarchy of credibility' which includes a discussion of Hallin's theories on deviance and Hall et al's work on 'primary definers' (Allan 2004:62-76); 'Journalism and its Critics (McNair 1999:28-43) and 'Sources and Journalists' (Gans 1980:116-203; Keeble, 2001:41-60). In addition, they were given 'thought prompt' questions including: ''What are the implications of who I interview and which facts I use as regards power?'; 'Am I treating one or more sources as more credible than other sources?'; ' If so, is that a good idea?; How does this link in to the journalistic ideals of 'impartiality', 'objectivity' and/or 'balance?' ; 'How might I respond to some of these criticisms of journalism, in my approach to this particular story?'

No cause for celebration: the rise of celebrity news values in the British quality press

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Abstract

In their study of news values in in the British press Harcup and O'Neill (2001) noted that celebrity was one of the redefinitions of the 'taxonomy of news values for the twenty-first century'. At the time, Harcup and O'Neill made no judgement about the changes in news values in their redefinition, nor did their research focus on the relative importance and potency of certain news values in the hierarchy of news. Using celebrity case studies from recent decades in the British 'quality' press, this article seeks to do just that, demonstrating that the pervasiveness and volume of coverage of celebrity has risen exponentially over 30-plus years. Celebrity/entertainment news values would appear to have risen much higher up the hierarchy of news, guaranteeing extensive coverage if combined with other news values such as surprise and bad news. The findings give rise to a wider debate and concerns about the colonisation of celebrity news and dumbing down in so many areas of British journalism, and the implications for the public and educators.

Introduction

It could be argued that with declining newspaper print circulations, the role and content of quality newspapers is not such a pressing issue as in the past when there

were fewer competing news media.

There is no doubt that the role of newspapers has changed – they no longer break news; that's the prerogative of social media, the internet or 24-hr news. Yet, out of the 10 established national dailies, apart from Scottish daily titles, five could be described - certainly in the past – as 'quality' papers. These are the specialist *Financial Times*, aimed at the business community, with a circulation of 297,225 (source: ABC figures June 2012); the more liberal *Independent* has a circulation of 90,001; the right-wing *Daily Telegraph* has the highest circulation out of all the 'quality' papers at 573,674; *The Times*, now owned by News International (along with the red-top *The Sun*) has a circulation of 400,120; and the slightly more left of centre *Guardian* has a circulation of 211,511 (all figures from ABC June 2012). October 2010 saw the launch of the *i* newspaper, a snappy, newsy and cheap re-formatted version of the *Independent* aimed at 'lapsed' readers of the upmarket titles but, at 20p, selling for considerably less than these titles, which normally sell at around £1. It has shown a steady increase in circulation since its launch and reached sales of around 272,597 by June 2012 (ABC figures).

The two mid-market papers are both right-wing: the *Daily Mail* (circulation 1,939,635) and the *Daily Express* (602,482). Then there are the red-tops: *The Sun* (2,583,552), the *Daily Mirror* (1,081,330) and the *Daily Star* (602,296) (source: ABC figures June 2012). Some, like the *Star* and the *Express* (owned by porn baron Richard Desmond) are more down-market than others. For some journalists, readers, media commentators and academics, there is an acceptance – weary or otherwise - that 'the tabloids are full of shit.' (Monck, 2008, p.19). Indeed, various websites exist (*The Sun – Tabloid Lies* http://the-sun-lies.blogspot.com/; *Daily Mail Watch* http://www.mailwatch.co.uk/ and *Express Watch* http://expresswatch.co.uk/) to expose the sensationalism, hypocrisy, propaganda, racism and sexism that all too frequently turn up in the likes of *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Star* and the *Daily Express*, with their focus on scandal, xenophobia, misogyny, bingo scratch cards and, most of all, celebrity gossip.

Disgusted by what he was required to write, former *Daily Star* reporter Richard Peppiatt made his views about the paper public in a resignation letter to the proprietor Desmond, published in the *Guardian* on 4th March 2011, where he spelt out the depths the paper had sunk to. 'On the awe-inspiring day millions took to the streets of Egypt to demand freedom, your paper splashed on "Jordan … the movie."'

Peppiatt writes about 'skewed news values' and the hypocrisy of a paper that pretends it stands up for the working class while attacking workers, and which incites racism and makes stories up to fit its view of the world. 'If you can't see that words matter, you should go back to running porn magazines' is Peppiatt's advice to Desmond.

Despite this, it is hard to deny that the red-tops are not entertaining, funny and irreverent, or that they never uncover stories in the public interest; moreover, it takes skill to be able to produce the 'screaming headlines and short, punchy campaigning prose' (Conboy, 2011, p.119) that are the trademarks of the tabloid style. It is fair to say that tabloid influences are not 'uniformly negative' (Conboy, 2011, p.119): McNair (2003) welcomes the 'less pompous…more human, more vivacious' styles now adopted by most newspapers, reflecting a 'more inclusive, even democratic journalism culture' (Conboy, 2011, p.120) and former Guardian editor Peter Preston has championed the style as a 'means to a disciplined end, a clarity of mind' (2004, p.51 in Conboy, 2011, p.120). It is hard to argue that there is anything inherently wrong with the tabloid style in itself, as the publication of the *i* newspaper shows.

But whatever their merits or de-merits, the red-tops are not the first port of call for serious and in-depth news and analysis. That job is traditionally done by the quality press.

But for some time now, the boundaries between the popular titles and serious press have been blurring, and not just in terms of the smaller page sizes many have adopted (tabloid for *The Times* and *Independent*, and Berliner size for the *Guardian*). That the British so-called 'quality' or 'elite' press has taken on board tabloid news values has not gone unnoticed by academics (Franklin, 1997; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001; Barker, 2007).

More recently, almost 70% of the British public said they distrusted red-top tabloids in the wake of the phone-hacking scandal, according to the Edelman Trust Barometer survey. 'In a study of 2,100 UK adults in January 2012, 68% of respondents said they did not trust red-tops – including the *Daily Star*, the *Daily Mirror* and *The Sun* – "to do what is right"…. Edelman's study suggests that broadcasters including the BBC and Sky News are among the most trusted media organisations, ahead of quality titles such as the *Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph*.' (Halliday, guardian.co.uk, 24th January 2012).

But however dispiriting these surveys are, with combined daily red-top sales of around four million copies a day, there is clearly a demand from sections of the British public for this type of product, and they know where to find it.

But what about those who don't want this sort of 'news' diet? On the face of it, there are plenty of other papers to choose from. Yet retaining readership and position in a crowded market is not easy. While he believes that some quality papers have explored an internet strategy that is more coherent than the red-tops, Greenslade is not convinced that all current newspapers will be in existence by 2025, predicting that five national dailies are more likely to remain: *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Times* and the *Guardian* (*Telegraph online,* 10th June 2011.)

The problem for those sections of the public who are interested in serious news, comment and analysis, is what will surviving quality papers like the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Times* and *Guardian* have to offer them? A study of news values in the UK national press, taking in the quality press as well as the red-tops, found that stories were included, despite having no serious information for the reader, because of entertainment and celebrity news values (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001, p.274). The increasing influence of the red-tops has seen the quality press embrace more than a punchy and engaging style and design: beyond serious arts coverage, these titles also appear to have embraced the banal, gossipy, celebrity content of the tabloids. A recent study by PR company Clarion Communications confirmed this.

> Clarion analysed editions of *The Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, *News of the World*, *Sunday Express* and *The Sunday Times* in July 1986 and July 2011, looking at column inches over the first six pages…
>
> The research concluded that papers across the tabloid-broadsheet spectrum now broadly reported "identical content"…
>
> The main findings were:
>
> "Celebrity and celebrity-related TV, film and music news has rocketed in terms of coverage across all titles, particularly the Sundays, since 1986.
>
> "At the same time, older newspaper story staples such as court reporting have sharply declined, again particularly in Sunday papers.
>
> "International news across all papers receives 25 per cent less coverage across 2011 than it did in 1986 (from 4 to 3 per cent)."
>
> (Pugh, *Press Gazette*, 17th Oct 2011)

If all newspapers insist on relentless scandal and a celebrity-ridden drive downmarket, choice is severely limited, like a gourmet's choice being restricted to MacDonalds or Burger King.

As veteran BBC war correspondent Martin Bell says, 'The culture of celebrity, like an army of ants, has colonized the news pages, both tabloid and broadsheet' (in Allan, 2004, p.193). It is this 'colonization' that deserves attention since it is linked to another crucial element of the quality press, one that could prove their unique selling point in the brave new digital world: the perception that they are 'more credible and more authoritative than the popular press. In the future, when all straightforward news will be consumed online, the value of credibility will be crucial. Who will people trust to make sense of it?' (Greenslade, *Telegraph online*, 10th June 2011).

For this reason, this study aims to focus on the up-market UK press, to see to what degree these tabloid celebrity news values have permeated elite newspapers and whether this is driving out other news, with the resulting implications for the quality and diversity of news available in these papers. Prior to this, it is useful to provide some context by examining some of the literature surrounding the rise of celebrity and tabloidization.

Review of literature

In examining the origins of celebrity coverage, Marshall (in Allen, 2005) explains that celebrity and human interest reporting ameliorated the sense of disconnection and alienation brought about by industrialisation and migration by introducing identification, familiarity and commonality. With the expansion of consumerism and capitalism, celebrity/human interest reporting fostered aspiration by demonstrating greater possibilities for individuals. Transcending class, race and gender, it served to help people reconnect when the bonds of previous and familiar communities were severed.

A review of literature around the issue of celebrity reveals that many studies have come from the field of cultural studies seeking to deconstruct the celebrity phenomenon, and how it allows for identification and self-actualisation as a way of explaining the peculiar hold that celebrities have over the public (Braudy, 1997; Marshall, 1997; Turner, 1999; Andrews and Jackson, 2001; Cashmore, 2006; Holmes and Redmond, 2006).

The field of journalism and media studies has assessed the impact of 'tabloidisation' on news in general (Franklin, 1997), often focussed on political communication and the implications for citizenship and democracy (Blumler, 1992; Brants, 1998), raising concerns about the fourth estate role of journalism. Other studies have examined TV coverage, whether as popular journalism (Langer, 1998) or the effects on TV news (Winston, 2002). The charge of dumbing down has either not been proved (Brants, 1998; Winston, 2002) or has been criticised for not acknowledging that certain developments in style, formats and content allow for wider participation and engagement with social and political issues, and reflects a less deferential society (McNair, 2000; Temple, 2006), as well as empowering ordinary individuals (Cashmore, 2006, p.4).

In other words, there are two broad perspectives on celebrity culture: the first champions the phenomenon as a populist force for democratisation, representing freedom, the power of the individual, greater equality of opportunity and aspiration, and greater access to and engagement with social and political debates, through reality TV shows or by identifying with the life stories or views of celebrities. The second, however, is a lament for cultural decline, where our media are obsessed with constructing fabricated 'personalities' out of anyone, from runners-up on talent competition TV programme 'X Factor' to our politicians, where all debate and information provision is reduced to the emotive and personal or trivial. Implicit in this view is that the media, including news media, are effectively creating a dumb culture that plays to the lowest common denominator among readers and audiences in the pursuit of profits while undermining - certainly not adding to - our democratic processes. This latter view is supported by American journalist Carl Bernstein who has accused the media of lacking self-reflection in its role of contributing to the 'idiot culture' and to pandering to audiences. (Bernstein, 1992, in Allan, 2004, p.195).

Opponents of this approach argue that throughout history there has been a keen interest in the famous and there was never a golden age when certain individuals became famous on the basis of their honourable achievements alone. Cultural historian Leo Braudy points out that fame has always been bound up in media management to some degree (Braudy 1997, p.9), even before the development of the mass media, central to today's celebrity constructs (Rojek, 2001). Evans and Hesmondhalgh (2005, p.7) state that it is important not to lose sight of continuities between past and present and that representations of present-day celebrity had their precedents in the 19th century. While critics of celebrity culture might argue that there is increased prominence in saturation coverage of celebrity (Turner *et al* 2000; Corner and Pels, 2003; Marshall, 1997), the question is, what period are they comparing this to? As Evans (2005) says, even in previous centuries it was clear that commentators - such as Henry James in 1880 - felt overwhelmed by celebrity media.

In the field of journalism studies, Conboy (2006, p.185) points out that celebrity was one of the redefinitions of the 'taxonomy of news values for the twenty-first century' by Harcup and O'Neill (2001) in their study of news values in in the British press. At the time, Harcup and O'Neill made no judgement about the changes in news values in their redefinition, nor did their research focus on the relative importance and potency of certain news values in the hierarchy of news. This article seeks to examine and critique the extent and implications of celebrity news values in more detail.

The focus on celebrity in the general news media would appear to have increased. In Britain, it now permeates all aspects of news and current affairs, with the celebrity agenda being embraced by news and current affairs broadcasters, as well as 'quality' newspapers . For example, the BBC flagship news programme 'Newsnight' ran an interview on 14th December 2009 with Simon Cowell who was suggesting running an 'X Factor' talent competition for would-be politicians. When DJ and charity fundraiser Sir Jimmy Savile died, it was the *top* story on BBC R4's 6pm news on 29 Oct 2011, with the newscaster solemnly intoning Sir Jimmy's catchphrases, 'now then, now then' and 'howzabout that then?'. At 84 years old, his death could not be said to be premature or unexpected, nor had he been in the public eye for years. (Ironically, by October 2012, Savile was again making headlines, with revelations about his sexual exploitation of vulnerable young women – a scandal the press did not uncover, choosing instead to run with the BBC's 'Saint Jimmy' narrative on his death.) On the same day two suicide car bombers carried out one of the deadliest attacks in Kabul for a number of years, killing 13 US soldiers, as well as Afghan civilians, a news item that the BBC deemed secondary to Savile's demise.

Another trend worth noting is the celebritization of politics, with both celebrities and politicians as commodities to be sold to audiences (Marshall, 1997 in Drake and Higgins, 2006, p.87). Thus we see the spectacle of British politicians reinventing themselves as cuddly personalities on shows that specialise in the celebrity interview (former Prime Minister Gordon Brown interviewed by Piers Morgan in 2010, and Conservative leader and present Prime Minister David Cameron by Alan Titchmarsh, also in 2010). *The Times* TV critic Andrew Billen questioned Brown's decision to betray his instincts by discussing his children – including the death of his baby daughter – on Morgan's show. 'No votes would have been lost had he refused to discuss them.' (*The Times*, 15th February 2010).

Hand in hand with the rise of the 'celebrity politician', Drake and Higgins (2006) identify the 'political celebrity', as exemplified by Bono of U2. Journalist Marina Hyde has noted, that celebrity 'views' now equals 'news', displacing the views of the informed or the experts ('Newswipe' , BBC 4, 2nd Feb 2010. Thus, as she shows in the programme, we turn to pop star Ginger Spice or actor Jude Law for their assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. 'Serious political issues become trivialized in the attempt to elevate celebrities to philosopher-celebrities' (West and Orman, 2003, p.118).

In addition, the 'quality' press can sneak in trivia by 'reporting' on the antics of the tabloid press coverage of celebrities, while simultaneously holding their noses about the red-tops' news agendas. And TV channels can 'fulfil' their news and current affairs remit by rebranding celebrity pap as 'news' or 'factual' or 'current affairs'. Programmes which, in the past, would have been serious documentaries, are increasingly concerned with or presented by celebrities. Writing in the *Guardian* on 26th Sept 2009 about 'Live From Studio Five' (Channel Five, daily, 6.30pm), journalist and TV commentator Charlie Brooker highlights this sleight of hand:

> Here is a TV show that makes any and all previous accusations of "dumbing down" seem like misplaced phoney-war hysteria. A show providing less mental nourishment than a baby's rattle. A show with a running order *heat* magazine would consider frighteningly lightweight. A show which, incredibly, boasts Melinda Messenger as its intellectual touchstone. A show dumber than a blank screen and a low hum. ..... But the VTs – astoundingly – are, in fact, created by actual news journalists. Live From Studio Five is the product of Sky News. Which makes it part of Five's news quota. This – in case I haven't yet repeated the word "news" often enough to hammer it home – is a news programme.

Nevertheless, most people would agree that the press has more than one role: as well as informing the public and holding those in power to account, it must seek to do so in an engaging or entertaining way. As journalist and academic Tony Harcup (2009, p.116) puts it,

> If we do want to teach the public, we won't get very far if nobody reads, watches or listens to our work because we have made the stories too dull. Without an audience there can be no journalism, and we are not likely to gather much of an audience if we do not seek, at least in part, to entertain as well as inform.

But entertainment and engagement with audiences does not have to equate to acres of coverage of the minutiae of the lives of weather girls or former reality TV contestants, nor by going into overdrive about certain celebrity-related events.

It is this pervasiveness, volume and ubiquity that concerns academics (Franklin, 1997; Turner, 2004), with celebrity infusing 'every facet of everyday existence' (Andrews and Jackson, 2001, p.2). In addition, coverage of celebrity seems to make little distinction between the famous and infamous, the self-promoters and the publicity-shy, the talented and talentless.

This also leads on to another serious concern: is this trend towards ubiquity and volume of coverage driving out other more 'serious' news? Brian Winston (2002), in his study of TV news over a 25-year period, did not find evidence of this.

However, this study was nine years ago, and anecdotally at least, it appears that the volume of celebrity coverage has increased. Also, Winston examined TV coverage, which, in Britain, is subject to more stringent regulations than newspapers. Could the same be said of the British quality press, which may have to stake their survival on authoritative and credible content ? (Greenslade, *Telegraph online*, 10th June 2011)

Case study

This study was conceived and carried out before the phone-hacking revelations and the Leveson Inquiry. Already concerned about celebrity trends in 'serious' British newspapers, the study was prompted by the sheer scale of coverage of Michael Jackson's death in the quality press. Bored by the coverage of second-rate celebrities famous only for managing to harness publicity effectively, and overwhelmed by the sheer inescapable *volume* of celebrity coverage – even of celebrities whose achievements and antics chime with many news values and might merit news stories – coverage of Michael Jackson's death seemed to provide a useful case study to examine this trend.

When Jackson died in 2009, not all of the public welcomed the scale of the coverage in the British news media. The *Guardian*'s Leigh Holmwood reported on 1st July 2009:

> The BBC has received more than 700 complaints about its coverage of Michael Jackson's death, with viewers claiming there was too much across its news programming…………
>
> ……..The BBC said today it had received 748 complaints, with one senior source revealing that there were 10 to 15 times more complaints from viewers about Jackson than about BBC executives' expenses, which were published last week.
>
> (Holmwood, *Guardian Online*, 1st July 2009)

Letters of complaint were published by the quality press about the volumes of pages devoted for days on end to this issue. Some readers were later moved to write to the *Guardian* and *The Times* to complain. For example, Stephen Adams from Leeds condemned the *Guardian*'s coverage on Jackson, commenting, 'The *Guardian* seems to be confusing fame with importance.' (29th June 2009). The quality press, not just the tabloids, seemed to have lost all sense of proportion.

This presented an opportunity to carry out a study comparing the extent of celebrity coverage now, using Jackson as a case study, with the extent of coverage of similar celebrities in previous decades.

The first problem is to define the term 'celebrity'. Is it anyone who is famous? In which case the term could cover Barack Obama to Katie Price (a consummate self-promoter in the British media who appears to have become famous on account of having large, silicon-enhanced breasts). Is a renowned stage actor and regular of the Sunday supplements a greater or lesser celebrity and entitled to more or less coverage than the winner of Big Brother? Helen Boaden, Head of BBC News, thinks this is a class issue and she may well be right (talk at Leeds Trinity University College, February 2009).

Nevertheless for the purposes of this study, comparable 'celebrities' were needed, people who were famous for similar reasons. Like Jackson, any other subjects would need to have achieved celebrity status by virtue of their talent – preferably in the field of pop music - rather than merely being self-promoting spectacles.

Such a comparison might go some way towards answering the following questions pertinent to the 'dumbing down' debate: has celebrity coverage expanded? Where is it situated? Is it driving out more important news? With the red-tops something of a lost cause with regards to celebrity coverage, this study focussed on what was happening in the quality press, and the implications for the public.

Methodology

The comparison of the coverage of two celebrity deaths – Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson - were chosen as the case study because of certain similarities. The individuals had reached similar levels of fame through their achievements. Both were global pop stars who sold huge amounts of recordings (Presley, then The Beatles, then Jackson are the top selling artists of all time according to verified sales http://www.top10land.com/top-ten-best-selling-music-artists.html), though Jackson produced the biggest-selling album of all time, Thriller) and both died prematurely as their careers were waning, in rather squalid circumstances. For both singers, the arc of their lives and deaths closely fitted the celebrity 'fall-from-grace' narrative.

In other words, both their deaths were major news stories, reflecting many of Harcup and O'Neill's news values (2001) of Surprise (untimely deaths), Bad news (tragic deaths), but most of all Celebrity (by most people's definition) and Entertainment, though neither was at their peak when they died. Their deaths spanned four decades, allowing a reasonable period of time to examine how the newspapers changed in their coverage of similar events. The papers chosen were the *Guardian* , *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* (the *Independent* did not exist at the time of Presley's death and *The Financial Times* has a specialised circulation to the business community and is one paper not overly preoccupied with celebrity news).

Since their page sizes and pagination have changed over the years, the measurement used to record the volume of print coverage was column inches of print (photos were excluded) on the news pages. The total number of column inches of text on the news pages and the number of column inches of text devoted to each celebrity was recorded and then the amount of celebrity coverage was calculated as a percentage of total news coverage, providing an indication of how the proportion of celebrity news coverage had changed – or not - over the years. Calculating the percentage of column inches of news devoted to each celebrity would also provide an indication of whether this celebrity reporting was driving out other news. Coverage of the celebrities that did not appear on the news pages, such as supplements, features and obituaries, was noted separately but not included in overall percentages of column inches as it was not deemed to be affecting *news* reporting (though it could be said to be influencing the news agenda).

Initial research at The British Newspaper Library in London indicated that coverage of Jackson's death peaked on the day he died and for the next two days, though stories about Jackson continued for many weeks, even months, after. Coverage of the death of Presley appeared over two to three days following his death. For this reason, three days' coverage was examined following each death, starting when news of each death first broke.

In the case of Michael Jackson, all the news articles about him appeared on the domestic news pages, so the volume of coverage was calculated as a percentage of *domestic* news. On some days, the coverage of Presley only appeared on domestic news pages and was thus also calculated as a percentage of domestic news. But on a couple of days, coverage appeared on both domestic and overseas news pages or just on overseas news pages, in which case the volume of coverage was expressed as a percentage of domestic news and, in addition, of *all* news (the latter in brackets). This is indicated in the table below.

Findings

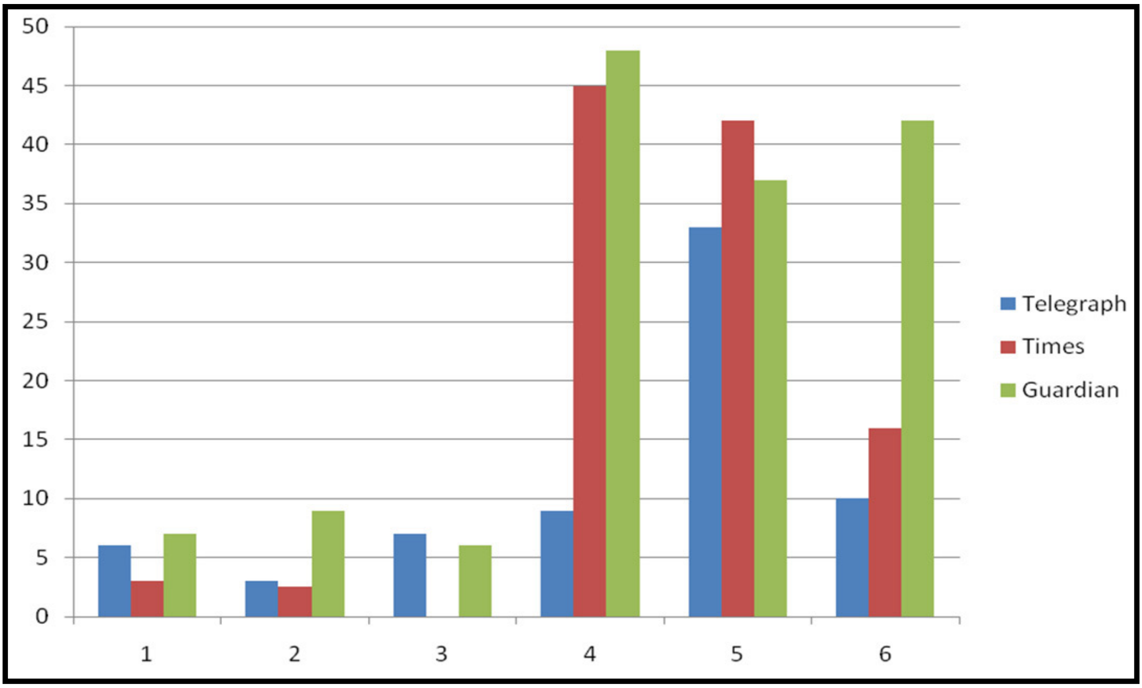
The figures below exclude all pictures, and only deal with text on the domestic news pages. (Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole figure.)

Some context as to what were the main issues in the news for each of the three-day periods in 1977 (Presley's death) and 2009 (Jackson's death) is provided.

Presley	***Telegraph***	***Times***	***Guardian***	***Summary***
17/8/77	6%	3%	7%	
18/8/77	3%	2.5% (2nd article also in OS news. When this article also included and taken as a proportion of *all* news, 4%) Plus obituary	9%	
19/8/77	7%	0% (appeared in OS news only; 2% of *all* news)	6%	Between 2% and 9% over three day period for all papers
Jackson	***Telegraph***	***Times***	***Guardian***	***Summary***
26/6/09	9%	45% Plus full-page obituary	48% Plus full-page obituary	
27/6/09	33%	42% Plus 1-page obit, and two comment pieces Plus 16-page supplement	37% Plus 2-page obit, plus leader plus comment piece Plus 8-page supplement	
29/6/09	10%	16%	42%	From 9% to 48%, plus supplements, peaking over three days but continuing for months

The results are represented in a bar chart (below) plotting percentage of domestic news coverage against the three days of coverage of Presley's death (1-3) and the three days of coverage of Jackson's death (4-6).

In mid-August 1977, Britain was experiencing a recession and many industrial disputes: British



Airways workers, air traffic controllers, Jaguar car workers, postal workers, while the Grunswick dispute about newspaper distribution continued. There were student sit-ins at Essex University and there were clashes between the anti-facist left and the racist National Front party. Riots against the NF erupted in Birmingham.

In June 2009, Britain was experiencing the beginnings of the global credit crunch and stockbroker and investment adviser Bernie Madoff was sentenced to 150 years in prison for large-scale fraud. Police tactics in the aftermath of the G20 protests, where a newspaper seller died after being struck by a policeman, were causing concern among MPs. This was a time when swine flu was spreading, and increasing numbers of graduates were facing the dole. It was the tail end of the MPs' expenses' scandal, and, in the wake of the clamour for more transparency in publicly funded institutions, some BBC expenses were revealed and rail bosses' bonuses published.

War in Afghanistan continued, there was unrest in Somalia, Italy's PM Belusconi was embroiled in an 'escort' scandal, and there were follow-up stories to the Air France plane crash. A leading US Republican Mark Sandford resigned after an affair. But the biggest foreign story was the protests in Iran following elections, and the death of a female protestor (*The Times* made this their full page 3 story on 26/6/09, after devoting the whole of its front page to Michael Jackson's death.) There was plenty going on in Britain and the world that merited coverage at the time of Jackson's death.

The death of US actress Farah Fawcett (from popular 1970s series Charlie's Angels) was also prominent, as was reporting of Glastonbury Music Festival (on the news pages in the *The Times*).

In monitoring the papers over the days following Presley's death, it was noted that there were no other celebrity stories on the news pages of any papers. There was coverage of people such as actors and musicians but these appeared on the Features/Arts pages.

The coverage of Jackson's death was not confined to these three days, but continued for months. A further Newsbank search between Jackson's death in June 2009 and 1 January 2010 of lead/first paragraphs in the national press revealed 3162 articles where Michael Jackson was mentioned. This means he appeared in the lead of more stories than the then Home Secretary Alan Johnson (3061) in the same period. Clearly no amount of economic crises, or government initiatives, policies and news management, could beat the draw of a dead pop star.

Discussion of findings

How times (and *The Times*) have changed. Coverage of a pop star's death (Presley's in 1977) in *The Times*, expressed as a percentage of domestic news coverage, had increased up to 15-fold (day 1) by the time Jackson died in 2009. For the *Guardian* it was a 10-fold increase on day 1; the difference for the *Telegraph* was not so dramatic for day 1 of Presley's death and day 1 of Jackson's death (almost twice as much in 2009). However, on day 2, the *Telegraph* appeared to have panicked about its relatively low coverage, and the percentage of news pages devoted to Jackson jumped to 33%, an 11-fold increase from the coverage of Presley's death on day 2.

Interestingly, both *The Times* and the *Guardian* treated some of the coverage of Presley's death as overseas news and did not give the story much prominence on domestic news pages, unlike 2009 when Jackson, also an American who died in America, was splashed all over the domestic news pages of UK newspapers, up to nearly a *half of all the news* contained on the domestic news pages of the *Guardian* and *The Times* on day 1, and taking up to a third of all news appearing on domestic news pages on day 2 in the *Telegraph*. All of this was in addition to the pages of supplements in *The Times* and *Guardian*.

As noted, the Jackson coverage went on solidly for weeks and more sporadically, but still quite frequently, for months. A cursory 6-month search found Jackson as the leading focus of over 3,000 articles, more than the two most prominent and important government ministers, the Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer. (Incidentally, Jackson was the main focus of around 40% of the number of articles that focussed on the then prime minister Gordon Brown.) A great deal of coverage was reminiscing or speculation, and not reporting in the strictest sense.

The stark contrast in coverage to similar pop stars' deaths 40 years apart is broadly reflected in two studies of news values almost four decades apart. In the first seminal work on news values by Galtung and Ruge in 1965, the concept of celebrity and entertainment did not even feature in their taxonomy of news values, let alone dominate the news hierarchy. By 2001, the influence of such personalites on news selection, whether famous for their talent or brought into the public eye by the media, had become so prominent that Harcup and O'Neill suggested an additional news value category called 'Celebrity' , separate from the notion of a 'Power elite'.

> 'The "elite people" noted in [our] study were not necessarily the elite people that Galtung and Ruge had in mind. The UK press seems obsessed with celebrities such as soap stars, sports stars, film stars and, of course, royalty…….As it stands, "elite people" is too broad a category to shed much light on what makes news in our current cultural climate.' (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001, p.270-271).

It can be argued from these results that Celebrity and Entertainment have ascended the hierarchy of news and appear to guarantee coverage, particularly if combined with other news values. In addition, there seems to be an unwritten rule that such stories must be given, not just prominence, but saturation coverage.

So how can we explain why Jackson's death merited between 10 and 15 times the amount of coverage than Presley's? It may be worth noting that some of Presley's coverage was confined to the overseas news sections of *The Times*. It is possible to argue that the USA is more culturally familiar today, with an increasing assimilation of American culture and values in Britain since the 1970s, when the USA might have seemed more distant, exotic, unknown and separate. And, unlike Presley, by performing globally, Jackson may have been more readily 'adopted' by other nations, such as Britain.

In addition, the Jackson story certainly contained a great deal of drama and twists and turns, which in turn kept launching new stories within the overall arc of his life. Cashmore (2006, p.155) puts Jackson's longevity on his mutability, morphing from a child star to the pop giant of the MTV generation, then an eccentric man-child with an unwholesome interest in young boys. These changes were accompanied by startling physical changes.

On June 14 2005 he walked free from charges of paedophilia. As Cashmore (2006, p.55) says, news of his acquittal did not so much define the end of an epoch but the start of a transition. Jackson may have been a broken man facing financial ruin and a career on the decline by the time of his 50th birthday in Sept 2008, but celebrity culture 'nurtures success from scandal.' (p.155).

In a study of the media coverage surrounding Jackson's 2005 acquittal, Garry Whannel (2010) applied his concept of 'vortextuality' - 'the intense, short-lived focus on a single news event' (p.66). His description of this media phenomenon, whereby journalists are rapidly drawn into the coverage, much like a vortex, and feel compelled to comment, would very much appear to apply to coverage of Jackson's death. 'The various media constantly feed off each other in processes of self-preferentiality and intertextuality. In an era of electronic and digital information exchange, the speed at which this happens has become very rapid. Certain super-major events come to dominate the headlines, and it becomes temporarily difficult for columnists and commentators to discuss anything else.' (Whannel, 2010, p.71). This may certainly explain why the *Telegraph*'s coverage rose on day 2, in line with the amount of coverage allocated by the *Guardian* and *The Times*.

When Presley was at his peak in the 1950s, pop culture was probably less pervasive than when Jackson was in the ascendancy. Subsequent changes and growth in media technology means that middle-aged journalists, most likely to be those in senior editorial posts, will have grown up with the music of Jackson as a frequent soundtrack to their formative years, so that emotions and memories may play a part in their news judgement.

Nevertheless, some media commentators, like columnist Stephen Glover, were taken aback by the coverage:

> I acknowledge it was a fascinating story. Jackson had an interesting and sometimes tragic life, and died in mysterious circumstances. He was obviously a hugely talented man.
>
> But was he a great one? One might expect *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* [red-top papers]to go over the top, but when the BBC and *The Times* and the *Guardian* respond with the same sense of awed reverence that they displayed nearly 45 years ago when Winston Churchill – a truly great man – died, one begins to fear for our culture.
>
> (Glover, *Independent*, 6th June 2009)

Glover also points out that any increase in sales at the time of Jackson's death were short-term, and may have occurred anyway, with or without such coverage. Would *Guardian* and *Times* readers really have turned their backs on these papers if they hadn't carried the column inches and supplements on Jackson's death that they did? It is doubtful that sales would have dropped significantly if the papers only carried a couple of articles about Jackson. As has been stated, the saturation coverage was not universally popular, with some readers moved to complain.

In defence of today's papers, it has to be said that examining newspapers from decades ago reveals how far modern newspapers have come in terms of design and layout. They are much more attractive and easy to follow than 30 or 40 years ago. They carry far more pages and photographs, and are also broader in the types of events they cover.

The editor of the *Guardian* reminds of us of this: 'When older readers speak nostalgically about the "old" *Times* they are yearning for its sober news values, its comprehensiveness and its intelligence of tone. They tend to have forgotten its narrowness, its maleness and its intellectual, social and cultural snobbery.' (Rushbridger, *Guardian,* 4th November 2000). He warns against generalising about dumbing down and about 'purging' the 'pages of all subject matter that more naturally feel at home in a tabloid.' (*ibid*).

It is hard to entirely disagree with this, but the opposite is also true. Should serious newspapers such as the *Guardian* or *The Times* be purging nearly half of their content of serious news (48% and 45% respectively of domestic news pages on 26/6/09 was devoted to Jackson, excluding supplements and obituaries)? With this amount of coverage of the death of one pop star, readers are entitled to ask, 'What important news is being ignored?'

Even allowing for the vastly increased pagination and range of content found in contemporary 'quality' UK newspapers, celebrity coverage has become pervasive and has vastly increased in proportion to other more important news, and expressed as a percentage of domestic news, seems to be driving out other news. The sheer volume and spread into news pages makes celebrity news inescapable; like the persistent drunk at a party, celebrity is in everyone's face.

Rather than being confined to certain publications, celebrity 'news' has gone viral, its creeping tentacles curtailing choice for *all* news consumers. The increasing homogenisation of the press – red-top and quality papers - mirrors the treatment of the British news-consuming public as an homogenous group, despite the fact that news audiences are segmented, and ignoring opportunities for focussed advertising .

Wider discussion

There is a palpable sense of unease in tackling this issue, stemming from what can only be described as the liberalism and relativism that all too often pervades the debate about celebrity coverage. There is a tendency to embrace cultural and intellectual relativism for fear of being accused of elitism, being a snob or, as Pierre Bourdieu (1996) has argued, being boring.

Unsurprisingly, the former editor of celebrity magazine *heat* embraces these views about critics of celebrity culture. 'There are the snobs that pretend they are not interested in celebrity culture and are too busy listening to Radio 4. I mean they are liars .....' (Sam Delaney, former Editor of *heat* magazine, quoted by Brook, *Guardian,* 18th January 2010). Yet these very charges can be turned against those who champion celebrity culture. The dismissive Delaney, a 34-year-old, former New Labour researcher for Harriet Harman and Gordon Brown, is typical of many top journalists, who themselves are part of an elite: university educated, many through the Oxbridge system, and well connected. A study into the educational backgrounds of leading journalists in June 2006 by The Sutton Trust found that most top journalists went to private schools (54%), were university educated (72% at 13 leading universities, including 40% at Oxford), were mostly male (over 80%), had a London background, and were recruited through personal contacts.

These are the people who condescend to their viewers and readers under the guise of egalitarianism, feeding them sugar rushes of celebrity that make no demands on their audiences, while diverting attention away from knowledge and information that could provide challenges to the very elites that control so many institutions of power and influence, including the media.

Stories are exaggerated and sensationalised, minor transgressions are turned into moral panics, all given the same weight, the same hyperventilating and hyperactive treatments to promote circulations and ratings. The Jonathan Ross/Russell Brand Sachsgate story (October 2008) was one such example, serendipitously serving up newspapers like the *Daily Mail* with a heady brew of moral righteousness mixed with anti-BBC propaganda, a winning recipe that elevated a witless and unpleasant prank to the status of a national TV news lead and which required the Director General of the BBC to make an apology on BBC2's Newsnight – a perfect example of a soufflé of hysteria whipped into pseudo-news.

Nevertheless, is the rise of celebrity merely a symptom of a less deferential society, where the public, through the media, are not afraid to criticise the great and the famous, and thus a healthy development in society (McNair, 2000; Temple, 2006)? On closer inspection this argument does not hold up. Contrary to some of the views in favour of celebrity culture (self-actualisation, affirmation, egalitarianism and equality), celebrity news encourages impotence and deference . As Charlie Brooker says, journalists are frequently more deferential and obsequious to celebrities – often accompanied by a team of public relations advisers - than to politicians ('Newswipe', BBC 4, 2nd Feb 2010. Most interviewers obligingly failed to ask pop star Dappy of pop group N-Dubz about allegations of bullying – a line of questioning very much in the public interest since Dappy was spearheading a government-backed, anti-bullying campaign at the time. Minders stepped in to slap the wrists of one journalist who had the temerity to mention it.

This deference echoes Su Holmes' point that celebrity culture, while seemingly aspirational, is actually rather conservative, with the notion of selfhood bound up in rather traditional ideologies and fixed social strata (2006, p.61). In her examination of the TV programme 'I'm a Celebrity… Get Me Out of Here!' she suggests that, while working class credentials are often invoked to signify authenticity, background or class cannot be discarded at will …. 'it naturalizes social hierarchies and the imbalance of power on which they are based.' (*ibid*), including the capitalist belief that 'life has its winners and losers and that is only natural' (McDonald, 1995, p.65 cited in Holmes, 2006, p.63).

Cashmore (2006, p.4) argues that the rise of celebrity bestows power on a public who can make or break a celebrity (a dubious ambition in itself). Apart from the fact that this is illusory power, what the press expose celebrities for, and the means by which they do it, are often unethical or, as in the case of phone-hacking, downright illegal.

Journalist and feminist Caitlin Moran highlights the undercurrents of sexism towards women in the public eye, pointing out that they suffer disproportionately because of the focus on their appearance (Moran, 2011, p.262). She argues that coverage of women is 'hugely reductionist and damaging': a female celebrity only has to be photographed without makeup, in a 'bad' dress or having changed body shape to be pilloried. 'I've read more about Oprah Winfrey's arse than I have about the rise of China as an economic superpower.' (*ibid*, p.264). The pernicious message is that half of the population needs to shape up and aspire to the air-brushed, unattainable, manufactured 'ideals' of womanhood constantly reinforced in the media, including the 'serious' news media - hardly a positive or healthy aspiration for young women.

In addition, the media frequently set their sights on vulnerable targets – the young, the ill, or the addicted, such as Britney Spears or Amy Winehouse – and these are all too often the subject of supposedly less deferential treatment. For example, when boxer Frank Bruno was suffering from depression, an early edition of *The Sun* on 23rd September 2003 had the front page headline 'Bonkers Bruno Locked Up', and more recently on 9th November 2009 the same paper started a campaign against former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who is partially blind, for making a mistake in a hand-written letter of condolence to the mother of a soldier killed in Afghanistan, a news agenda many other news outlets, including the BBC, slavishly followed.

However, Harper (2006) argues that coverage of celebrities and their fallibilities, in particular mental illness, offers opportunities for positive discourse, de-stigmatising mental illness and providing consolation, particularly for women. But this is to ignore the unethical methods that sections of the press are prepared to go to, and the damaging psychological effects of such intrusiveness on the individuals targeted.

In her press statement after giving evidence at the Leveson Inquiry, singer Charlotte Church described the devastating effects of being the young subject of 'blackmail, illegal phone interception, 24/7 surveillance and tracking, car chases, door stepping and blagging' as she grew up in the media glare (Church, 10th Nov 2011, guardian.co.uk, pp.3-4). While most of her statement was directed at the tabloids, she pointed out that *The Times* was guilty of seriously misrepresenting her comments on 9/11 aged 14, and that the press were determined to portray her as a 'fallen angel' . While there will be a mixture of uses and gratifications on the part of the newspaper-reading public, it should not be forgotten that the true goal of the press in exposing human frailties in celebrities is to boost sales by serving up schadenfreude to the public. As Church put it, 'I feel extremely strongly…. that children and their families – that people - need to be protected from the exploitative, unethical and financially driven practices of the soulless corporations who control the tabloid industry.' (*ibid*, p.13).

The 'fair game' attitude towards press intrusion into the lives of celebrities created a culture whereby immoral and illegal practices were easily extended towards murder victims (7/7 victims))and grieving parents (the McCanns).

It is these ethical issues being highlighted by the Leveson Inquiry that sustain the most damning arguments against the celebrity phenomenon. And the repercussions go beyond the red-tops and beyond celebrity reporting. In his evidence to the inquiry, former *News of the World* Deputy Features Editor Paul McMullan described the constant pressure to get celebrity stories, and the £3m budget he had to pay for invading the privacy of the famous. As we now know, a great deal of this went either directly or as payment in kind to the police, for tipping off News International papers with celebrity stories ('How Murdoch Ran Britain', Dispatches, Channel 4, 29th July 2011). John Yates, former Assistant Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police, who was leading the re-opened investigation into phone hacking, was close friends with Neil Wallis, a former senior executive at the *News of the World*, who later became an adviser to the Met. Andy Hayman, former Commissioner at the Met, became a well-paid columnist on *The Times* (*ibid*). In the drive for celebrity sleaze and gossip, newspapers have helped mire the police in allegations of corruption. With the methods for obtaining celebrity 'news' and the elevation of profit over standards now laid bare, the outcome of Leveson threatens press freedom as a whole.

Why has celebrity coverage increased?

So what is fuelling the ascension of celebrity news and news values? There are a number of reasons.

One is the cross-promotional vested interests of modern media conglomerations. Puzzled by the amount of photos of pop star, footballer's wife and 'X Factor' judge Cheryl Cole in *The Times*, the reasons became clearer when satirical magazine *Private Eye* reported that Murdoch's papers have given her extensive coverage 'without ever finding room to explain that the US show's [X Factor] broadcaster, Fox, is also part of Rupert Murdoch's empire.' (*Private Eye*, 10-23 June 2011, p.11). In the same edition it also pointed out that around the same time the *Sun* (proprietor Rupert Murdoch) devoted three centre page spreads to the film 'X-Men' and its stars, made by no other than Fox film studios.

Editors and journalists involved in the celebrity game frequently claim to be giving the public what they want. But Barker (2007, pp.114-115) argues, 'In an epoch of media saturation, this argument has become disingenuous. Journalism has become the creator as well as a reflector of public taste.' Related to this is the fact that editors seem to be under a misguided belief that in order to attract younger readers, they must liberally sprinkle their pages with the shenanigans of footballers, their wives, TV personalities and pop stars. However, the assumption that all youth are obsessed with celebrity is often over-simplistic or misplaced.

If youngsters seem to know a great deal about celebrities, they are not necessarily leading the demand for this information; rather it is a consequence of the culture that surrounds them, to which the mass media contributes in no small part (Barker, 2007). Rojek defines celebrity as the impact on public consciousness (Rojek, 2001, p.10.) The notorious, the vainglorious, the downright mad and stupid, the renowned, are all given equal space in the mass media. Rojek argues the pervasiveness of the celebrity must be laid at the door of the mass media.

Contrary to perceived wisdom, most children are not driven by celebrity ambitions. A recent survey of nearly 7,000 young people by the National Literacy Trust, found that about 33% of girls aged between 8 and 16 said they just wanted to be happy when they grow up compared with just 3.5% who aspired to celebrity status. Slightly more boys wanted to be famous (5.1%) but again most wanted to be happy. (Sugden, 4th May 2011, *The Times*)[1].

It is not just young people who we may be underestimating with regards to celebrity. Reflecting on the Leveson Inquiry, the editorial director of celebrity magazine *Style* points to another trend:

> I spend many evenings with groups of women, researching what they want from their media. For the past few years there has been a growing sense of having gorged on an unhealthy celeb cake that's starting to make them feel guilty and a bit ill.

1 The survey on Gender and Communication was conducted online in June/July 2010. Overall, 6,865 young people aged 8 to 16 from 47 schools participated in the online survey. 46 were schools from England, one was from Wales. There was an almost equal gender split in the sample, with 51.5% of boys (N = 3,511) and 48.5% of girls (N = 3,309) participating in this survey. http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/8363/Gender_communication_survey2011.pdf

> The falling sales in the celebrity sector reflects scepticism as well as moral doubts…
>
> (Hilton, *The Times*, 28th November 2011)

And a recent survey by the *British Journalism Review* and YouGov found that there was clear public opinion about what type of stories merited publication due to the public interest, and what should remain unpublished and private. Furthermore, these attitudes were found to be consistent over the past 10 years (Barnett, 2012a.) 'The British public understand the distinction between watchdog journalism, which holds power to account, and celebrity journalism, which has little public value, even if it is "interesting"', says Steve Barnett , who commissioned the research (2012b, p.3).

This leads onto a couple of other important reasons for the spread of the celebrity virus. Journalists have a symbiotic relationship with what can be broadly termed the PR industry. Rojek makes the point that celebrities are essentially fabrications, concocted by what he describes as '"cultural intermediaries" ... the collective term for agents, publicists, marketing personnel, promoters, photographers, fitness trainers, wardrobe staff , cosmetic experts and personal assistants.' (2001, p.13). With many pages to fill, reliance on publicists and public relations professionals make the job quicker and easier, as does the sort of speculation and unsubstantiated gossip that is another key feature of celebrity 'reporting'. This is lazy journalism at best, or PR puff at worst. Journalists are allowing themselves to be manipulated by publicists and minders who dictate the news agenda. Certain questions are off-limits, while books, films, TV programmes and other products are ruthlessly marketed.

The celebrity trivia invasion also appears to stem from the cannibalistic nature of the media, different strands of which feed off each other. Thus TV provides an endless source of cheap fillers for newspapers that blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction, while news broadcasters in turn feed off the press, a trend made more acute by lack of investment in news gathering in recent years.

They also follow each other's news agendas – listeners to BBC Radio 4 were prompted to complain about the BBC following the *Sun*'s agenda when the BBC reported on former PM Brown's mistakes in his note to a bereaved mother of a soldier in November 2009. There is a tendency to regard what rivals are reporting on as *de facto* 'news', regardless of its merits, for fear of missing the media bandwagon: journalists are notorious for having a pack mentality. Add to this is the speed of digital media - whereby news can go viral in minutes - and social media's unlimited opportunities for obtaining, echoing and amplifying celebrity views and gossip, the conditions are set for creating the vortex of coverage described by Whannel (2010).

Nevertheless, some trends in journalism are inevitable and welcome: there is no reason for journalism and the media not to change as society and culture changes and evolves, since journalism both shapes and reflects that culture. This is no clarion call for a return to newspapers of old, with their cramped and uninspiring layouts and design, and lack of pictures; this is no argument for dry and narrow content.

But there are certain core values and standards worth defending in any craft or profession. In newspapers this means lively, well-crafted writing, communicating useful information through attractive and easy-to-follow layouts, conveying thought-provoking opinions and analysis to the reader in an engaging way that directly or indirectly helps to hold those in power to account. There will be other things in this mix: reviews, letters, obituaries, features, TV guides, but if truthful and accurate information is omitted, what right have these publications got to call themselves newspapers?

> A journalist's job is *both* to inform and entertain. The trick – for journalist and audience alike- is to understand the difference between the two and to understand that if it fails to inform then it ceases to be journalism. (Harcup, 2009, p.122)

In the meantime, it can be argued that news audiences are left with a shrinking public sphere, where the free exchange of information and opinions has been reduced to acres of coverage of lurid celebrity gossip that materially affect most of our lives not one jot, while journalists fail to expose falsehoods about taking us into war, or warn and campaign against the sharp and disastrous banking practices that plunged us into global recession.

Conclusion

Too many academics, commentators and journalists are reluctant to criticise the celebrity trend for different reasons: because of misplaced judgements about the democratising force of celebrity culture; or because the debate is wilfully polarised, with critics accused of calling for a return to the newspapers of yesteryear, and opposed to engaging and lively journalism. Too often, those that call for higher professional aspirations and quality journalism are charged with being out of touch, elitist and patronizing, particularly by journalists and proprietors with vested interests in the celebrity circus. Such accusations are ironic, since dishing out pap under the illusion of egalitarianism is the work of those who are truly serve-serving, patronizing and manipulative.

The result is dumbed-down, shallow, poor-quality journalism, full of banality, inaccuracies, rumour and speculation. This can be borne – perhaps even enjoyed - if it is confined to certain parts of the media so that consumers are provided with real choice and diversity. Instead, its pervasiveness and sheer volume means it is permeating every nook and cranny of the media, from serious broadcast news and current affairs programmes to the quality press.

With regards to the UK quality press, this study demonstrates that celebrity is, at times, driving out other news. The public is being ill-served. Those who lament the lack of choice start to believe they are out of step, given the amount of coverage, and left to rail with 'increasing despair' (Barker, 2007). The press (often willingly) and the public (often unwittingly) are being manipulated by public relations professionals with vested interests, serving up publicity or propaganda as news, in the pursuit of personal or corporate profit. In the rush to fill column inches, dubious ethical – even illegal - practices have been spawned, and invasions of privacy are commonplace.

> ……. the real damage *of News of the World*-style journalism had been done well before the exposure of its reporters' reliance on illegal voicemail interceptions. Though the paper may have expressed "sincere regret" for its hacking activities, it would never consider apologising for a much greater offence – transforming modern popular journalism into little more than a newsprint version of an old-fashioned seaside what-the-butler-saw machine.
>
> (Greenslade, *Guardian,* 2nd May 2011)

The dual filters of distraction and omission are being applied to reporting in our elite newspapers, weakening claims to be acting as a fourth estate and limiting readers' choice and the public sphere. Important news is being missed in pursuit of cheap gossip, and banal, inflated coverage of personalities.

While there is little doubt that the quality press has made considerable contributions to public, political, social and cultural life in Britain, it is in danger of losing its way. While there may be a market for gossip and prurience, there is also a market for engaging and truly informative news.

One of the fundamental issues that journalism educators require new students to consider is the purpose and role of journalism in a functioning democracy. Central to this is journalism's capacity to act as a watchdog, to play a central part in the public sphere. News agendas shape public consciousness and wider social and political agendas. As educators, our job is to reveal the agendas – intentional or otherwise – behind the media we consume, to provide our students with a level of media literacy, and to help them understand the power structures in society. Examination of the celebrity phenomenon can help students contribute to the debate about how well modern journalism is fulfilling its fourth estate role.

This study contributes to that debate by arguing there is too much celebrity 'news'; it argues there is little in the supply of celebrity news that helps any of us to challenge and, more importantly, change and take responsibility for the society we live in. Apart from diverting us away from the important issues of the day, a diet of celebrity news is in danger of starving us of the ability to understand the complexities, contexts and facts about the world we inhabit. Instead, it promotes emotive, simplistic, and individualistic responses: to condemn or to worship. It is time to debunk the myth that the celebrity phenomenon is empowering, or a social leveller and the representation of democratisation. Much of what passes for journalism in this celebrity-ridden era is the 21st century equivalent of bread and circuses.

So while journalism educators need to understand the rise of celebrity, this does not mean accepting its pervasiveness in all sectors of the press. Its rise and spread needs to be challenged by academia. To argue that celebrity news is both empowering and an economic necessity, led by public demand, especially among younger readers, is both disingenuous and irresponsible: journalism shapes public consciousness as much as it reflects it. In a complex world that needs making sense of, educators and academics should not be endowing celebrity reporting with the same status or moral equivalence as public interest journalism.

But whether this view of celebrity is accepted or not, critiquing celebrity can help develop the critical and analytical skills that graduates need. And a detailed examination of celebrity can be a springboard from which to raise many ethical issues around journalistic practice, such as the complex debate around privacy, the public interest and press regulation. Celebrity coverage is also central to any discussion about the future direction of journalism and the press. This makes the celebrity phenomenon a fruitful field of study for educators and students alike, while this study offers a methodological model for future studies on the march of celebrity.

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The use of parlour games in teaching journalism

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Abstract

This article suggests reasons for the use of parlour games in the university teaching of undergraduate journalism. As commonly used in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), parlour games develop flexibility and creativity in the use of grammatical constructions; as used in coaching and management training, they develop confidence in social situations; as used in the training of artists and speakers in performance, they develop quickness in response to others' unforeseen actions and reactions. Most importantly, perhaps, as used in middle-class families, they act as a tool to establish access to social and cultural capital. Put baldly, confidence is the confidence to fail and learn from failure: "Fail again. Fail better," as Beckett memorably puts it (Beckett 1984). This paper will show how, grounded in theory about social and cultural capital, performativity, ludicity [please note, correct spelling!] and cognitive/social development, London Metropolitan University's journalism team has developed the use of parlour games to deepen first-year students' facility with language and social skills.

As regards success, statistics from the National Student Survey (NSS) in 2012, found that 90% of final-year students from London Metropolitan University's BA Journalism were satisfied with the course: 83% said that the course

had helped them to present themselves with confidence; 83% said that as a result of the course, they felt confident in tackling unfamiliar problems; and 86% said that their communication skills had improved (Unistats 2012).

Literature survey

Building on a theoretical base which owes much to Pierre Bourdieu (1986), David Crystal (1998 and passim), Habermas (1984-7), the constructivism of Piaget (1945) and Vygotsky (1978), as well as anthropological notions of performativity (eg, Evans-Pritchard 1937 and Lyotard 1984), I have been developing session plans which link rigour and creativity in the exploration of grammar and rhetoric. These have mainly been used to teach undergraduate journalism students in the first year of a three-year degree.

In brief, Bourdieu (1986) outlines the immense advantage conferred on those who are brought up with sufficient social and cultural capital, often generated within the high aspirations and practices of successful families. Among these, I suggest, is the attention paid to young people by adults who often interact with them in a validating way: considering their arguments, taking time to correct their misapprehensions, and playing with them (structured and non-structured) games. Many of our students do not have this kind of home environment. Surveys show that they come from backgrounds which are more economically deprived ethnically diverse background that those at other UK higher education institutions (see, eg, Eddo-Lodge 2012). In consequence, they can be (of course, this does not apply to every student from any background) at a disadvantage in social environments other than those of their peer groups – a fatal limitation for a journalist.

As Bourdieu puts it (1986, online text):

> Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.

If we are then aiming to correct an imbalance in our students' readiness to enter the class-bound and class-limited spaces of the media workplace, it is worth considering what factors other than the obvious ones of parental income and scholastic attainment might be holding them back. Ethnic diversity, whilst potentially a rich source of social capital, may also inhibit access to social networks and jobs, since the cultural capital which inheres in specific ethnic groups may not translate into the media mainstream. (For a lively discussion of class barriers and how they might interact with ethnicity, see Zahir 2011.)

Bourdieu (1986) again:

> The notion of cultural capital initially presented itself to me, in the course of research, as a theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success, i.e., the specific profits which children from the different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class fractions.

Bourdieu's theory is widely used by social commentators and analysts, including those making policy with the Labour Party (Cruddas 2010), and has become reified beyond its author's probable intent. None the less, it remains a provocative starting point for practitioners trying to work within what can seem internal but rigid limits on individual students' capacities for intellectual and social development. [For a good discussion of the limitations and possibilities of Bourdieu's theories, see Weininger and Lareau, 2007.]

If cultural capital operates as a limiting force, then classroom practice needs to be aimed at breaking down its limits. For journalists, the cultural tool is written language, first and foremost. Yet, it is an accepted truism that "young people today can't handle the language". A typical newspaper article in the Daily Telegraph (Porter 2011) blares, "Too many young people are unable to read, write or communicate properly and do not work hard, a business leader claimed."

Crystal (1998, 1999) talks of "ludicity" as a way to gain confidence in and mastery of language, specifically with word games. Those teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) have long made use of word games, role plays and stories as ways to enliven and diversify the teaching of linguistic structures. At the time of writing, there are about three million Google hits for "Games and play in teaching English as a Foreign Language" (July 2011).

The importance of play in education, first properly addressed by the ground-breaking theories of Montessori and Froebel (Saracho & Spodek 1995) at the turn of the last century (and theorised for deeper cultural impact by Huizinga in 1938 (Huizinga 1998)) is widely valued and promoted for children under the age of 11. Piaget, founding father of developmental psychology, wrote: "Education, for most people, means trying to lead the child to resemble the typical adult of his society…but for me and no one else, education means making creators… You have to make inventors, innovators—not conformists" (Bringuier, 1980, p 132). A playful approach has since Piaget's time been widely accepted in early-years education in the UK and Europe. For example, the Early Years Foundation Stage document produced by the Department for Education) calls for "planned purposeful play" (p 11) and support for young children's "curiosity, exploration and play" (p 15).

And although a cultural backlash in the UK seems at the time of writing aimed at taking that element of play away from young children -- according to critics of the curriculum plans of the current Education Secretary, Michael Gove (Rosen 2012) -- education theorists nevertheless continue to explore the importance of play in learning, while EFL classes, with games components, continue to multiply world wide (eg, 5500 schools listed on eslbase.com in July 2012).

Stuart Brown gave a TED talk in 2006 on the importance of play (2006), citing our mammalian inheritance as a basis for those social interactions which are not purely ends-focused – a more scientific version of Huizinga's stress on play as a basis of human bonds (Brown 1992) and the release of energy to learn. Narrowing that panorama of human playfulness from the vast array of games and pastimes to be found across the globe, to smaller-scale, more intimate interchanges, a UNESCO document on Cultural Statistics commented, "The great parlour games belong to the most perfect creations of human engineering. Almost all children know Chess and the Ladies; much of children from Asia are interested by Go ; African children play Mancala (more than two hundred alternatives exist : Akonga, Awele, Toguz Khorgol, Wali, etc…).Teachers and parents can use this quasi-spontaneous motivation of children for the great parlour games in order to arouse their interests for scholar disciplines." (UNESCO 2009)

Much theoretical work on the importance of play both within human society and experience and within education locates the time for learning games in childhood, within the family and close social bonds. Vygotsky (1978) thinks that language can grow as the child gains control of language used initially with other children and adults: development can be seen as internalising the conversational process of language and hence of cognition, stimulated by social interaction. Habermas (1984-7) writes that communicative action serves to transmit and renew cultural knowledge, in a dialectic process of achieving mutual understandings. For Habermas, communicative action is a dynamic process through which people form their identities. As such, a lifelong task, but one which is most often stamped in the mould of childhood and adolescent experiences (Penuel and Wertsch 1995).

Let us extend these notions into the sphere of higher education for journalists. Playfulness and curiosity are key elements for journalism, from the development of satirical humour as in the British bi-weekly Private Eye to exposés like Morgan Spurlock's Super Size Me (2004) and such staples of the broadsheet press as parliamentary sketch writers and third leaders. To regard journalism, as many seem to (eg, McNair 2009), as simply reporting events, as reporting events to a political agenda, as analysing events and as investigating accounts of events is, I submit, to ignore a great deal of the processes and products of journalism.

Communicative action is surely the essence of journalism, both in terms of journalists as enactors of communication and for that concretisation of information now widely described as "content origination" (see, eg Wilhelm and Downing 2001). More baldly, journalists need to bond with interviewees, develop contacts, compete in the rough and tumble of news conferences, listen carefully to sources, analyse what is new and newsworthy, think up and pitch ideas, develop new formats and hit on new angles for existing stories. Thus assisting young people to form their own identities as effective communicators is the essential task of journalism educators.

Therefore, journalism educators need to develop a pedagogy which aims to build students' performance within taught sessions and allows both students' creativity and their (dread buzz-word!) employability to flower, encouraging them to explore the cornucopia of English usage whilst also assisting in their development as social beings, within professional and ethical guidelines. The social skills so frequently identified by contemporary commentators as missing from young entrants to the workplace (Porter 2012, as above), can be developed by games as well as by the trusted routes of work simulations and work experience. As one of the students graduating from London Metropolitan University in 2012 confided (personal communication), "I can see the point of all those stupid games where you made us stand up and do things now. I really didn't like it, but now at the magazine [where she was an intern] I don't feel scared talking to anyone."

Our pedagogic approach also has roots in another branch of social theory. Performativity, a notion about the embodiment and enactment of social values in successful agents, was first adumbrated in the analysis of the African Azande people by British anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1937). In two seminal works, Evans-Pritchard (1937, 1940) analysed religious practices as the embodied performance of political power structures. "Values are embodied in words through which they influence behaviour" (Evans-Pritchard 1940, p135) Later anthropologists, thinkers and educators have developed these ideas and applied them to our own society. For example, a paper on Awkward comedy and Performative Anxiety: the self as communicative machine was given at a conference at York University, Toronto (Goldstein 2011). The comedy of Ricky Gervais in British TV series The Office (2001-2004) explicitly played on the triumphs and discomforts of this notion as applied to modern workplace life.

With more obvious relevance, the notion of performativity has been applied to education by Lyotard (1979) and his many followers. They seek to explain social action and agency in terms of power accrued by and attention paid to social actors. Although journalists may not seem to be prime social movers in the same way as chiefs and sorcerers in an African clan, yet they surely need to be adaptable: to play the parts of listener, investigator, adjudicator, narrator. In short, they need to be fluid post-modern controllers of their impact in social situations à la Lyotard.

For journalists, the means whereby they will control their social impact will partly depend on their control of language (Bernstein 2003). Thus we link back to the importance of linguistic control for social subjects. Language operates not just as a means to control social situations but as a guarantor of a measure of individual autonomy. Given this, developing personal performativity in language-based social situations like parlour games offers students the wherewithal to adopt effective linguistic and social skills -- even if the material may at first seem difficult for them.

Finally, as educators, we are also involved, whether we like it or not, in helping our students develop as whole people. Here, Daniel Goleman's ideas about emotional intelligence (despite their now seeming yesterday's buzzwords which state the obvious) may be pertinent. Arguably, if British tabloids had been more emotionally intelligent and less focused on obeying the proprietors' greed for the bottom line, they would have avoided the unwholesome excesses which the Leveson

Inquiry (2011-12) has unearthed – publishing intimate details of murder victims' lives, pursuing celebrities with loaded cameras.

At one time myself a journalist, ex-New York Times science writer Goleman argued (1996) that our emotions play a much greater role in thought, decision-making and individual success than is commonly acknowledged. He defines "emotional intelligence" a trait not measured by IQ tests, as a set of skills, including control of one's impulses, self-motivation, empathy and social competence in interpersonal relationships. Over a number of books (1998, 2006) Goleman has developed his idea of key competencies in life – and hence as subjects to be taught in formal education -- as being more than "reading writing and 'rithmetic", but rather those "soft skills" which employers – and fellow-citizens – value in everyday relationships. Goleman's (2007) synthesis of the latest findings in biology and brain science revealed that we are "wired to connect" and pointed to the surprisingly deep impact of our relationships on every aspect of our lives, including in education.

Such insights are commonly discussed in the earlier stages of education and in teacher training, but often discounted in favour of a hard-edged cognitive and training bias in higher education. Employability, skillsets, learning outcomes and key performance indicators, as touted on the UK's HESA website, HE academy and QAA documentation, are all very well and good but as Goleman remarks, we are designed for sociability, constantly engaged in a "neural ballet" that connects us brain-to-brain with our acquaintance. Put more simply, we need to learn to get along without sacrificing our individuality.

These elements, then, of the importance of social and cultural capital, of ludicity in pedagogy, of social performativity and of the need for emotional intelligence, underlie the practice of games within the journalism classroom, where it in no way diminishes or undermines the intellectual rigour of other parts of the curriculum. To quote the NSS once more, 93% of final-year students said that staff made the subject interesting and 79% that the course was intellectually stimulating (Unistats 2012).

An account of practice

Since many of our BA students at London Metropolitan University come with a non-academic attitude to analysis, this kind of mingling of more traditional academic thought with enactments, scenarios, parlour games and small group activities has been an effective way to build with them not only facility with language and confidence in social interaction, but also understandings of theory. Student intake for BA Journalism at London Metropolitan University is currently (2012) based on 260 points on the first run of applications to university via UCAS – a mid-range requirement for skills on graduating from secondary education – but this is frequently dropped to a far lower level at the final stage in the process, where students scramble for left-over places and universities scoop up those whose results were less than they had hoped. Our first-year undergraduates also include many on hybrid degrees (where students also take modules from other faculties or course areas) with lower entrance requirements. Thus, our students commonly have little experience of dealing with abstract ideas or of detaching their own responses from what they read or hear (subject of a forthcoming paper).

In most first and second-year sessions, tutors often use ice-breaker or game activities to free students' creativity and help them form social bonds. Students are also required to take notes, debate intellectual ideas, write in small groups or individually, and present to the class. This set of activities mimics -- or prepares them for -- much of the activity required of a journalist: capacity to originate stories and look at information in a fresh, inquiring way; literary capabilities; the social skills to interact with a wide variety of people, be they primary sources or colleagues; the need to present information concisely and confidently.

Piaget says (1945) that the world is actively constructed by the child (or learner), as he or she takes action to solve problems. Our students learn by doing, which is why, like most journalism degrees, we also make full use of our newsroom and website for the course. Both of these are now extremely helpful for our students, who rehearse the experience of employment, working in teams to produce journalistic product. But that is scarcely novel for any journalism department, no more than beat or patch reporting, daily classes in shorthand, or scouting for vox pops.

When it comes to ideas, learning by doing is much harder. Hence the place of games, not only in writing classes, the subject of this current paper, but also in more theory-based courses, like those on history, culture, law and ethics. As Leslie Viney, former colleague, writes, "Through investing cultural theories with realtime examples and bringing them to life in the classroom through games and challenges, the level of student learning and performance has grown steadily." (personal communication, 2011). This dynamic approach is the subject of another article.

Why parlour games?

Patrick Beaver writes, in Victorian Parlor Games:

> All games, from the Roman gladiatorial battles to a quiet round of cards or charades, are imitations of real-life situations. This is equally true of physical or mental contests, games of chance or combinations of any of these. Team games, whether played in field or parlor, are all essentially exercises in combat. Games in which the individual pits his wits against other individuals are only a reflection of the struggle to live and better oneself in the world of reality. (page 13)

Since the reality of the modern journalism workplace is a see-sawing between individual entrepreneurship and collaboration, games provide the perfect preparation. A typical advertisement, from the online jobs site, Gorkana outlines everything you need be godo at the games – as well as to be good at the job (2012):

We are looking for a hard-working, motivated individual who is capable of working as part of a team or alone, with a proven record of great editorial experience, broad interests and knowledge, a sense of fun and excitement, technical ability and an eye for detail.

Some general rules for practice

Playful is not the same as trivial; conversely, serious need not mean dull. Before each game, staff stress to students that we are going to play but that our play has a point and a rationale. While there is no need to be over-solemn about this, the quality of adult commitment must be clear, since an important aspect of playing games is the validation conferred by staff attention and participation, just as it is crucial for middle-class children to absorb the attention of their parents.

Tempting though it is to play the part of entertainer, to do so would be to negate the point of the game, which is to elicit creative responses from the class, rather than model them from the front.

Thus we have established a checklist for staff, which should be explained to students.

Everyone participates

No one wins; no one loses

The purpose of the game is explained

The game is summed up

The game is linked to the next activity

We don't take it too seriously: bonding and building confidence is more important than competition.

These rules embody in social strictures the ideas of building social and cultural capital, exploring ludicity, developing performativity, fostering intellectual development and nurturing emotional intelligence.

Some examples

Some games which can be used in this manner successfully are:

I love my love with an A

My uncle does not like peas

Smile

How/ What? Where/ When?

Fizz-Buzz

The Traveller's Alphabet

Detective

In the manner of the word (adverbs)

Who am I?

Taboo

To explain the general principles of how the strategy works, let us examine the game of Storybuilding or Conjunctions. A list of games, how to run them and possible developments follows.

Storybuilding

This is suitable for groups of up to 25. The tutor introduces the concept of conjunctions, in a standard grammatical formula and then links it to this game. A list of conjunctions is displayed on the projector screen. The tutor explains: "We're going to go round the circle quickly. Each person will add a sentence or two of a story: we'll keep it this time to a crime news story.

The only rules are:

Nothing disrespectful to any individual or group

You must end each contribution with a conjunction."

It is best if the tutor starts with an anodyne sentence, which lets the story develop where it may. I tend to use, "Jones lay on the sofa, BUT…." and then look inquiringly at the person next to me. Tutors may find it helpful to pick an extrovert as the first person, to get the ball rolling. At first, students will need prompting, coaxing even, but it is important for the cohesion of the group not to let any "pass". The tutor needs to be gently inflexible.

After, usually, some hilarity and everyone having taken a turn, the game concludes. It is important then to consolidate the learning through explanation, which might go like this:

We did this because – well, first of all, we all need some fun and to get to know each other. But more seriously, conjunctions are words that help us join phrases or clauses (that is, pieces of information) together in different ways. In writing stories, the journalist takes the responsibility not just for relating a series of facts but for making them into a coherent narrative. You do not want to bore the reader.

If we always use "and" to join clauses, we are simply stringing facts together, without judging their relationship. You owe it to the reader -- or listener -- to make the language flow. Now try in your next portfolio piece to use as many different conjunctions as you can, without torturing the sense.

Tutors need not overtly explain that responding quickly to social stimuli and developing confidence at being, however, briefly, in the public eye, is also of benefit, but students quickly develop their own understanding of this, as the remarks by a graduating student quoted above demonstrate.

Developments of Storybuilding

The same game could be used with adverbs, for a second iteration. To make it yet more complex, tutors can insist that adverbs of place, time, intensification and manner are used in any particular order. To emphasise how dull the repeated use of one conjunction sounds, they may insist that only that one instance of any particular item (eg, "and") is used.

I love my love with an A

A game about adjectives, this can be played two ways. In the first, each participant progresses the game using an adjective from each letter of the alphabet – I love my love with an A because he (or she) is amazing, beautiful, cuddly, desirable and so forth. In the more difficult version, the whole group sticks with the first letter until it is exhausted, then chooses another letter to continue.

In the first, the play is linked to the use of commas in lists and the merits or otherwise of the Oxford comma. In the second, ideas about alliteration are explored, including its use in journalism as headline builder and memory-snagger.

[NB: Other versions of this use a cat: "My aunt's cat is an adorable cat, etc."]

Developments

This game may be developed into "I went to market and I bought…" items beginning with either the same or successive letters of the alphabet. This exercise develops listening and memory skills as well as verbal ones, and therefore needs to be flagged up as so doing. Again, it can be further used to develop ideas about listing and the use of conjunctions or no conjunctions (technically, asyndeta and polysyndeta) in lists. [Also called, I Have a Basket.]

My uncle does not like peas (Opposites)

This is a simple round-robin game. One person says "My uncle doesn't like peas." The next must answer with an opposing sentence. "But my aunt likes blancmange." The third must find a riposte to this, such as "My cousin hates strawberries." And so it goes on, until everyone has had a turn.

The idea of the game is to come up with ever more outlandish opposites. For journalism students, it is also meant to stimulate the writing skills of using balance and antitheses, and the research skills of asking the contrary question. For example, "Why did you sack Bob Diamond?" But also, "Why didn't you sack him before?"

Development

Teachers may also use the structure of this game with hyperbole. One person starts, "I would rather eat my liver with a rusty spoon than have dinner with the Queen." The next has to outdo that. "I would rather dance naked in the rain than eat my liver with a rusty spoon." And so on, around the group. We use this successfully to raise the students' game before getting them to try their hand at press releases and blurbs.

Smile

In this game, one person is chosen as It. He or she is the only one allowed to smile. They can do anything they want (within limits of the classroom and institution code) to try and get anyone to smile. Once someone does smile, he or she becomes It in theit turn. Anyone who never smiled is a winner.

This is obviously a game about self-control, but also about social interaction. As well as engendering good feelings in a group, it can be used to explain to students about mirroring in interviews: the old "Nod if you want someone to agree with you" trick. Empathy, humour and conviviality go hand in hand.

Development

This game can also be used more analytically. Questions that might be raised include: What makes people laugh? How spontaneous should journalists be in interviews? How much of your "real self" should you use? How do you build a relationship with interviewees? Do jokes have a part to play? Could they be risky? We find that students from non-UK backgrounds can be quite scandalised to begin with but, as one shy Muslim woman from Turkey confided, "I like the games, Victoria. They make me feel comfortable."

How? What? Where? When?

In this game, one player thinks of the name of an object. This can be made more difficult by thinking of a word with multiple homonyms, like male (masculine), mail (letters) and mail (armour). The other players then try to find out what it is by asking (but only once) the following four questions: How? What? Where? When? For example: How do you like it? Why do you like it? When do you like it? Where do you like it?

The player on the spot must answer questions truthfully, but can of course, alternate between the homonymic meanings as appropriate for each question. The person who guesses correctly wins, and then has to think of a word.

This game has clear affinities with the infamous "Five soldiers" or Five Ws which journalism educators use to teach newswriting. Tutors can also use the game as a jumping-off point to discuss with students how simple questions can elicit information. This game remains useful with second and third-year undergraduates.

Development

If these are useful questions, what are useless ones? Tutors can try the Yes/No game, where people must submit to a barrage of questions to which the only requirement is that they must not answer "Yes/No/Black/White". In discussion, this can be linked to the technique of slipping in a sneaky closed question as in Jessica Mitford's famous "Cruel/Kind" questioning, outlined by her in Poison Penmanship (1980).

Buzz or Fizz Buzz

In this perennial favourite, players begin by counting one by one in turn until the number three is reached. The player whose turn it is to say three instead says "Buzz". Players keep counting in turn until the next multiple of three is reached when the player whose turn comes on six will say "Buzz" instead. Once this is going well, tutors may add in "Fizz" for every multiple of five. Thus, 10 will be "Fizz" and 15 "Fizz Buzz". This game is useful for focusing students on the need to pay attention and pick up the detail of what other people have said.

Development

Tutors may be able to build on this pattern to discuss onomatopoeia and the use of sound words to build pictures. The debate can be elaborated with an explanation of "screamers": why journalists should eschew 90% of the use of exclamation marks.

The Traveller's Alphabet

There are many ways to play this game and it goes by many names. In one, the first player says, "I am going to Amsterdam" (or any other place beginning with A). The player on his/her left then asks, “What will you do there?” and must be answered with a sentence in which the activity begins with the letter A. Players then go through the entire alphabet. For more advanced play, the answering sentence must contain noun, verb and adjective all beginning with the same letter – no matter how ridiculous the sense.

In the other, simpler, version, players construct mini-biographies along the lines of “My name is Alfred; I am married to Alice; I live in Africa; I work as an acrobat; my favourite food is asparagus.” This can lead into a discussion of what information is crucial for readers or listeners, and hence what are essential and inessential questions for journalists.. It is also a good way in to a more formal discussion of nouns, adjectives and verbs.

Development

In pairs, the students ask five questions of each other. They then construct a mini-biography to share with the class. This is a standard ice-breaker. However, it can be developed with a more advanced first or second-year class by encouraging other class members to discuss the questions and suggest what better ones might have been asked: specifically, the construction of a question that led on from an answer rather than one that was prepared earlier.

Detective

In this game, the tutor chooses an extrovert member of the group. They are taken outside and given a rhyme or nonsense rhyme to recite. They need to be well briefed: the tutor tells them that they are going to rush in and recite it in a particular way – at top speed, or in tears, or like a crazy person or in a foreign accent or very, very slowly. Everyone else is informed that they have to take notes. The irruption into class should be mildly shocking and take students by surprise. Afterwards, tutors ask individuals to give an account of recent events.

The idea of the game is to get students to understand the need accurately to record not only words (which can be hard enough) but also the manner, body language, demeanour and emotions of people about whom they are reporting. For example, after a road crash or concert or election result, people’s appearance is as telling as their words. This exercise also builds confidence in the subject who has to act out; they deserve congratulations from the class and tutor.

Development

This game can be integrated into class exercises, by asking students to take notes from small Youtube or TV clips. Again, the stress is on how important information is found in non-verbal aspects of witnesses.

In the manner of the word

In this well-worn favourite game, one person goes out while the others think of a promising adverb (one that is quite specific works best, such as bizarrely, childishly, euphorically). He or she then comes back in and asks the other players to mime everyday tasks (doing the ironing, running for a bus, brushing your hair) in the manner of the word, until he or she guesses the adverb. This game can also be played with one person acting and everyone else guessing.

The game is a lively introduction to adverbs, tout court. When players get more skilled they can playing it with adverbs of degree like “very” or “scarcely” – or even “not”. It is useful to note and point out that in their writing, inexeperienced students often stick with adjectives when adverbs might be more powerful.

Development

This can again be developed into a class exercise where students are asked to look at a news article and see what adverbs could have substituted for the ones used.

Who am I? or Metaphors

In this version of a popular game, one person goes out and the others choose a famous person (it needs to be someone known to most in the group). When the outsider (again, tutors need to choose someone who is not shy for the first round) returns, they ask questions in the form, “If I were an X, what would I be?” EG, “If I were a kind of weather what would I be?”

This is often hard for students to grasp at first, so it is an imagination-stretching exercise as well. It is important to note that the questions are about comparison, not habits, so a knowledge of the celebrity’s eating habits, cars, clothing etc, is not required. Instead, the metaphors are about how the celebrity is experienced in the public discourse. Discussion can then lead on to the uses of imagery in description, from metaphor and simile to personification. For foreign students, this game is also a good introduction to the unreal conditional (“If I were… etc).

Development

If the group is confident, tutors can develop more defined categories, such as music or film. Or they can reverse the process and ask the person who goes out to choose someone and the other members of the class to ask the metaphor questions. This can also feed into a news-gathering chestnut, “How do I ask a question that’s never been asked?”

Ask questions

Taboo

There are several version of this game, including a popular board set. In the simplest version, a chosen player has to avoid using a particular letter. Other players ask the chosen one questions, trying to force him or her to use the forbidden letter. For example, if the forbidden letter was “C”, players might ask, “What animal purrs?” The answer “Cat” loses, but the answer “Kitten” stays in the game. In more difficult versions, players must answer in complete sentences, and may not use the forbidden letter as initial anywhere in the sentence, as in: “The little kitten meowed for some milk.”

A more Charades-based version asks for someone to describe a film without mentioning its title, the main actors or the main plot device. For example, “It’s a love story with unusual exchange of body fluids,” might be Twilight. This connects then to a discussion of how humour and elliptical description may be useful in bringing stories to life, or in reviewing.

Development

The game can be linked to an exploration of clichés and how to avoid using them. A standard exercise is to see how many clichés can be spotted in a passage: this is developed into an understanding of how comparisons evolve and then stiffen into lifelessness.

Hestia (thanks to the Observer (2012)

This game is also known as Coffee Pot. Two people start with a homophone -- for example: plain/plane, shore/sure, bye/by/bye/bi, etc. So far, it’s the same as How? What? Where? When? But the idea is that as people catch on, they join in. This game is only suited to more sophisticated second or third year groups.

Thus, the original pair start a conversation discussing the word. For example if the word is plain/plane: “How did you travel when you went on holiday? Did you fly?” “Yes, but I wasn’t allowed to take my woodworking tools in my hand luggage.” “Did you get much precipitation in Spain?” “Mainly where I was, where the land is flat as a pancake.” “Talking of which, what kind of flour do you use to make pancakes?" And so on. Everyone else joins in when they think they know what the word is. This can be quite bewildering, which makes it a good game to discuss bullying and in-group, out-group behaviour.

In the hard-nosed original Victorian version, the original pair tease anyone who joins in with a wrong word -- or even try to make them have doubts even if they are correct. It can even be played with the whole group agreeing on a word, except for one person who has to work out what it is. But that will only work with someone very confident.

For our first-year students, I prefer the sillier version called Coffee Pot. In this, someone starts a conversation, but every time they come to the chosen word, they substitute it with a silly word or phrase, such as "Coffee Pot". For example, instead of the word park: "How did you manage to coffee pot your car?" "It is true, coffee-potting can be a problem at the coffee pot, so we walked and wore our coffee-pot-ers to keep warm."

This game is an excellent way to kick-start a discussion about he power of words and the need to build a good vocabulary.

Development

Tutors who have a more confident or literary group can go on to use dictionary-based games, like Call My Bluff (when players have to guess at real meanings for a word from a set of three or four). These explore confidence as well as lexical knowledge; adept players who think of a cod meaning can make it sound more likely than the real one

Conclusion

Parlour games may seem like the last thing that journalism education needs, with serious challenges facing the industry; among them, the UK Leveson Inquiry on ethics and practices of the press, the possible extinction of the printed press by the Wild West of the internet, aggressive cost-cutting by media owners and declining participation in mass politics in Western democracies. Yet journalism educators may take the example of EFL teachers, who have long mixed the rigours of grammar teaching with the games and activities summarised by Crystal (1999) as "ludicity".

To play is not to be foolish or shallow. Theorists from the historian Huizinga (1998) to the child psychologist Piaget (1945) have emphasized the deep foundations of creativity and sociality in the play of children and the pastimes of adults. Play is the work of the child, Maria Montessori (1964) wrote; for an adult, imagination is a transformative capacity. Educators, in whatever sphere, need to be sure that they are not drowning their students' creativity. Parlour games offer a light-hearted mechanism to relax and open up innate capacities, to mingle the play of a child with the work of an adult.

Evans-Prichard (1937) and Lyotard, (1979) among others, have attested to the importance of performativity as a means for social subjects to attain agency. Playing parlour games can be a rehearsal for the performativity required in real-world journalism: the ability to listen, to speak with confidence, to respond quickly and to develop thoughts in speech are all foreshadowed in the pleasant pastimes of the parlour.

Our students have told us repeatedly how much they enjoy the structure of our sessions. Our recent graduates, 25% of whom have already got media jobs (three months after completing their course) have told us many times ,in person and through the NSS, that they value our attention to social and linguistic skills. Of courses, running the games requires commitment on the part of tutors – they certainly won/t work if the lecturer thinks they are silly – and emotional intelligence as described by Goleman (1995) so that more extroverted students do not overwhelm the others and so that the shyer ones can gain confidence.

None the less, the rewards are great. As Bourdieu so trenchantly demonstrated (1986), social and cultural capital distinguishes the economically successful from the economically repressed almost as much as a simple measure of wealth. Confidence in a variety of social situations can, however, be built from the outside rather than being ineluctably determined by birth into privilege or otherwise.

So, if you are one of those "hackademics" tired of endlessly ploughing through basic newswriting, the errant apostrophe, Dreamweaver for dummies or interviewing skills, parlour games can serve to lighten a session, draw talents out of your students and develop social skills and bonds.

As the 2012 graduate said, "I'd tell anyone: Just try it!"

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Journalists and the bereaved: constructing a positive approach to the teaching of death reporting

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Abstract

The Millie Dowler affair and subsequent Leveson Inquiry have highlighted some of the worst aspects of relations between the news media and the bereaved. It has previously been documented (Duncan and Newton, 2010) that even before the phone hacking revelations reporters generally viewed the death knock negatively and found their role within the tragedy to be ethically dubious. This paper suggests that journalism educators could assume the role of presenting the death knock and subsequent contact with the bereaved in a more holistic, constructive fashion, and considers how the stories that journalists tell about the bereaved become personal narratives of grief. Evidence from journalists, editors and bereaved families is drawn on to support the assertion that death reporting can often be in the best tradition of public service journalism, and should be sited within the more positive, personal aspects of commemorative journalism – 'a journalism of feeling as well as fact' (Kitch, 2010). This paper also suggests the relationship between journalists and the bereaved can become much more equitable than current teaching suggests and relates evidence gathered to models of grief and bereavement pioneered in sociology and bereavement counselling.

Key words: death reporting, bereavement, pedagogy, grief narratives, death knock, commemoration

Introduction and method

Journalism educators have found the concept of the death knock challenging and in many cases have struggled to deal with the issue in the classroom, despite demonstrating a willingness to prepare their students for their first experience of this particularly sensitive reporting task (Duncan and Newton, 2010).

In an attempt to re-frame the nature of our academic approach to death reporting and offer a more rounded view of the process, a substantive body of work gathered through our research project was re-examined to identify positive elements and consider whether death reporting can be viewed as commemorative journalism in the public interest. A total of 85 interviews have been carried out as part of a larger death reporting project; 55 with reporters and editors; 10 with journalism educators and 24 with bereaved groups and families. Two focus groups have also been held involving final year Journalism students. Once this data had been reviewed, a further four follow-up interviews were undertaken to clarify opinions and experiences. This evidence was then considered in the light of models or frameworks of bereavement which suggest biography and commemoration as forms of grief resolution. It particularly focuses on the work of sociologist Tony Walter in this area, drawing on the idea that: “When it comes to death, journalists and photographers are in the forefront of psychological ‘instruction’ - something students of both death and the media have failed to notice, let alone research.” (Walter, Littlewood and Pickering, 1995) The work of Graves, a bereavement counsellor who has developed Walter’s theories into a practical framework for therapy, was also examined to provide parallels between grief resolution processes and positive, commemorative death reports.

The context for educators

As Duncan and Newton (2010) acknowledged, lecturers face great difficulties in trying to recreate intrusive situations in the classroom both from the practical and the ethical point of view. In interviews with lecturers a number of differing views were offered on how the issue should be approached pedagogically; whether skills can be taught in any practical manner; and even whether the practice should be condoned at all. (Duncan and Newton, 2010; McKay, 2007) Some of the ambiguity has come from academics finding the practice difficult to justify personally, particularly as none of those interviewed had been given any official newsroom advice or guidance on the death knock in their own journalistic careers. During this research a senior lecturer with experience in both print and broadcast media said of death knocks: “I have always hated them and to a large extent I have seen them as pointless exercises.” It is also fair to say that the academic literature does not currently offer a great deal in the way of good practice or of positive ways to approach the bereaved. Instead, the literature on the ethics of intrusion into grief coupled with codes of conduct offer a safer, less morally ambiguous route – that of a list of “do nots”. It is, therefore, easier to warn students of the dangers of the death knock and continued contact with the bereaved via a checklist of “do nots” than it is to encourage them to actively participate in the act of interviewing and build their efficacy in it, as they would in a more routine story. However this approach can lead reporters to be dangerously ill-prepared for such a traumatic and potentially damaging task. As Duncan told a recent Dart Center Europe seminar: “You would never send out a sports reporter without them knowing the rules of football. So why can we send out journalists and reporters to cover something as sensitive as working with the bereaved without them knowing anything about bereavement?” (Townend, 2012) Although some lecturers interviewed during our research were dismissive of the death knock and concerned about the role of the journalist in death reporting, others were positive about the practice and keen to justify it to students.

> "I have concerns about how it is handled but I think it is a legitimate practice to do it. There are an awful lot of people who die in a local area who we want to know about. We want to celebrate their lives. The family want to celebrate their lives and if you can persuade people that that's why you're doing it and if that's the way you treat it then I think that's entirely appropriate."

Academic research into the reporting of death and journalists' contact with the recently-bereaved tends to concentrate on the negative, even when there are positive elements to be noted. (McLellan, 1999; Walsh-Childers, Lewis and Neely, 2011) Even those which do recognise some good practice among journalists have titles which focus on the worst aspects. For example Walsh-Childers, Lewis and Neely's 2011 study into the coverage of the Virginia Tech shootings has the title "Listeners, not Leeches", re-inforcing the blood-sucking stereotype of the reporter covering disaster. A further study including survivors of the Port Arthur massacre in Australia in which 35 people were killed by a lone gunman was titled "Fair game or fair go" (McLellan, 1999) and concludes that journalists still "confront victims/survivors in large numbers when they are at their most vulnerable...". However the same study also looked at the experience of people bereaved by industrial accidents rather than mass tragedy and found that there was more of an appetite among these participants for active engagement with the media. In fact many of the bereaved complained about minimal coverage of their stories, and that the stories used tended to focus on the circumstances of the death rather than the life and achievements of the person killed, suggesting the issues were far more ambiguous than the title suggests. Neither of the cited studies are wholly negative about the role of journalism in fatal tragedies, despite their titles, and McLellan reported: "Many had high praise for compassionate, careful journalists who checked even minor details to ensure accuracy."

Greater negativity is apparent in articles which veer towards commentary rather than peer-reviewed research as these appear to be even more sceptical of the relationship between reporters and the bereaved. For example,

> "Nowhere is the conflict between the professional values of journalists and the values of ordinary people more apparent than in press coverage of families grieving for victims of accidents or crimes" (Tulloch, 2004)

McKay (2007) challenges the lack of serious ethical reflection in practical journalism textbooks, but also suggests: "The justifications for death knocks are spurious, as any journalist knows deep down."

So why does the practice continue?

It continues because the family are fundamental to the story. The bereaved who were interviewed for this research indicated that the story of their loss belonged to them, not the reporters, and to exclude them from participating in any articles about their dead relative in an attempt to ease their pain was arguably an act of arrogance even if they did seem too distressed to speak. They believed that should be their decision, not the journalists. As one national news reporter observed: "… it is a key part of the newsgathering process. How can you claim to have covered a murder without trying to speak to the victim's family?" It is also the case that the reporter who does not approach the family, perhaps respecting their privacy, or relies on social media for tributes, risks producing an inaccurate story, a journalistic sin which is documented as adding to the pain of the bereaved. (Newton, 2011; Fullerton and Paterson, 2006) Newton spoke to several families who had had no contact with the media, despite other sources being quoted about their loved ones' deaths. Some relatives were upset at the "lack of interest" or angry that they had not been offered the chance to appeal to the public for help. Others complained about factual inaccuracies. The mother of a murder victim said:

> "What they wrote was totally wrong...nobody at all approached me or anybody in the family. I would have given them the right story at least. I would have thought that someone from the media would have come to me and asked me were these things true. Some said I should have gone to the paper and sorted it out but at that time you really don't want to be bothered with all that. It's too raw. Even now when I read those snippets I just cringe."

Despite journalists' concerns about intrusion into grief, running a story without input from the family, who are arguably the closest and most reliable story source, is equally problematic.

> "It is much better, perhaps, for them to be upset at you initially than for them to be upset at you after you've done the story and it's gone in the paper and you've missed the point completely, or not been accurate or sensationalised it when it didn't need sensationalising." (Journalism lecturer at a Further Education college)

Towards a positive mindset

Previous research has noted that the journalist does not have a clearly defined or socially accepted role when contacting the bereaved at the time of a tragedy, unlike, for instance, the police or the clergy (Duncan, 2005; Duncan and Newton, 2010). Hanusch (2010) cites the death knock as an acknowledged source of secondary trauma for journalists while Browne, Evangeli and Greenberg (2012) describe journalists as a "unique cohort" in times of tragedy or trauma because of the lack of a "direct, helping role". Their study of 50 journalists found a worrying correlation between PTSD, exposure to trauma and guilt about reporters' involvement in a tragedy and warned that "specific aspects of their job may make journalists more vulnerable to guilt, such as pressure to sensationalise an event or to pressure distressed people to provide an interview". Given this link, along with reported and anecdotal evidence that the death knock has been cited as a reason for journalists to leave their jobs, educators and editors should be aware that such guilt has the potential to be corrosive and ultimately damaging. Brown, Evangeli and Greenberg add that "ethical dilemmas may result in behaviour perceived as violating moral standards". They are referring specifically to objectivity, when the moral imperative to offer help in times of disaster clashes with the journalistic duty to record and remain impartial, but this can also relate to issues of privacy and intrusion. Given that journalists consider the death knock interview as an onerous task but not one they would shirk (Duncan and Newton, 2012), then as long as it is seen as a requirement of the job journalism educators and editors have a duty of care to students and novice reporters to support them in the practice. As a first step towards a more positive mindset perhaps journalism educators and editors could offer some explanation as to why the practice continues despite the ethical concerns about intrusion into grief in order to suggest a moral justification of the practice. This justification, explored further in the next section, would point to the journalists' role in recognising the life led, acknowledging the grief, supporting the bereaved families, and informing the community, for example. To do otherwise would leave student journalists and novice reporters in moral conflict. Kitch (2000) suggested that journalists act as "healing spiritual leaders" after celebrity deaths, often conducting "the rite of passage from life to death." Although this appears a complex role for the individual reporter to fulfil while going about his/her daily duties, there is an argument that perhaps this could be valid within communities when ordinary families are caught up in personal tragedies, and journalists convey their loss to the community through the tribute story or obituary.

> "Obituaries connect families, friends, co-workers and neighbours in shared commemoration of not only the deceased, but of his or her love of hometown, church, associations, families, and simple pastimes. In legitimizing (sic) these powerful death stories for a wider audience, obituaries become not only reflective, but instructive as well." (Hume, 2005)

Re-framing the death knock?

Brown, Evangeli and Greenberg's study into journalists and PTSD makes clear that it can be injurious to journalists' confidence, self-image and even mental health to send them into potentially intrusive situations without defining a public service role for them. Thus, it is evident that journalism educators and editors have a moral responsibility to explain the death knock in terms of public service, the commemoration of the deceased and inclusive journalism centred around the bereaved. A legal magazine editor interviewed for this research was clear on the legitimacy of the death knock as a journalistic practice:

> "Yes, undoubtedly, as long as any request for privacy is respected. However bad the news is, the community is entitled to know it, and reporters have a duty to get their information from the closest or best source."

Despite concerns about intrusion, news journalists and editors interviewed by the authors could see no workable alternative to the death knock and reported many instances when the media were expected by their intended interviewees and invited in. Even in the age of social media, when all manner of information about individuals is available online, journalists still see a visit to the family as important and integral to the story of a tragic death. [It should be noted here that the ethics of "hacking" social media after a death have been discussed at length in Newton and Duncan (2012) but it is important to point out that for many families, grabbing material from social media sites is a more intrusive act than the knock at their door.] In addition to this, many families interviewed understood the role of the journalist in the tragedy and reported positive responses to stories in the media. (Newton, 2011) Those families who had been involved in prolonged legal cases after a death, or had been involved in a campaign of some sort, demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the media and referred to their continuing relationship with specific journalists. One father of a murder victim said he had come to rely on certain reporters to keep him updated on the perpetrator's case and subsequent appeal. "I often learned more from the journalists than the police and the lawyers," he said.

There is also evidence that work produced ethically and sensitively from such encounters can give solace to the grieving. Riches and Dawson (1998) discuss how conversations with bereaved parents were much eased by "the presence of the child in the form of artefacts – snapshots, schoolwork, trophies, artwork, newspaper cuttings and even "preserved bedrooms". Several bereaved relatives interviewed commented on the media's role in letting the community know what has happened to them. This can help in a number of ways, the principles being that the community can offer support and that the relatives are spared the constant re-telling of upsetting details if these are made public. Former newspaper editor John Griffith admitted feeling uneasy about the death knock during his journalistic career, but changed his mind when his own son was killed and he was interviewed by the regional press. He described the newspaper stories about his own son's death as "a great comfort". The newspapers containing details of the accident were displayed in his home so that visitors could read them. (Griffith, 2004) This was further borne out in interviews for this research when a grandmother of a road victim, who said her family were devastated by the child's death, explained that they garnered some solace in the response from the local community. "The support I got was brilliant – and that was only through the newspapers. I still get letters." The reaction described by Griffith and the road victim's family is a common one, according to a national newspaper journalist who had previously worked on English regional titles. He claimed he had rarely been turned away by grieving families and had developed good and lasting relationships with some of them.

> "I know people who regretted not speaking to the papers. You can't blame them for it because they're so caught up in their grief they can't see beyond their noses, but in hindsight they wished they'd had a lasting document to their children or mum or dad's existence. A well-written story can bring a life off a page and make other people care about that lost life, and give some kind of memorial to the person."

Significant connections exist between memorialisation and death knock narratives, and this offers journalism educators another means of diminishing the negativity of the reporting process. The British sociologist Tony Walter has developed a model of bereavement which challenges the Freudian ideas of "moving on" after a loved one dies. He identifies (Walter, 1996) how survivors "typically want to talk about the deceased and to talk with others who knew him or her" in an attempt to construct a "durable biography" of the deceased which the survivor can then integrate into their own lives. Walter looks at the "Western" psychological model and contrasts it with the experience of grief in other societies where emotional links with the deceased are much more prolonged, appreciated and explicit. He also cites a study (Marwit and Klass, 1995) which asked a sample of students aged 18 to 54 to write about an important person in their lives who had died, considering whether this person still played a part in their lives. The researchers found the deceased helped in a number of ways: as role models; as guides in specific situations; as clarifying the values of the survivor; as a valued part of the survivor's biography. Similarities can be seen here to themes in obituaries and death knock stories, which Duncan (2012) describes as providing "reaction to the death, tribute statements and biographical details" as well as emphasising loss of potential, the deceased's status within the family or community and the gap they have left. Walter also considers journalism as a guide to modern grieving rituals in the Western world. He details how the news media in Britain "home in" on the emotions of the survivors and bereaved rather than merely reporting the circumstances of a tragedy. This may sound a callous criticism, but Walter, Littlewood and Pickering compare this favourably to Geoffrey Gorer's 'Pornography of Death', a theory that suggests violent death in the media is characterised by its exclusion of emotion or humanity, such as in video games, crime thrillers or horror films. While such representations use death as emotionless entertainment, by contrast journalists use emotion to explain the consequences of personal tragedy. Walter et al suggest that in the news media: "...emotion and humanity are there not only in the reports but also in the reporters", as one of the journalists in this research study noted:

> "Even when I was writing for quite dry papers I'd always try to put in something personal out of respect for the people who had let me into their living room and given me a picture." (National newspaper journalist)

Bereavement councillor Dodie Graves has adapted Walter's theories on bereavement in her practical guide to fellow professionals, *Talking to Bereaved People*. It is striking that four of her six elements for "structured and sensitive communication" reproduce the obituary/death knock story construction i.e:

There is a story

There is a relationship

There is a life to celebrate

There is a legacy left behind

The "story" Graves refers to as a suitable element of a counsellor's conversation with a bereaved person is the story of "the deceased's life, their illness, their death". The relationship here refers to the relationship the deceased had with the bereaved person, but also with other family and friends. Graves and Walter both note the tendency to want to celebrate the life and achievements of the deceased by recounting their story during the funeral in a spirit of thanksgiving rather than sombre mourning. Graves suggests that this may be enough in itself to help friends, colleagues and distant family members, but suggests that bereavement counsellors should return to the theme as sessions progress.

> "By looking at the life of the deceased in constructive ways they might be able to make some choices about how they view the life of their loved one, and their own life." (Graves, 2009; p94)

While it would be irresponsible and inappropriate to suggest that the journalist is fulfilling any sort of counselling function during the death knock and subsequent contact, it is legitimate to point out the parallels between funeral eulogy, suggestions for therapeutic interaction and the stories told by journalists on behalf of families and disseminated to the rest of the community. Newton (2011) interviewed a number of bereaved families who had not been contacted by the news media about their relatives' deaths, even though a story had been published or broadcast. Some of these turned to other outlets such as real-life magazines or on-line tribute sites to tell their own stories of their loved ones and their loss. Roberts (2006) found that 91% of bereaved people who had posted online memorials found it had a beneficial effect on their grieving. Telling the story often does help, as this mother of a murder victim who trained as a bereavement counsellor explains:

> "I say speak to the press, but always, always ask them to understand the pain that you are going through and be able to say what it is that's hurting you; tell them about the loved one you're miss-

> ing. Tell them about what kind of a person they were and let that be what people remember.... To me there's always a story behind the headlines and if that story is told in the proper manner with compassion and accuracy between the person with the pen and the person telling the story I think it's a good marriage. It's a good thing to do because it can also help families being able to talk about their loved one."

Similarly, Duncan's concept of the tribute-driven story and the action-as-memorial story (Duncan, 2012) would seem to fit the bereaved's desire to understand the deceased's legacy and celebrate their lives, as documented by Graves. The tribute-driven story concentrates on the family's loss and leads with positive affirmations of the deceased's character and achievements, relegating the manner of death to a secondary theme. The action-as-memorial story explores the legacy of the deceased through the bereaved's efforts to launch campaigns, raise money for causes or memorialise their loved one in some other way. Duncan (2012) argues that telling the story of the deceased in the context of his or her relationships and legacy gives the grieving an element of control in a situation where they their powerlessness is distressing.

> "The bereaved acknowledge that they cannot keep their loved one alive in reality but they do have some control over their commemoration. They are able to frame the perception of the deceased by the expressions of grief they make at different stages in the news reporting process." (Duncan, 2012; p600)

The value of the media story as an acknowledgement of grief and loss is underlined by a relative of a road victim who makes a point of contacting her local paper every year to get them to do an anniversary story of cover a memorial event. Although she could use the "In Memoriam" columns, she believes a story written by a journalist is a much stronger reminder of her loved one and a better public acknowledgement of her loss. There is also a public interest motive in these poignant recollections, she feels.

> "It's a reminder to people that they should drive a bit slower; they should be more responsible. They see a picture of a child who's been killed and maybe they think I'm going down that road now I'll go a bit slower."

Conclusions

While the issue of intrusion is vital and ever-present, it must not be the only frame for the death knock. Death reporting is not always a negative activity, and indeed at some stages beyond the initial event it can be a cathartic expectation of the bereaved. The anniversary and action-as-memorial stories where the deceased are remembered fondly, albeit with sadness, can assist in the family's acceptance and on some occasions, the community's healing. For example, some reporting of large scale tragedies such as the Dunblane massacre can be perceived as poignant, sensitive and redemptive (Linklater, 1996).

Thus, by emphasising the benefits of reporting the bereaved it may be possible for journalism educators to reduce the "fear factor" in novice reporters' perceptions of the task. This could be done by deconstructing the process, examining the elements that make up the death knock story and by emphasising its similarities to other forms of story-telling. Of course, the main difference is that the interviewee has had a traumatic experience. However, if journalism educators could emphasise that the fact the journalist is face-to-face with their interviewee under such circumstances indicates that the bereaved are willing participants then this may influence the novice reporter's perception of the constructive aspects of the death knock. Many new reporters are fearful of "upsetting" the bereaved in these circumstances but if they can conduct their interview in an honest fashion where they make clear any limitations on their reporting, such as editorial constraints, and where they empower their interviewees by acknowledging their consent and control over their personal story then the "fear" might dissipate.

However, "guilt" over this issue is an important factor and can lead to mental distress. Journalism educators should recognise that some students and novice reporters will be concerned about the legitimacy of interviewing the bereaved. Exploring students' anxieties through critical reflection may assist in opening up specific issues. Of course, students may not have the experience of death reporting to reflect on their own actions but examination of case studies or inviting experienced reporters to share their practice, both good and bad, may act as a catalyst for discussion.

This process of reflection might be enhanced by journalism educators providing a level of moral justification drawn from academic research into the reactions of bereaved families, the psychology/sociology of grief, the position of the death knock in commemorative journalism, and evidence from the growing number of online tributes. Newton (2011) found that much distress can be caused to families who feel "left out" of the stories of their own tragedy and this was confirmed by further research for this study. This "neglect" of a family's wishes is potentially as ethically challenging as the issue of intrusion into grief. By contrast, there is strong evidence that a sensitive story can help acknowledge the family's grief, inform the community and provide a memorial or tribute that may provide solace for to the bereaved for years to come. The "biography" theories from the areas of sociology and bereavement counselling arguably help explain why such stories are helpful and support the importance of the tribute story in the process of grieving and acceptance. Therefore a level of moral justification could be achieved by clarifying the ethical purpose of the journalist in this type of story and removing ambiguity about their role. For example, their function is to tell the story, to inform the public, to reflect what happens in a community but it is important that journalism educators also encourage their students to strive for excellence, to be aware of the need to treat people fairly with dignity and respect and to minimize harm. Equally, making students more aware of the process of bereavement through academic study of grief or inviting representatives from bereavement groups to talk to students might demystify the situation and reduce the "fear factor". Indeed, previous research has indicated that journalists who had experienced a bereavement of a close family member felt it helped them when interviewing the bereaved (Duncan, 2005). Although this might not be applicable to all students it is likely that discussion of the process and characteristics of bereavement would assist in presenting a more positive perception of the death knock.

> "I look at it from the point of view of the tribute. Some people can be very cynical about it, but I used to say: 'Is your child's life not worth celebrating in some way?' Celebrities rise to the top and we know all about them, but why are they more important than anyone else's sons and daughters? It's right that their passing should be recognised if that's what the family want." UK national newspaper journalist.

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Class acts: putting creativity to work

Catherine Darby, University of Central Lancashire

Abstract

What does the next generation of professional journalists need? Multimedia skills aside, the core requirements are employability and creativity. The challenge lies in incorporating these into an academic qualification. The Masters in Magazine Journalism at the University of Central Lancashire offers its postgraduate students the option of researching, creating and critiquing individual, original 68-page magazines. In partnership with academic assessors, industry editors and publishers blind second mark the students' magazine projects according to set criteria. Experts thus assess creativity within an academic framework and potential employers are provided with a professional seal on a coursework showcase of students' abilities. This study explains and reflects on what the assessment criteria were and how they were developed, based on identifying and targeting genres. It tracks how the projects' pedagogical path changes students' mindsets from that of consumers to producers, yielding valuable reflections about that journey. It examines what has been learned from this joint academic and industry process about enhancing creativity assessment in a way that meets pedagogical goals in tandem with graduate and industry needs.

Introduction

In a medium where, according to the Periodicals Training Council (PTC), 98% of new entrants have a degree and over half (58 per cent) a journalism qualification, a Masters with a core magazine project harnessing reader engagement can be a driver for employability. And beyond the college environment, for an industry that seeks new, original, individual ideas to engage readers, what better than to involve employers from such a high-ratio HE industry in the assessment process?

The first Masters in Magazine Journalism in the UK was set up in 2004 to complement an existing palette of Masters courses, newspaper, broadcast and online, offered by the journalism department at the University of Central Lancashire and as such fitted into an already well-developed structure. The pioneering MA Online, launched in 1999, offered the third semester option of a project to set up a business client's website.

For their MA triple-weighted module in Semester Three, as with its peer courses, students are offered the choice of a dissertation or a project. To date, all but one student has chosen and completed the project, attracted by the challenge it poses and the personal achievement upon its completion. In the five years it has been offered, the project itself has evolved to refine its assessment procedures and incorporate industry and academic developments.

Assessment and employability

Governments require a highly educated workforce to drive the economy, even more so in a recession, placing pressure upon Higher Education to make graduates fit for purpose in the workplace.

In recruiting to specific graduate-level jobs, employers are looking for graduates and diplomates who possess high-level skills, knowledge and appropriate personal attributes, and who can 'grow' the job or help transform the organisation. (The Higher Education Academy Learning and Employability Series I, Pedagogy for Employability: 5).

The demand for employability is not incompatible with traditional academic values. 'Good teaching and learning practices can serve both kinds of end, and assessment practices need to cohere with teaching and learning.' (Knight and Yorke, 2003: vii).

This is why assessment matters and, simultaneously, why it presents a challenge.

It matters to students whose awards are defined by the outcomes of the assessment process; it matters to those who employ the graduates of degree and diploma programmes and it matters to those who do assessing. Ensuring that assessment is fair, accurate and comprehensive – and yet manageable for those doing it – is a major challenge. (Brown and Glasner, 2003: 202.)

The Holy Grail of successful assessment while developing employability is, as indicated, nothing without students achieving the first essential: learning.

Race (2007:11), identifies five principal factors underpinning successful learning:

Wanting: motivation, interest, enthusiasm

Needing: necessity, survival, saving face, gaining a sense of ownership of the intended learning outcomes.

Doing: practice, repetition, experience, trial and error.

Feedback: other people's reactions, seeing the results.

Digesting: making sense of what has been learned.

In Race's terms wanting and needing are the motivation; doing is "at the heart of any good course", feedback "keeps the learning moving". Digesting – "all experienced tutors know how important it is to give students the time and space to make sense of their learning and to put it into perspective" (12). Best practice assessments, therefore, should seek to meet the five factors of successful learning while rising to the challenge of what is required for employability. This is the attraction of a project, which also provides employers with a showcase of students' knowledge and skills.

The Masters in Magazine Journalism's project promotes and enhances the student learning experience by demonstrating all their acquired research and reflective knowledge and practical skills in striving to produce a project to a professional standard which engages their targeted reader. As such it is also a platform for their individual interests, enhancing their employability and reflecting the diversity of their backgrounds and interests, from DesiGirl (for teenage British Asian girls) to Go! (a glossy for disabled women), from BBC6 (a magazine for fans of a music radio station) to Exhibit (focussing on North West arts and culture).

Learning Factor 1: Wanting

What the Masters' project criteria are, how they were drawn up and why they work: the methodology.

The project runs over the three months of Semester Three and has three assessments. The first is the proposal, based upon original research, submitted at the beginning of the semester. The second is the 68-page magazine dummy, house style guide and media pack and the third is a self-analytical critique of the student's journey to launch, both due at the end of the semester.

The first assessment, the proposal, sets out the student's stall for the existence of their magazine project. Based upon Johnson and Prijatel's business plan brief in The Magazine From Cover to Cover (1999: 139) it now also reflects the entry criteria for the PTC Magazine Academy competition as mirroring what the industry itself would require. In this criteria the student pitches for a new consumer, business or even contract magazine by examining the current market, competition and potential reader demand to justify the newcomer's existence. The pitch should include:

A sample front cover communicating its core brand proposition to its reader.

Title – "a good title positions the magazine and it does so with as few words as possible. It is short, direct and clear." (139).

Magazine Type – B2B, consumer, contract, in-house or specialist

A mood board. This encapsulates who the magazine is for and what it does for them.

Editorial Philosophy - "An editorial philosophy explains what the magazine is intended to do, what areas of interest it covers, how it will approach those interests and the voice it will use to express itself. It is highly specific." (139). Kinds of articles, other content planned and its relationship to its "website" (for workload reasons, this is purely academic not an additional practical construction).

Audience – Demographics using research methods and/or focus groups to crystallize the reader profile.

Competitor analysis – who are the other players in the market?

Circulation – including frequency and means of distribution.

Advertising – who are the target advertisers and what advantages would the magazine offer?

Manufacturing – to indicate production values such as paper category.

How will you keep your readers coming back? And acquire new readers?

Once assessed on four, equally weighted, criteria (content, structure, writing style and originality) students are given feedback which helps to position their magazines ahead of the three months they have to produce them. The proposal is then modified according to their magazine's development and resubmitted as the media pack for the second assessment, the dummy magazine itself, with a house writing and design style which encapsulates the reader's voice. By identifying and targeting their genres, it challenges the students' mindset as consumers and sets them on the road to production.

The beauty and singularity of this first assignment is that the student is setting their own assessment criteria, the media pack, for the second: does the product match up to the pitch?

This assessment meets the first criteria of Race's successful learning criteria: wanting. It is critical that the student selects an area they are interested in to generate the enthusiasm needed to motivate them to complete a task that will dominate three months of their lives. This is where individual consultation with course tutors before the pitch helps to draws out what the student wants to do. Even before the student arrives on the course, they are asked to conceptualise a magazine. They are given feedback on this which they can reflect on and take forward as their magazine project or, if understanding during the course that it would not be viable, consider alternative options.

For example, a student's initial brief was for a careers magazine for female postgraduates. But six months down the line she realised that she wanted to move on from being a student, other postgraduates might feel the same and the subject was just too niche. Asked what subject she was really interested in, she said simply 'cakes - and puddings'. Having identified this as a driving interest, research uncovered that there was no magazine solely catering for her and fellow cake-lovers and no magazine that did not induce calorie-counting guilt. This motivation led to her project magazine Indulge, tagline Bake Your Cake and Eat It Too, which not only achieved a Distinction but also won the PTC Magazine Academy award for Original Concept in 2007.

In teaching and tutorials, students learn the hard commercial imperative that wanting to write about film, celebrity, music, for instance, is very different from discovering whether there is a genuine need for another magazine in that genre. Students also learn how they might 'spin' their offering to fill even a tiny gap in the market. It is this professional knowledge and experience that gives students the edge and makes them consider their choices of topic more carefully, sometimes leading them into innovation. So it is a considered wanting, based on teaching and learning. It is also an objectified wanting, not subjective, which introduces academic and industry rigour.

The editor of Backboard magazine, for British basketball fans of whom he is one, found this the attraction. He said magazine readers are constantly analysing what is read on a subconscious level, and buying a publication depends on those judgements made while reading it. 'The challenge comes in making these judgements conscious and knowing why you think what you do. This is the first step in becoming a producer rather than a consumer – by effectively analysing what is already there and what you've previously done you can learn, improve and adapt, thereby improving what you produce in the future.' Hence he created a pull-out guide, more work for him but targeted at creating a community for his readership, which was also possible given the number of pages in the dummy.

Consulting the magazine's targeted readership is also formative in turning students from a consumer to a producer. Getting feedback from their target audience makes them evaluate what their readers want rather than what they would prefer themselves and thereby sets the agenda for the magazine's content and features.

Learning factors 2, 3, 4 & 5: needing, doing, feedback and digesting

> 'Assessment should enable the demonstration of excellence. The very best students should be able to be challenged to achieve at the highest standards.' (Race, 2007: 30).

The second assessment, the dummy, seeks to give students this platform to stretch themselves to produce a project to a professional standard as a complete magazine, not a series of separate feature pieces. This is why it is set at 68 pages with 40% advertising which brings the number of editorial pages to 41. To demonstrate students' editing skills, ten per cent of the work may be commissioned.

This particular assessment was drawn up within two frameworks: practically, in consultation with industry expert and publisher Sally O'Sullivan and academically, with the assessment based on the structure of dissertations with the first marker as supervisor and the dummy magazine blind marked by the second marker. The process has since been refined to team tutorials of the three first academic markers who have extensive industry experience offering panel tutorials for each student. As in best practice for dissertations, a log charts students' progress at each one.

What is particularly innovative about this assessment is that the magazines themselves are now second marked by industry editors interested in the academic process and bringing real world experience to bear in judging creativity. They are guided by clear assessment criteria on a sliding scale, using the media pack and the third assessment, the student's critique, for background information. The final mark for the dummy is negotiated between first and second marker in an email debate that may refer to the tutorial log during moderation. The agreed conclusion is ultimately returned to the student along with the feedback and final mark to see how it was arrived at. If required, a third arbitrator would be an academic.

This second assessment meets the outstanding requirements of successful learning: needing, doing, feedback and digesting. The formative tutorial system offers an academically monitored safety net while giving students ownership of the intended learning outcomes. Mandatory attendance (necessity) galvanises students to save face by producing evidence in working dummies of moving on between each one. In their own experience, learning by doing and through trial and error, issues and challenges are brought to the table where students can see other people's reactions and explore alternative channels.

For example, a celebrity interview central to their magazine's readers' expectations has fallen through, not least as student coursework is low on the agenda of celebrities and their PRs. Working through alternatives with tutors such as a different story angle or treatment (for example a photo essay instead of a word portrait) helps the student keep control of their project and develop the lateral thinking needed to put themselves in their readers' shoes to find a suitable replacement feature. Moving from consumer to producer, what would their readers expect to find in their magazine? And what will it take to provide it? This demonstrates their knowledge and application of different journalistic genres.

Each tutorial builds upon making sense of what has been learned, feeding forward to students and their careers in the industry. This is put into perspective by the third assessment of a self-critiquing analysis.

Setting appropriate assessment criteria is critical, however, particularly for a product seeking to be of a professional standard.

In assessing the quality of a student's work or performance, the teacher must possess a concept of quality appropriate to the task, and be able to judge the student's work in relation to that concept. (Sadler, 1989:119.)

Methodology for marking the student magazines

When it came to marking the dummies themselves, with all the nuances of magazinecraft, it made sense to involve industry practitioners as second markers rather than fellow academics who may not have specialist knowledge of that section of the media unlike the three team tutors who have all worked in it. In the first year of trialling this, 2005, the methodology was tested with publisher Sally O'Sullivan on four project magazines, including one which was the real-world launch of a Manchester edition of lifestyle magazine Your Quarter.

The marking guidelines were then drawn up and issued as an assessment pack to second markers, with previous examples. The priority in assessing the magazine is how it succeeds from the communication point of view on four criteria, each weighted equally at 25 per cent:

In terms of its Content, does it meet the interests, expectations, aspirations of the targeted reader? On the sliding scale of assessment first class work, for example, will be consistently well targeted and demonstrate a high level of lateral thinking and originality, making it most suitable for publication. At the other end of the scale, anything that is unpublishable, contains serious lapses of judgement or serious errors is a failure.

The following three criteria are marked to equivalent levels.

Does the level of Writing match the genre?

Does the Design match the genre?

Has the Package delivered on the promise of its media pack with pace and a clear editorial voice? Are the appropriate adverts placed without detriment to editorial? Bearing in mind the drawbacks of a student publication, credit must be given on how they have achieved exclusivity (such as celebrities, philosophers and rock stars) against odds not encountered by professional publications.

This assessment has two overall aims: that the magazine communicates clearly within its genre delivering the goods to a targeted readership and that the student has achieved the best outcome they can as a non-professional within the scope of an academic framework.

There are two further refinements in what is expected to be a continuing development of this process. First, students know that their projects will be second marked by industry editors but are not told who their markers are so they don't work (consciously or subconsciously) to the interests or expectations of one person. Therefore they will focus all the more on their product and their reader not on the marker.

Second, a disparity of greater than five overall marks between the academic first and industry second markers in two of the projects (neither of them to the detriment of their final mark) does address what is a core challenge of coursework for employability: that these projects are a creative package not a real-life commercial pitch. As part of preparing the students for world of work the MA course teaches them to understand the business of journalism but the distinction must be clearly made within the academic framework that students must achieve subject journalism learning outcomes not subject business learning outcomes. To that end the Package criteria has been clarified that the product meets the criteria set out by its own media pack not that of an industry-led pitch.

The third and final assessment, marked by the module leader, is the reflective critique of their project experience, digesting what they have learned. Based upon the principles of a SWOT analysis, it should include: current industry research, a prospectus for the launch's future development and an analysis of how the project developed with a comparison of what was achieved to the original stated aims. It is marked as Assignment One on the four, equally weighted criteria of content, structure, writing style and originality. In chronicling and analysing the journey to launch, students measure how much they have learned and make sense of the experience.

From the students' perspective an integral part of this was arriving at the understanding of the difference between being a consumer and a producer.

As the editor of Bounce, a magazine for family fitness, commented:

I learnt that to make a good magazine, you can aim it at people like yourself, but to make a great magazine, you need to separate yourself from the equation and write for others.

The link between an academic project and successful learning was summed up by the editor of cultural travellers' magazine Monument, who spoke of his 'pride that it is the realisation of not just three months' work but of a whole year's education'.

Industry comment

This innovation was expanded for the cohort of 2007/08 courtesy of the Periodicals Training Council who invited volunteers from the industry. So the students of 2008/09 had their magazines marked by editors from the BBC, Today's Golfer, Reed Business Information, Archant, Future Publishing, Business Insider and Peter Baistow, a guest speaker and the retired associate design director of the Sunday Times and colleague of the legendary Harold Evans. Students can hardly better learning from and referring to a critique of their work from such sources when they apply for employment within the same industry.

Peter Baistow enjoyed "being in touch with the next generation of journalists and seeing what they are about". He felt the benefit of industry second markers brought "a degree of reality to a project that must not be trapped in its own vacuum". Andrew Calton, of Today's Golfer, said that it helped him to understand students' creativity:

It was good to see the creativity across such a wide range of disciplines from a student. It showed how young writers are encouraged to think about the entire process – from the initial idea, to the structure of the piece, the pictures and ultimately the writing. It showed how well the whole process is being taught and understood. How students can visualise an idea – and I think that's really important and will help them massively when they get a job in media.

There may be immediate practical benefits too. Roger Borrell, editor of Lancashire Life, said in a different economic climate he would have taken his findings further. "There was at least one piece of work which, had the economy been different, I would have tried to develop into a section for one of our magazines using the skills of the student involved."

Conclusion

The PTC Original Magazine Concept in October 2009 was awarded to Wild, a children's wildlife magazine, which also pioneered the first professional publication of a student's MA coursework project by Dennis Publishing as an insert for The Week magazine. Wild's author Alice Lipscombe-Southwell, who started her first job in September 2009 as editorial assistant on Paper Craft magazine as soon as she had finished the course, says 'I loved creating my own magazine, it was a lot of hard work, but the feeling of achievement and success when I handed it in and saw the finished product was unbelievable.'

There is material here for further analysis which is limited within the confines of this current platform: exploring the elements of "deep" and "surface" learning within the tutorial process and meeting the challenges of maintaining clear criteria and open lines of communication with a rapidly changing industry will mean continuing refinements to the Masters. The insights gained may also be found to transfer across to other subject area projects which call upon similar drivers of subjective creativity within an objective context. Fashion design, for example, where an original design which meets customers' desires could create a new collection, even a trend.

The Masters magazine project is based on best practice in learning and seeking to meet the challenges of assessing creativity in a way that meets pedagogical goals in tandem with graduate and industry needs. In terms of employability, it is an excellent method of promoting the students' interests and of introducing industry to an understanding of students' creativity. There are new magazine markets and audiences developing all the time and students are at the cutting edge, both as customers and as the source of ideas. The learning drivers to produce work to a professional level showcase their ideas and skills to potential employers. Editors and publishers might wish for a first bite of what they have found and the students have demonstrated that they are knowledgeable about their documented achievements and 'able to present them to putative employers in an appropriate manner'. (Assessment, Learning and Employability: 13).

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Enhancing students' critical thinking in journalism education: An approach using historical primary journalism texts

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Abstract

This paper considers methods to improve students' critical assessment of primary journalism texts, drawing on the experience of a journalism history course taught at a New Zealand university. The course requires students to critically analyse English, United States and New Zealand journalism texts from the 1500s to today. Although some students have performed well on the course, others have encountered difficulties, such as struggling to think critically, avoiding close reading of the journalism, or simply failing to follow the questions' instructions. Several modifications have been made to the course, including abandoning the use of a narrative history textbook, greater use of in-class exercises, and introducing a session focussing on the nature of critical thinking. The paper's analysis is informed by the experience of the United States advanced placement history examinations, which use similar assessment methods and have encountered similar challenges.

Keywords: Journalism history; critical thinking; document-based questions

Introduction

In 2006, Massey University in New Zealand became the country's first (and, to date, only) tertiary educational institution to offer a course on the history of journalism. This third-year undergraduate course considers the development of print journalism from the 1600s to today.

The assessment for the course primarily consists of three essays. Each essay requires the students to critically evaluate primary historical and contemporary journalism texts. That is, the students must critically assess actual journalism articles, rather than simply repeat information obtained from secondary sources (such as from narrative journalism histories). United States history educators would instantly recognise this task as being the Document-Based Question (DBQ)—a long-established form of assessment in the United States for university-level study in history.

In the light of the experience of using the DBQ in the United States, this paper considers the use of the DBQ in Massey University's History of Journalism course. The paper discusses the challenges students have encountered in both countries in answering DBQs, and the strategies developed to help students improve their performance. It is hoped university journalism teachers who ask their students to critically respond to primary journalism texts will find these experiences instructive in helping their students maximise their performance. Indeed, critical thinking and writing clear, persuasive texts are vital skills for all journalism students to learn, not just those studying journalism industry.

The paper begins by considering the United States experience, before describing the method used to evaluate the use of DBQs in the Massey University course. The research results are then presented, followed by the concluding remarks.

United States experience with the DBQ

The DBQ was introduced into the United States annual school examination system in 1973 as part of the advanced placement system, a curriculum equivalent to undergraduate study (Rothschild, 2000). The advanced placement system is administered by The College Board on behalf of the participating educational institutions. Students who perform well in the advanced placement examinations receive credits towards their subsequent undergraduate study at participating institutions, allowing talented students to progress faster through higher education (The College Board, 2012a).

Advanced placement examinations are offered in 34 disciplines, including European History, United States History and World History (The College Board, 2012b). The three advanced placement history examinations all include a DBQ, asking students to argue a case drawing on accompanying primary historical documents. The DBQ was introduced in order to replicate the nature of university-based history study, where students are encouraged to study primary documents so as to learn history "from the bottom up" (Rothschild, 2000, p.496). That is, "working with and interrogating historical documents in an effort to understand and explain the past" (Monte-Sano, 2008, p.1046). The DBQ documents are typically short extracts from speeches, diaries, newspaper accounts, plus some visual documents, such as cartoons, works of art, or graphs.

Some have expressed doubts as to how well they reflect historians' approach to inquiry, given many of the documents are heavily edited and reflect a Western perspective on historical issues (Grant, Gradwell and Cimbricz, 2004). Nevertheless, the DBQs are generally well-accepted and remain an integral part of the advanced placement history examinations.

By way of example, in 2011 the DBQ for the United States History examination was:

Analyze the international and domestic challenges the United States faced between 1968 and 1974, and evaluate how President Richard Nixon's administration responded to them (The College Board, 2012c, p.2).

The examination instructions told students to use the accompanying documents to answer the DBQ and to construct a coherent essay that integrated key evidence drawn from their interpretation of the documents plus their knowledge of the time period. The nine documents included short extracts from Nixon's speeches on Vietnam and the energy crisis, a graph of price indices for the period 1968 to 1975, and a cartoon on Watergate (The College Board, 2012c).

History teachers in the United States have utilised several strategies to help their students perform to their best in the DBQs (Pompilio, 2010; Monte-Sano, 2008; Stovel, 2000; Young and Leinhardt, 1998). The nature and breadth of these strategies indicate students have found answering the DBQs challenging, including some of the most basic tasks involved. The first strategy is that teachers emphasise to their students that they make sure they understand the DBQs' instructions (particularly those students doing the European History examination, to ensure they cover all six core elements required for the essay). Second, teachers perform DBQ exercises in class (sample DBQs and model answers are easily available on the internet—see, for instance, Museumwise, 2012). In these exercises the students are given a DBQ and primary documents to read. They then formulate their answer and write the introductory paragraph of their essay. The paragraphs are then critiqued in class by the teacher and other students. This approach saves time (students do not write an entire essay) and helps the students focus their minds on developing an argument (Stovel, 2000). Pompilio (2010) asked her students to read the documents before class (again, to save time in the classroom) and then had the students conduct their discussions in groups, with one student acting as facilitator. Other students in the class observed the discussion and rated the students' input. Such exercises helped the students realise the teacher (or textbook) was not the sole source of knowledge and that students could learn from each other.

A repeated theme in the literature centres on that aspect of answering the DBQs that students find most demanding: thinking critically (Rothschild, 2000). Part of the cause is, no doubt, the lack of clarity as to what critical thinking actually is. As Tian and Low (2011) concede, critical thinking is "notoriously difficult to define and explain" (p.63). The definition endorsed by the United States National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking Instruction is extremely broad:

Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action (Scriven and Paul, 2012, para.2).

In an attempt to convert such a widely defined notion into something students can use, history instructors have used various tools to help students address the DBQs methodically and deeply. Mnemonics have been devised to help students remember the issues to consider in critically analysing DBQ documents. One is DID ACAPS—Document attribution (title, author and date if known), Identification of document type (diary, letter, etc. which can give indication of the nature of the information in document), Description/Purpose of the document, Author and position, Context, Audience, Point of view (what is the document saying and how is it said?), and Significance (how important is the document?) (Pompilio, 2010). Another is SOAPS—Subject, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, and Speaker (Rothschild, 2000).

Research method

Massey University's History of Journalism course has been delivered on campus and by distance since 2006. Every year, about 30 students do the course. In 2012, there were 31 students enrolled in the course: 13 studied the course on campus, the remainder by distance. Most of the on-campus students are young Communication students aged in their early 20s, some of whom intend undertaking postgraduate vocational journalism study to become journalists. The distance students include off-campus young Communication students, as well as mature students—including working journalists—studying a variety of qualifications.

To understand the experience of using DBQs on the course, this paper reports the views of the two academics who designed the course; the three academics who have taught and marked the course; and comments from the course's students, as given in student feedback forms. The experiences of the on-campus and distance-learning versions of the course have been very similar, with any significant differences mentioned below. The research survey period is 2006-2012, covering the six-year period the course has to date been taught.

In light of the discussion in the preceding section on the use of DBQs in the United States advanced placement history examinations, five key questions for considering the experience of using the DBQs in the History of Journalism course in New Zealand were identified. These questions are:

What are the DBQs?

What was the rationale for using the DBQs?

What has been the experience of using the DBQs?

What changes were made to the course in light of this experience?

What have the students said about the course?

Each question is now considered in turn.

The DBQs

The History of Journalism course is divided into three modules, corresponding to three historical time periods. There is no examination; instead, the students complete three essays and participate in class discussions. Each essay must be no more than 1500 words long and contributes 30 per cent of the final mark. Class participation accounts for the remaining 10 per cent.

Each essay question is a DBQ, one per module. Each DBQ instructs students to use a selection of readings (the primary texts) as the basis for answering the question, and each DBQ focuses on one issue (fact versus fiction in reportage, the role of the journalist, and the impact of new media technologies), both in the past and today.

There is a marking schedule for the essays, which notes that each essay must be a piece of critical evidence-based work (50 per cent of the grade); be well structured, including that the essay's argument is contained in the introduction (30 per cent); include evidence that the student has read the readings and accurately referenced them (10 per cent); and be well presented (for instance, the essay details the word count and quotes are accurate, 10 per cent). The course handbook given to the students includes a list of additional instructions, emphasising to the students that their essays must focus on primary texts, with contextual information playing a secondary role:

> You must critically assess the Readings and other examples of journalism. You cannot simply repeat what was said in the lectures/tutorials. Attending the lectures/tutorials will give you the context for your analysis and will help spark ideas in your own mind, so you can to some extent quote the material covered in the lectures/tutorials. But you must directly engage with, and analyse, the journalism itself, and this should form the major part of your essay (Massey University, 2012, p.10).

The course handbook also includes guidance on writing scholarly essays—including ensuring the introduction includes the essay's argument (or thesis), advice on crafting and structuring the essay, and detailing the referencing requirements.

Each DBQ requires the students to engage closely with a selection of historical journalism readings and to think about the issue raised in the DBQ in the modern journalism context. The students must thus seek out relevant modern primary journalism texts, to help them answer that final part of each question. In 2012, the first DBQ (covering the years 1500-1800) read:

> Select four to five Readings from Module One and use them to write an essay critically assessing the distinction between fact and fiction in print journalism. What influence did the merging of fact

> and fiction have on journalism prior to 1800? Looking at specific examples of modern journalism, do print journalists still merge fact and fiction today? (Massey University, 2012, p.7).

For each DBQ, a selection of 10 to 12 documents is provided. All these documents are original pieces of journalism. In 2012, for the first DBQ the documents included 16th-century pamphlets describing the births of a deformed piglet and baby, pamphlets from the English Civil War, news ballads about crimes, Scandal Club pieces from Daniel Defoe's Review, society gossip pieces from The Tatler, the front page of the first issue of The Daily Universal Register (later renamed The Times), and some early American newspapers including Publick Occurrences and the New-England Courant. All the material is sourced and unabridged. As much as possible, all the readings are reproduced as they originally appeared. This means that in module one many of the documents are in early modern English (featuring the long s, v for u, and some older spellings, such as "newes").

The participation assessment requires the students to engage in tutorial work, either in class or, in the case of the distance students, online. Assessment for participation is composed of intellectual quality, including that the student's contributions were relevant, informed and logical (60 per cent); presentation, including that contributions were well written, respectful and scholarly (20 per cent); and frequency, that is, the student regularly contributed to the discussions (20 per cent).

The tutorial work mimics the essay questions. In each case, a reading is given to the students and they are asked to critically assess it. The tutorial readings are not included in the readings for the essays, but the students are asked to undertake the same analysis as that for the essays. So, for instance, one of the module one tutorials considers how Samuel Johnson uses some of the fictional conventions of the ghost story when debunking a story of a girl supposedly possessed by a spirit in 18th-century London. Participation also covers, for the on-campus students, a group presentation that students must give on the readings to the rest of the class. This is not required of the distance students, as asking students to present seminars online is impractical.

Rationale for using DBQs

When they originally created the course, the academics who designed the course quickly agreed that its assessment should be based on DBQs. Although they were not explicitly thinking of the United States DBQs when forming this view, their reasoning was essentially the same. That is, they believed answering DBQs would be valuable for the students in that it would replicate the work of historians, who typically analyse primary texts with their research informed by the documents' historical context.

> "We wanted to emphasise to the students the exciting immediacy of reading historical news," said one of the designers. "We then wanted them to critically think about it, such as considering the veracity of a 17th-century report of a milkmaid who supposedly witnessed blood raining from the sky."

The course's designers anticipated the students would find such a task challenging but not unduly so. As a third-year paper, many of the students doing the course would already have experience writing essays and undertaking some critical analysis in other papers on the undergraduate programme.

The designers anticipated that the students would deepen their understanding of the context of the readings by going beyond the simple introductory material contained in the lectures. In order to properly analyse the journalism, the students would need to research both the events reported in the journalism and the journalism itself, including the background of the journalists who wrote the material and the periodicals in which it appeared. "The contextual material given in the lectures was only meant as a starting point," one lecturer said. "We explained to the students that, once they'd selected which readings they were going to analyse in their essay, they needed to research the material far more. I encouraged them to use the library and to take some of the research tutorials run by the library."

The designers' requirement that four or five documents from the readings be included in each essay was to ensure the students read widely among the readings and had enough source material for a substantial response. By encouraging the students to seek out modern journalism texts, the designers were effectively asking the students to do their own primary-document collection, another common task of the historian. It was also requiring the students to critically respond to the journalism they read every day. As one of the designers explained, "The students are given the historical texts on a plate. We wanted them to find, and critically assess, relevant contemporary journalism texts too." They also hoped asking the students to consider the same issues in modern texts would help make the historical material more accessible to the students.

The designers felt reproducing the material in its original form helped create a sense in the students' minds of the historical nature of the material. For instance, reading text that used the long s and gothic script helped the student appreciate they were reading real 17th-century material. The relatively high number of documents for each DBQ was intended to gave the students a significant amount of raw material on which to work, given they had plenty of time to read it all.

Experience using the DBQs

The course originally comprised lectures, audio-visual material pertaining to the history of journalism, and problem clinics, in which students could ask questions about the material. The three DBQs comprised all the assessment on the course, each essay being worth 33.3 per cent of the final grade.

The on-campus class was also required to form into three groups, with each group giving a 10- to 15-minute ungraded presentation to the class on two simplified DBQs based on the readings from a module. These questions considered different issues from those covered in the assessment DBQs. For instance, one of the group presentation questions for module one reads:

> 1. The issue of The Daily Universal Register includes an editorial statement addressed to the public, positioning the newspaper within the crowded marketplace of the daily press. Read through this statement. How does the editor of the paper attract readers? (Massey University, 2012, p.5).

After each presentation, there was a classroom discussion on the issues raised, and the lecturer gave feedback on the presentations. The distance-learning version of the course originally supplied the lectures in hard copy and the group presentation work as self-tests for students, the questions appearing in the front half of the study guide with model answers at the back.

There was also a textbook for the course, Stephens (2007), which focused on English and United States journalism history. The class lectures referred to the textbook, included additional historical material and gave introductions to the readings, explaining their basic historical context. Originally, the readings also included some journalism history texts. These included a historian's discussion on the accuracy of the film All The President's Men and a media commentator's discussion on the state of the modern newspaper industry.

The academics who have taught the course say that from the outset some of the students answered the DBQs very well, undertaking close reading of the historical journalism documents, finding and analysing modern journalism examples, reading around the topic, and producing well-written essays. As one lecturer commented, "They really understood the material and made it their own. They did independent research and came up with some creative ideas which hadn't been drip-fed to them."

But the academics encountered several major problems with many other students' performance. Many students' essays simply repeated the lecture and textbook material, with only a cursory mention of the readings. Even when using the readings, the students often preferred to discuss the narrative history readings, rather than the primary journalism texts. In many cases, the introductions of essays did not set out the students' central arguments. Indeed, it was often unclear what a student's argument in their essay was, with essays meandering from one point to another. One lecturer said the possible causes for this were "a lack of training in critical thinking and perhaps increased exposure to opinion writing via media like blogs, Twitter, Facebook postings, print opinion columns, etc."

The students often made little attempt to cite evidence from the readings. This was particularly the case with lengthier documents, where even classroom discussion of such readings, to quote one lecturer, "fell flat." After the textbook and narrative history readings, the main secondary source cited by many students in their essays was Wikipedia, suggesting the students were not looking far for secondary sources. In the lecturers' view, Wikipedia's open-access policy made it a questionable source.

Students sometimes failed to follow the basic assignment instructions, such as including modern examples of journalism. There were also frequent elementary errors, such as spelling and grammatical mistakes, misquoted readings and poor sourcing.

The material in the group presentations was largely descriptive and the presentations poorly rehearsed. Neither the problem clinics nor the group presentations generated much classroom discussion.

Although there will always be a range of abilities among the students in a class, the lecturers believed too many of the students were having difficulty with the material. They therefore resolved to reform the course with the intention of raising the students' general performance.

Changes made

Several major changes were made to the course. First, the textbook and narrative history readings were abolished, with all narrative history material now confined to the lectures.

This was to prevent the students simply repeating material from those sources in their essays. One lecturer commented:

> It was perhaps understandable that the students favoured the narrative secondary material. After all, they don't know that much about the events covered in the journalism or the history of the journalism itself—that's why they're doing the course! But just reciting the textbook back at me was not helping anyone. I wanted them to learn the historical context in class and via their own research, and then apply it to the readings. That's a tougher task, but a more intellectually rewarding one.

Second, the problem clinics were abandoned. In their place, considerable time is now spent undertaking critical analysis, using DBQ exercises in class (initially rendered as self-check exercises for the distance students in their hard-copy study guides). These DBQs use additional readings, not included in the assessment DBQs, but which consider the same issues covered in the assessment DBQs, such as fact and fiction in reportage. This is designed to help the students see how to analyse the readings in light of these issues. The lecturer leads these classroom exercises to help the students engage in deep, reflective analysis and discussion.

As part of some of these exercises, the students form pairs and each pair constructs the introduction for an essay on the class reading. The students write these introductions on the whiteboard and they are discussed in class. The purpose here is to focus the students' energies on writing a clear introduction that spells out their thesis.

To maximise the time spent analysing the readings and discussing the students' introductions, the students are required to read the readings prior to class. "To be honest, I thought only a few of the students would take the time to read the material ahead of class," one lecturer said, "However, nearly all of them do so. That shows how keen they are to come to grips with the material." Such pre-reading also means the analysis of lengthier documents no longer falls flat, as the students have had time to read and absorb the material.

Beginning in 2012, the students are now graded on their contribution to these classroom exercises. This is the participation assessment element, worth 10 per cent of the final grade. This helps ensure all the students make full use of the benefits the exercises provide. This applies to the distance students as well. Rather than simply having the questions and answers in a hard-copy study guide, the distance students must use Moodle to undertake a virtual classroom discussion on the texts, guided by the lecturer. As the current lecturer explained, “I have removed the self-help material from the study guide. The more the students must actively think about these exercises and discuss them with each other online, the better.”

The in-class group presentation work has been retained, as it complements the DBQ exercises. It is included in the participation grade for the on-campus students. As it is not possible to organise such presentations for the distance students, it is not included in their grading. “The distance students must undertake the tutorial work via emails, rather than just speaking in class,” one lecturer explained, “so I think excluding any presentation component to the distance students’ participation assessment leads to an equitable workload across the students.”

Third, the generic Massey University guidance on essay writing and referencing has been amended or supplemented by specific advice on answering the DBQs. This includes the direct instruction to the students to focus on the readings quoted above and a prohibition on using Wikipedia as a source. The lecturers also remind the students several times during the course to read and follow the essay-presentation requirements, including proofing their work.

The lecturers say these changes have resulted in several positive outcomes. First, the DBQ exercises are generally a very positive experience, with the students clearly interested in the material. The in-class discussions can generate deep insights. In one case, a lecturer was running a tutorial looking at a 16th-century report of a man who had transformed a boat into a wagon, and sailed and wheeled it from Lambourn to London, a distance of about 100 kilometres, attracting great public interest along the way. The lecturer asked whether similar endeavours are reported today. The lecturer had in mind the charity walks undertaken by celebrities such as Sir Ian Botham in Great Britain. But one of the students suggested a much stronger example—a case reported in New Zealand of two men who transformed a van into a boat and sailed it across the strait that separates the country’s two main islands. The lecturer incorporated this example into later versions of the exercise.

But these changes have not been an unqualified success. The DBQ exercises have revealed severe weaknesses in the students’ critical analytical skills, weaknesses that are carried over into the students’ essays. In particular, students take the primary documents at face value. One lecturer recounted the experience over several years of one in-class discussion using a piece by Mark Twain, in which the 19th-century American journalist uses irony to mock American tourists’ ethnocentrism. Frequently, the students failed to see any irony in the piece, simply concluding that Twain was a racist.

The exercises have also revealed the students are not accustomed to close reading. “I often must press the students to cite specific evidence from the texts to support claims they make in class,” one lecturer reported. In some in-class presentations the students make sweeping statements based on the scantiest evidence, such as using one page from an early 20th-century newspaper to conclude that all newspapers from that time did not favour using photographs.

Turning to the highly fraught notion of critical thinking, a two-hour session on critical thinking was introduced into the course in 2011 to sharpen the students’ critical thinking skills (the exercise is conducted online for the distance students). The students are first asked to discuss what critical thinking is. The students are told that, for the purposes of the course, the lecturers take critical thinking to include:

> Not taking a text at face value, but instead reading it sceptically and objectively.
>
> Being an informed reader, by reading around the topic and understanding the text’s context.
>
> Analysing the text in light of a specific issue, such as the use of fact and fiction in the piece.
>
> Developing a clear, defensible argument, that will stand up to scrutiny from others.

Citing specific textual support from the text itself and from secondary sources, to support the argument.

The students then critically assess an 18th-century piece from Henry Fielding, in which he recounts his eyewitness tale of a kitten falling overboard and being rescued during a sea voyage to Lisbon. The students are asked to critically assess what devices the piece uses to underscore its factual nature and what fictional writing techniques are employed. Although the story clearly has a ring of truth about it—Fielding was indeed sailing to Lisbon at the time of the incident—during the discussion the students come to understand how Fielding, a great writer of fiction, quite explicitly manipulates his telling of the story to maximise its emotional impact on the reader.

The students then must discuss how the lecturer and class critically assessed the text—explicitly acknowledging the use of relevant historical context (that the lecturer told the class Fielding was indeed travelling to Lisbon on a ship at the time) and that the students undertook a close reading of the text in search of factual and fictional elements. The lecturer then tells the students this is the type of analysis they must do for the essays.

The lecturer currently running the course says these changes have improved the general quality of the essays: "The days when students simply repeated the textbook and barely mentioned the readings are thankfully gone." The tutorials are also far more enjoyable, he adds:

The problem clinics were often poorly attended and short, because the students did not raise any concerns. It was only when we marked the essays that we realised how much trouble the students were having. The tutorials are now a far more rewarding, beneficial experience for everyone.

But the lecturer feels more needs to be done, so plans further changes for the course. First, the essays are to be increased in length to 2000 words and the number of readings a student must consider in essay reduced to two or three. The expectation is that requiring the students to write more about less will encourage them to think more deeply about the texts; undertake closer, detailed reading of the material; and research the journalism's historical context more. As the lecturer explained, "This will further encourage the students to read closely and think critically."

Second, the assessment schedule for the essays will be simplified and restructured. This is because the innovations so far have done little to address a persistent reluctance among some students to meet the presentation requirements, with some essays continuing to be poorly proofed and referenced. The lecturer again:

This has been very frustrating, but I am determined to fix it. We will simplify and increase the share of the total marks given for presentation requirements. Hopefully, that will encourage the students to take the time to meet these elementary requirements.

Student feedback

From the outset the students have generally found the course interesting and well organised. Asked each year to rate the overall quality of the course on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest rating, the students have consistently rated the course at around 4. "This paper is clearly well planned out," one student said in 2007. "Good solid base of both history and journalism," said another in 2011. "Learning to critically analyse print media was well taught and a valuable skill," said a third in 2012.

But the students have found the demands of the DBQs challenging. "The assignment questions were difficult to understand sometimes," said a student in 2008. A student in 2010 criticised the course's "lack of direction with assignments." The following year, a student said the "assignment questions could have been a bit more clear." Another difficulty the students have consistently identified was coming to terms with the historical context of the readings, especially when they were required to undertake the detailed research themselves. As one said in 2007, "Sometimes some historical knowledge is assumed." Another commented in 2010, "Saying, 'Research around the topic' isn't always helpful." Some students also found the gothic text of the early readings hard to read, with one suggesting in 2012: "You should transcribe the readings. Keep the words the same but have them all in Times New Roman."

The students felt their ability to critically assess the readings improved as the course proceeded, with their third essay being an improvement on their earlier ones. As one student commented in 2007, "It feels like in the first few weeks, knowledge is much more limited than when the third is due." It is likely this is because the third assignment focuses on the more familiar world of near contemporary journalism and, also, by then the students have completed the first two DBQs and the group presentations.

The increased tutorial work in the latter part of the course's life was partly driven by such feedback. This has generated favourable response. As one student commented in 2011, "Doing the exercises in class, analysing texts as essay practice, was very useful." Another said in 2012, "The tutorial exercises were very good for helping to get me thinking on how to approach the assignments."

As such tutorial work was introduced the students asked that it be graded. "It would be nice if the presentation was worth a small amount (10%) as it does involve time and effort," said one student in 2009. This understandable expectation, plus the need for the students to commit fully to the DBQ exercises, saw the introduction of the 10 per cent participation grade in 2012.

Conclusions

This paper has considered methods to improve students' critical assessment of historical primary journalism texts. It has drawn on the experience of a New Zealand university-based journalism history course, the analysis informed by the United States experience with DBQs in advanced placement examinations. It is hoped this paper will be of assistance to journalism teachers seeking to improve their students' ability to critically assess primary journalism texts.

As in the United States, DBQs are used in the History of Journalism course because the academics who designed the course believed DBQs approximate the activities of real historians. Students must argue a case, based on their critical analysis of primary journalism documents. As in the World History advanced placement examination, the students are also encouraged to think about what other primary documents they can obtain, in order to answer the modern journalism aspect of each DBQ.

Again as in the United States, while some students have produced excellent work answering the DBQs, others found the task challenging. For whatever reason, these students clearly were not accustomed to critically assessing texts. They often avoided close critical reading of the journalism documents, preferring to repeat information from secondary sources. Their essays did not contain clear arguments or cite sufficient textual evidence. Some students failed to follow the essay instructions or even carefully proof their work. Several modifications have been made to the course over time to address these issues, including abandoning the textbook and narrative history readings, and devoting much of the class time to exercises that both mimic the essay questions and consider the nature of critical thinking. While the United States approach of using mnemonics has not been adopted, the students have been encouraged to follow a somewhat formulaic approach to undertaking critical analysis, largely because the notion of critical analysis itself is so hard to pin down. Grading students' participation in tutorial work has rewarded their committed involvement in these exercises. The students have appreciated these innovations.

None of these changes appeared to predominate in enhancing the students' ability to think critically. Instead, they have worked as a package, with the changes incrementally improving the students' performance over time.

And the current lecturer has determined that more must be done. To further encourage the students to think deeply and critically, the students will be required to write longer essays based on fewer readings. To encourage them to meet the basic presentation requirements of the paper, more marks will be allocated to that aspect of assessment.

It is likely such ongoing enhancements to the course will continue to pay dividends, for both students and lecturers. The students enjoy the course more when they feel more confident writing their essays; the lecturers find it more rewarding to read better essays and lead more insightful class discussions. Such paths of discovery and educational experimentation are relevant to all university teachers, who, of course, should always be aiming to enhance their students' critical thinking abilities.

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Working to a client brief? Offering work-based learning as a valuable addition to work experience in journalism: a case study

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Introduction

Work-based learning has become a key component of foundation degrees and in training generally. It does not seem to be commonplace in journalism education, though, where work experience remains king.

Journalism has always been about contacts, and for many journalism students, the links they make while undertaking work experience placements are key in finding that crucial first job. They also can have the opportunity to use their classroom-acquired skills in the real world. But as a journalism educator, I found that some placements – mostly in regional newspapers - offered a disappointing experience for students. They returned from short-staffed newsrooms where the expectation was that no-one went out on a story and rewriting from press releases was the norm.

Although I acknowledge that this sort of experience has value, I felt an additional type of learning would be welcome.

The work-based learning model, based as it is on a "client brief", had always been at odds with what I considered to be real journalism but the project described below offered real value for students and forced me to re-think the work-based experience offered to journalism students.

This paper seeks to share experience of a work-based learning project delivered on a National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ)-accredited print journalism course, and to offer the view that work-based learning is a valuable addition to NCTJ-accredited courses and would work equally well in undergraduate programmes.

The story begins

I was based in an FE college which offered NCTJ-accredited fast-track courses of 17 weeks and an academic year course, spanning 35 weeks. Many student were graduates, although there were some 18-year-olds and mature students with varied educational and employment experience.

The NCTJ qualification includes a portfolio of real-life news stories and features as an assessed element of its course, which required opportunities to be available for such reporting to take place. Work experience could be difficult for fast-track students to arrange during college holidays within the four-month timescale, and missing a week of college had a negative impact on other subject areas. Some students had little published work during their course.

Another of the main drivers for discussions around work-based learning was the creation and validation of a two-year Foundation Degree (FD), a number of which are on offer in journalism around the country.

The challenge is to find projects which are worthwhile and of value to students while maintaining strong links both to the world of work and the world of academia and education.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education, in its benchmark document for FDs, says authentic and innovative work-based learning is integral.

They are intended to equip learners with the skills and knowledge relevant to their employment, so satisfying the needs of employees and employers.

(http:www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationdegree/benchmark/fdqb.asp:point 14)

But a review of FDs carried out in 2004-5 noted:

> Sustaining an effective level of employer engagement continues to present challenges for some providers. In these cases, employers' lack of involvement in regular monitoring and development, assessment practices and student feedback, and in their support for work-based learning, can limit the professional currency and credibility of the FDs

(http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationdegree/learningfrom05/)

The review found some programmes included live projects and simulated work-based learning, which was particularly effective when they included the typical demands of being in the workplace. Among the review's comments was that development of work-based learning experiences should ensure students undertook real tasks, rather than simply observing, and also ensure tasks related to real-world experience. There was also the recommendation that the support supplied by mentors and employers to students was monitored to ensure they all received an equivalent experience.

In discussion about how to deliver this, my college bosses often referred to the idea of students working to a "client brief" for work-based learning projects. This did not sit easily with me, as journalism has never been about writing what others want you to write. As journalist and publisher Lord Northcliffe said:

News is what somebody somewhere wants to suppress; all the rest is advertising.

Journalism is the sort of discipline where work experience has always been held up as the best way to gain crucial industry experience, often leading to a job as a trainee reporter. The NCTJ recommends a period of work experience during a course, though it is not a requirement. This was how I envisaged work-based learning being delivered.

The importance of work experience placements was highlighted in research by High Fliers, whose managing director Martin Birchall was quoted in the Guardian (2012):

Today's report includes the stark warning to the class of 2012 that, in a highly competitive graduate job market, new graduates who have not had any work experience at all during their time at university have little hope of landing a well-paid job with a leading employer, irrespective of the academic results they achieve or the university they've attended.

But work experience in newspapers has, in places, become of limited value for some students.

There is the problem of how much relevant work the student was being asked to do. As noted above, the QAA's review of work-based learning highlighted that students should be doing, not just watching.

The implosion of the regional newspaper business causing a huge number of redundancies – with Slattery (2009) reporting more than 900 regional journalists being made redundant between July 2008 and March 2009 – has often left remaining reporters with enormous workloads and little time to get out of the office. They instead churn out material from press releases and speak to contacts via email or on the phone, rather than the face-to-face interviews which journalists should be conducting. This type of work pattern – criticised as "churnalism" by Davies (2008) among others – was having a detrimental effect on students' experiences of the workplace and of what journalism is meant to be.

One student returned from a week's work experience at a weekly local newspaper saying that being a reporter was a desk job, as he had not seen reporters going out of the office. His role had been rewriting press releases throughout his time there. Another student had been asked to write a book review based on the press release and cover notes, without reading the book.

One student wrote this about her work experience:

> I did a week's work experience on a local weekly paper and found that although working in a newsroom was a good experience, I found the lack of initiative and creativity quite boring. Virtually all the stories were based on press releases, all interviews were conducted over the telephone

> and none of the reporters left the office. I was also surprised that there was no interaction between anyone in the office.

Clearly students needed a better work-based learning experience.

Hanney (2005) described confusion over the scope and meaning of work-based learning in a media production degree. He explained how Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries (2004), said learning must take place in a real world environment and not an FE or HE environment, which was at odds with the QAA guidance. And he asked the question: “How do we as educators incentivise employers to work with us within the constraints of HE institutional practices?”

This is a major issue in print journalism, where newspaper editors and staff are overwhelmed by changes and cuts in the industry and not in the best place to devote time and staff resources to work-based learning schemes.

Hanney advocates a methodology called Problem-based Learning (PBL), which focuses on the process rather than the products of learning and knowledge. He offers the example of a project which requires the production of an artefact, where the outcome is open-ended and assessment could be peer or self-assessment. The tutor supervises and facilitates and students produce their own strategies; determine their own learning, maybe within budgeted resources; form learning teams and work through problem-based scenarios together.

It (PBL) establishes a principle where capability rather than competence becomes the benchmark for success and assists us in offering the following challenges to students:

*To engage in their own independent critical inquiry;

*To manage their own resources;

*To take ownership for their own learning.

(Hanney 2005)

Simmons (undated) describes running a ‘Newsweek’ for level six broadcast journalism degree students, where students pitched for roles such as producer, reporter or presenter, drew up their own rotas and produced news bulletins and programmes across the week. At the end of the week, students critiqued ten 15-minute programmes and voted for one to go forward to a panel of academic and industry judges for feedback.

She concluded:

> Assessments can offer a valid work-based learning experience but still retain the academic rigour that enriches students’ learning in addition to enhancing their employment opportunities.

(Simmons undated)

Students undertake WBL

A work-based learning opportunity arose when the college’s media department was approached by the British Heart Foundation’s fundraising volunteer manager for the region. She had a plan to recruit 500 new volunteers for the area in the next 12 months and felt she could run a project with the print journalism students, as well as the photography and video production students. Her aim was to garner publicity for the campaign.

I was initially dubious about how it could work, but in a meeting with the volunteer manager and the charity’s local press officer, a trained journalist, my colleague and I came up with the idea of approaching the city’s daily paper to run a series of news stories and features written by our students.

After meeting the BHF team and lecturers, the editor was positive and gave a timescale for the campaign launch story, which would be a double page spread.

We had a small cohort of students but two-thirds of them signed up as volunteers. The project’s value as part of the assessed portfolio was emphasised to them. The NCTJ's programme of study for the portfolio says:

> The portfolio is a record of training and is intended as evidence that the candidate has undertaken a range of reporting and writing exercises, as part of coursework or during work experience, which has been assessed to newspaper standards by qualified journalist trainers.
>
> (NCTJ 2008)

The project had a smooth start, where the press officer and I discussed the best way of splitting the launch feature into discrete parts and I divided it between two fast-track students. They were briefed and given information to turn into a news story. They were also given the contact names and numbers of two existing BHF volunteers to interview. This required a high level of skill, as both interviewees had lost husbands to heart disease a few years ago, an excellent chance to build skills in sensitive interviewing.

The system set up was that, after discussion during which students were guided into the best angle and structure for the news story, students emailed me their final version. I subbed it, checking any ambiguities or inconsistencies with students. I forwarded it to the BHF for checking on BHF guidelines, accuracy on medical facts, for example, and they submitted it to the newspaper.

The print journalism students had to liaise with photojournalism students to ensure photos were provided to go with the story. The skills they developed included checking with interviewees they were willing to have pictures taken; organising the logistics; and briefing the photographer on what the story was about, so the most appropriate photo could be taken. This very much reflects a pattern of working in a newspaper office and is invaluable real-life experience of managing an entire news story.

This approach meant students received feedback – or feedforward – as they worked when we discussed how best to approach the story, or how to phrase some tricky information or concepts. They also had the benefit of effective work-based learning, as they learned from real-life experience by seeing what final changes I, and indeed the newspaper, made before it was printed.

They also had excellent bylined cuttings of prominent new stories they could use for their portfolios and to show in future job interviews.

The charity continued to offer leads for further stories and many went well, with students reliably turning in good quality stories after gaining real-world experience of interviewing people, sometimes in difficult situations but always with willing interviewees and with a positive purpose of helping the BHF.

Problems did arise when there was a mismatch between students' professed keenness to undertake a story and the reality of doing it. In a couple of cases, there were problems with hitting deadlines. The keenest students had already volunteered for stories and it was the turn of less keen and reliable students to take on the challenge. This led to stories arriving too late to be used in a timely manner by the newspaper, and with inaccuracies which were picked up by the BHF but delayed publication. On reflection, the tight deadline on this task was a big ask for those particular students and I needed to be more mindful of the amount of support needed for them to achieve this successfully. It was, though, a real world learning experience for all involved.

The news stories published in the paper showcased our students' work and we built up a good relationship with the charity's staff, which could lead to similar projects in the future.

The student who had described the lack of creativity during her work experience said this about the project:

In comparison to work experience, the British Heart Foundation gives you a better experience of interviewing people face-to-face as well as allowing you more freedom to source the story individually. The fact that the BHF gives you the original source for the story also means that you get a gentle introduction to writing stories, rather than throwing you in at the deep end straight away.

Conclusion

Wenger (1998) wrote about a social theory of learning, "one that placed learning in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world." (1998:3). People build up communities of practice, whether in their home life, work life or leisure time.

In spite of curriculum, discipline and exhortation, the learning that is most personally transformative turns out to be the learning that involved membership in these communities of practice.

(Wenger 1998: 6)

If we acknowledge that what has come to represent the epitome of learning – a classroom or lecture theatre – is only a small part of knowing, the traditional format for learning does not look productive.

What does look promising are inventive ways of engaging students in meaningful practices, of providing access to resources that enhance their participation, of opening their horizons so they can put themselves on learning trajectories they can identify with, and in involving them in actions, discussions, and reflections that make a difference to the communities that they value.

(Ibid:10)

This project offered a better understanding of why work-based learning can and should be more than simply sitting at a desk in a workplace – and how to deliver that. It hopes to offer food for thought for journalism educators working to deliver FDs or undergraduate programmes, as well as industry-accredited pathways. This real-world journalism project offered great opportunities for students and good publicity and goodwill for the college. Not all work experience placements can say the same.

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Leveson - to regulate or not to regulate? The question dividing journalists and educators

The Leveson Inquiry is due to report on November 29 but already much of the national and regional press has been campaigning to hold on to self regulation.

The Sun and the Telegraph launched their campaigns to keep self-regulation in early November. A letter to the Guardian by 42 Tory MPs supporting statutory regulation sparked the Sunday Telegraph to dish the dirt on 14 of them claiming this was why they wanted limits on the press. This backfired somewhat when 30 more MPs publicly joined the 42 over claims of press bullying. A few days later the Daily Mail waded in, accusing many campaigners for stronger regulation including Hacked Off supporters and Sir David Bell of a "coup by the Left's old boy network" linking them to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism currently in the doghouse over Lord McAline.

The big debate of course is not whether the press behaved badly, or is likely to continue behaving badly but is about how we manage a regulatory system to gain some sensible and generally agreed balance between press freedom and the individual rights of members of the public.

There are three key issues that consistently raise their head during discussions about regulation:

How does the regulator oblige newspapers to accept its rulings?

What criteria should be used to choose which publishers are covered?

Is the new body a regulator or a complaints handler – in other words, what powers should it have?

One overwhelming feature of the debate is its very limited nature outside of Leveson's courtroom. Publishers are keen to get their version of the regulator, a version that has been pressed strongly in many newspapers, but there have been limited opportunities to hear other views. Here Journalism Education identifies two very different ways of handling the press. One from former AJE chair, Mick Temple looks at a press without regulation whilst Chris Frost, the present chair, puts the case for a strong regulator.

In defence of a free press

Mick Temple, Staffordshire University

Before I begin my defence of it, I know that there is really no such thing as a 'free press' (Journalism 101, lecture two). Apart from the journalists who produce them, owners, advertisers and (at times) governments have always exercised some control over the newspapers we read.

To be clear, what I want are newspapers free from direct or even indirect governmental control - and some such control seems likely to emerge from the Leveson Inquiry.

It's been a long wait. So long that the authors of a number of 'definitive accounts' now fear there may be no press left to regulate by the time Leveson reports. One's heart bleeds for John Mair and Richard Keeble, not to mention those of us signed up and eager to pour out our scorn/anger/delight/disappointment/puzzlement (delete as appropriate) on the noble lord's conclusions.

The editors of Journalism Education had also planned to give our responses to Leveson in this edition but we can't wait for ever. So Chris Frost's and my short articles are alternative 'responses' to the most likely outcome.

First, one point has to be acknowledged.

The British public is not waiting with eager anticipation for the publication of Lord Leveson's recommendations on press regulation. Unlike the publication of Lord Denning's report into the Profumo affair, they will not be queuing outside W H Smith or HMSO to pick up copies. Except for a small group of politicians, academics, maligned celebrities and journalists, the interest is minimal. More people are interested in who wins the X Factor than what Lord Leveson has to say.

Of course, lack of interest by the public does not equate to a lack of public interest, which is not to say the public shouldn't be interested in Leveson's conclusions. The consequences of ill-considered reform could affect the quality of information we receive, although that may be only in the short term, because the end of the printed press is surely nigh.

But Hackademia's obsession with Leveson shouldn't be allowed to obscure the fact that the audience has long since moved on. The Sun on Sunday's sales of more than two million in the wake of the closure of the News of the World suggests its readers have forgotten their outrage over Milly Dowler.

Anyway, the report is certain to recommend changes to the current voluntary system of press regulation – probably some form of regulatory code of conduct underpinned by statute. Of course, quite what this means has never been made clear. I hope Lord Leveson will provide greater clarity than the statutory regulation lobby.

That group includes my co-editor Chris Frost, the National Union of Journalists, the single-issue pressure group Hacked Off and the Coordinating Committee for Media Reform (and God help Josef K if he ever appears in front of the CCMR).

Opposition to statutory control has been dismissed by supporters of change as a concerted action by the press to preserve their 'freedom' to continue to act irresponsibly. In response, Paul Dacre and the Mail attack the 'quasi-masonic nexus' who seek to muzzle the press.

Not everyone in this debate has a vested interest. Apart from writing academically about them, I am wholly unconnected with national newspapers, yet I look at the responses from the NUJ and most media academics with sadness.

Professor Brian Cathcart of Hacked Off dismisses objectors, arguing we have a 'once-in-a-generation opportunity' to tackle the intrusion and dishonesty of the British press (The Guardian, 6

November 2012). But as another university professor, Tim Luckhurst, points out, virtually every objectionable action by the press ‘uncovered’ by Leveson was in fact a criminal offence already punishable by law (Daily Telegraph, 13 November, 2012). The scandal is not only the illegal and undeniably unethical practices of some owners, editors and journalists: it is the corruption in the police, revealed by their wilful failure to investigate such law-breaking properly.

What world are the proponents of statutory legislation living in? It’s certainly not the world of our journalism students, for whom newspapers – whether in print or online – seem a rather quaint way to get your news.

What is a newspaper in the multi-media world? It doesn’t matter, because the term ‘newspaper’ is rapidly becoming redundant. And any code of conduct will quickly take the same road into obsolescence as our traditional printed newspapers.

At a recent debate on Leveson at the Frontline Club, I listened dejectedly as a stream of journalists and journalism educators demanded a compulsory code of press conduct backed by statute. Most seemed unconcerned about their illiberality, convinced of their rightness in a way I found deeply disturbing from professions for whom freedom of speech should be paramount. That so many media academics have argued for statutory regulation has already aroused concern, a point noted by the Independent’s media correspondent, Ian Burrell (13 November 2012). The hackademics also seemed not to understand that the world has changed since their day.

Professor Stuart Purvis’s solution to the ‘Desmond problem’ – that is, what do the ‘regulators’ do if a newspaper refuses to sign up to a code of practice – showed the inflexibility of their position. We fine them, said Purvis - whose time at Ofcom may have informed his approval for regulation – and we keep on fining ‘them’ until ‘they’ decide it’s cheaper to pay to join up. This attack on liberty was received with approval by many of the audience.

So what would happen if a print publication refused to sign up to a statutory code of conduct? Unlike the USA, we don’t have a constitution prohibiting any law infringing the freedom of the press, but Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, despite its acceptance of the state’s right to license ‘broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises’, would certainly be cited by lawyers. The resulting court cases could drag on until long after the death of the printed newspaper, which may be much closer than we think.

And who are ‘they’? Is Private Eye a newspaper? Will the huge number of citizen journalism websites also be subject to a statutory code? How about Hello, Bella and OK, whose content is often intrusive and difficult to justify?

Professor Cathcart suggests there should be a clause requiring all newspaper publishers with revenues over say, £50 million, to participate in this regulatory regime. He asks if that would amount to licensing of the press, without answering his own question. Well, yes Brian, it would. Come back Roger L’Estrange, all is forgiven.

We don’t need a compulsory code of conduct backed by statute. Britain already has one. It’s the law of the land - and blinkered, biased and beset with inconsistencies as it is, our law is more than capable of dealing with the illegality of newspapers – if it wants to.

Unlike most opponents of statutory regulation, I don’t want a tweak of the current system. I don’t want PCC Plus, Minus or Squared.

I want all newspapers, magazines, journals, pamphlets – whether in print, online or technologies yet to be invented – to be free to publish whatever they want. If it’s libellous let them be sued. If our libel laws inhibit the ‘ordinary man or women’ from suing, then reform the law, as is currently happening.

If newspapers are biased, inaccurate or ‘economical with the truth’, so what? We are all biased, inaccurate and economical with the truth when it pleases us.

Trust the audience to make its own judgements. The elite classes of Britain – and academics are especially guilty of this – often appear to regard the masses as ‘gullible dupes’ incapable of understanding the difference between ‘truth’ and ‘propaganda’. Opinion polls consistently show a public opposed to statutory controls, but that is irrelevant to those who believe they know best – the people have to be protected from big bad organisations who will tell them lies.

There is a market for truth, fairness and balance in news – the respect in which the BBC is held worldwide demonstrates that, despite its recent problems. And we have newspapers which remain committed to accuracy in their reporting. The Guardian or The Independent do not need an imposed code of conduct and statutory control – their audiences expect the highest standards from their journalism (and yes, I remember Johann Hari).

In short, there is a market for high quality news, and there is a market for soap-based sensationalism. In an increasingly fragmented news environment, attempts to introduce control are not only illiberal – they are doomed to failure. Those who believe a statutory code of conduct would rein back the excesses of the feral press are fooling ourselves. No system of regulatory control can cover the numerous sources of news and information now available online. So why try and control any of it?

Whatever the many flaws of our newspapers, press freedom is too valuable to slaughter on the altar of misguided authoritarianism.

A free press, but a responsible press

Chris Frost, Liverpool John Moores University

Almost everyone believes there needs to be a change in the press regulatory system and that the PCC is not fit for purpose; The PCC itself has said so, Parliament, Pressbof and newspaper proprietors have said so, the NUJ and numerous campaign groups have said so.

There needs to be a new regulator – "a press regulator with teeth" - according to the PCC chair Lord Hunt. So what is Leveson all about if everyone is agreed?

Well, as with all things, the devil is in the detail. What teeth and how do you ensure they bite the right people at the right time? It's all very well having a watchdog but if it barks all night yet fails to deter burglars, it's worse than pointless.

Newspapers are still campaigning to keep self regulation largely on the basis of promising a new approach. Lord Hunt reminded the recent Society of Editors conference that: "in essence the PCC is still a complaints-handling body, not a full regulator. Whatever anyone may allege, that has always been perfectly evident, from the outset, to anyone who has taken even a passing interest in the Articles of Association and modus operandi of the PCC." Whilst he is right that it has only ever handled complaints, that is not how the PCC has portrayed itself. Even now on its website it says: "The PCC is an independent body which administers the system of self-regulation for the press." It is hardly surprising that people would get the idea it thinks it is a regulator.

Lord Hunt wants a system of contracts that will tie publishers to a new regulator. The problem is, can he guarantee that all will join? What about the Desmond conundrum; how can the system operate if one publisher fails to join?

The PCC failed, in part at least, because it constantly had to aim at the lowest common denominator for fear that those breaking its code would resign. We need to find a way of regulating that ensures all are obliged to accept the authority of a new body. Despite its obvious repugnance, the only real option is a regulator set up with statutory underpinning that would be able to oblige all commercial publishers to uphold its code of practice.

We need to understand a few things right away. First this is not licensing; anyone could set up a newspaper (if they could afford it) they would just be obliged to uphold the code of practice (which should be drawn up by the industry).Nor is it censorship; any newspaper could publish what it liked it when it liked it would merely be responsible for what it published. Defame someone and it would risk a libel suit. Invade their privacy and it could be another visit to the High Court. Tweet the name of a rape victim and it's a charge of contempt, Breach the code and the regulator could fine the paper if it felt the breach was serious enough or a repeat offence.

Opponents of such a system, mainly the newspapers likely to be regulated by it, say this is state regulation and a gross threat to press freedom but as H. L. Mencken said: "Freedom of the press is limited to those who own one"; what newspaper owners really want to protect is their commercial right to make a profit out of intrusion, propaganda and entertainment.

Don't get me wrong. All of those things are properly the right of newspapers (and anyone else) provided the rights of other are protected and provided the journalism involved is carried out legally and ethically. There's nothing wrong with making a profit. However making a profit needs regulation in order to prevent greed overcoming good sense, as we have seen happen all too often in all walks of live over the past five years. The right to trade freely is an important right, but it is one that is heavily regulated by statute in order to protect people from harm. If you sell goods, there are laws to ensure fair competition, to protect people from harm and ensure they are sold what they think they are buying. When people are buying newspapers, it is difficult to understand why they should not receive the same protection. Newspapers and magazines are produced as commercial operations designed to make profits for their shareholder but if I buy one, I expect the news to be true, reasonably accurate and a fair selection of the day's important events. If I don't get reasonable standards, why can I not complain?

Nor should we take cherished beliefs such as free expression for granted. We need to build a case for press freedom, freedom of expression and regulation of responsible journalism from the ground up. It is not enough to say that press freedom is the same as free expression and we must have free expression, merely because Mill and Milton expressed it so. Mill himself points out the dangers of failing to contest firmly held beliefs: "the meaning of the doctrine itself will be in danger of being lost, or enfeebled, and deprived of its vital effect on the character and conduct: the dogma becoming a mere formal profession, inefficacious for good, but cumbering the ground, and preventing the growth of any real and heartfelt conviction, from reason or personal experience." We should hear all opinions he said to allow for that growth.

What is important is the right freedom of expression – a vital human right that we each possess singly and individually. It is what allows us to challenge of leaders, uphold our rights and protect our freedoms. Whilst this is closely linked to press freedom in that journalists have the same right to free expression, they are not the same because the power of the media is different to the power of the individual. The press arguably needed the same freedom back in the time of Milton and Mill as it was the only real way of disseminating free expression to a mass market. But that access to a mass market brings additional responsibilities over the right to free expression as individuals. But we are now in a time where the limitation of access to newspapers no longer applies. None of us depend on newspapers to present our views and to be the central forum for public debate any longer. The press continues to have an important role, but it is no longer alone and broadcasting and the internet allows us all the free expression we could want. Indeed it's been quite a long time since some of our national papers have played any real part in informing the nation and facilitating debate, preferring instead to deal with propaganda and tittle-tattle.

So what of regulation? There needs to be a regulatory body and it needs to have authority over all publications that are produced commercially and are of a certain size.

The body needs to be able to draw up a code of practice for newspapers and it needs to be able to police that. Anyone should be able to complain to this body that will deal with it speedily and at no cost to the complainant. In cases where the publication is deemed to have breached the code it should be obliged to publish a short report of the adjudication in a position ordered by the regulator. In serious cases where the publication has been reckless, malicious or for repeated breaches around the same issue the regulator should be able to fine the newspaper. This fine should be proportionate and linked to the publication's turnover or advertising income.

All of this requires statutory underpinning in order to ensure the regulator's authority covers all commercial publications. Ofcom and the BBC are underpinned by statue, but I have yet to hear anyone make a case that government is preventing them broadcasting what they want. Some have pointed to recent difficulties but these cannot be ascribed to over-regulation. Ofcom gains its authority from statute not the government, it takes its regulatory lead from people appointed by the minister, but this new regulator could easily have people nominated by organisations with a direct interest.

Concerns from many that more effective regulation would bring more interference are simply not supported by evidence. In 20 years of the PCC and more than 30 years of the Press Council before it not one complaint was made about any newspaper or magazine exposing malpractice or abuse by those in power. All the serious complaints made to both bodies concerned issues such as newspapers lying, intruding on privacy or presenting a highly prejudiced, unfair and often false view of certain sections of society. In most cases the PCC and the PC before it, ignored the complaints either by saying it was in the public interest or, in the case of the PCC, by saying it didn't accept third party complaints.

We must move beyond this in order to protect publications that play an important role in society and which are threatened by bad management, economic storms and public mistrust. If we have another fudge as we did in 1953, 1961, 1972, 1977, 1989, 1993 and 2010 (when the PCC's own review firmly threw out all the recommendations that Lord Hunt is now proudly pursuing) then we will get what we deserve because only a fool keeps trying the same thing in the hope of getting a different result.

What do you think? Join in the debate on the AJE's website www.ajeuk.org or www.journalism-education.org

The Existential Journalist

Ken Pratt, University of the West of Scotland

Self-censorship is a greatly under-stated effect in journalism. I should know because years ago I decided to cut loose as a staff reporter and begin writing the way I saw it.

Two years before Milly Dowler, phone hacking, and Leveson I began writing Hunting Captain Henley as my creative PhD at Glasgow University. It's an account of one reporter's investigation into corruption at the heart of his own industry and part of it deals with the narrator's shock when he discovers his editor's extremely close connection to Special Branch, MI5, and the British Israeli Movement. After being ordered to hand over his contacts in relation to an IRA and Ku Klux Klan story, the narrator Billy Queen begins to suspect his editor Auld Nick is more closely involved with agents of the British State than he could ever have imagined. As he tracks Captain Henley (a close associate of his editor) to his work with 'The Foundation' in India Queen becomes what John C Merrill (Professor Emeritus of Journalism at the University of Missouri, Columbia) describes as The Existential Journalist. Merrill describes this as someone who is not 'robotized by the pressures of society to conform.' He writes:

> Some of us are born, and in some kind of statistical, materialistic way slip into old age and death without any meaningful guiding principles for a meaningful life. For such people existence means a kind of passive being, connected only by birthdays, weddings, illnesses, and catastrophes. For existentialists, on the other hand, existence means a more active and involved immersion in life experiences that largely are determined by our willingness to take chances. The existentialist refuses to be a robotized citizen who sees life as no more than a period of time where the person touches most of the laid-out bases but knows little or nothing about what is in the outfield. (Merrill, 2011)

News Androids

Merrill's 'robotized' reference is a timely one given today's multiskilling culture of media convergence that arguably mold journalists into smooth functioning androids and, in the case of Milly Dowler, unethical spies. But if we truly believe that changing the culture in newsrooms is one of the most important ways to initiate new ethical standards then there are still some hurdles to be overcome. We firstly should accept that censorship is largely self-censorship (the most corrosive and insidious form of all) by reporters who construct their news values in accordance with the scandal and hype of the commercially driven workplace and that it is therefore equally plausible to assume that student journalists will also adjust to the environment of the student newsroom in a similar vein. As we set-about developing progressive student news values Merrill spells out a stark warning - he points to something called communitarianism to describe the ethos that operates at the heart of some journalism training institutions where democratic political life is based on prerational moral commitments to shared concerns and opinions. He may be right. Journalists brave enough to revoke the internalization of market-driven news values could now be faced with well-meaning codes of conduct that restrict creativity. To use a crude Orwellian analogy, in some quarters the pigs may have moved into the farmer's lodgings. It may therefore be time to broaden our ethical definitions. Nietzsche, for example, did not endorse the communitarian perspective comparing it to the instinctive behaviour of herd animals. In another context let's not forget the great American journalist John Reed, author of Ten Days That Shook The World and the only American to be buried in the Kremlin, who once told his Russian Communist colleagues in the propaganda bureau to 'never change what I write.' The point is that self-censorship isn't always just the product of market driven news values, damaging though that is. Throughout the 1950's for example, journalist and philosopher Albert Camus denounced the restrictions on freedom of speech inherent in the totalitarianism of both right and left, from Spain to Hungary. Merrill argues that journalists and journalism educators who hold communitarian ideas for society wish to quell individualism in the newsroom in favour of group thinking. And some intend to use the new post-Leveson codes to achieve it. Not only that, it is group thinking that today often places little emphasis on content and maximum focus on digital platforms. 'It is my belief,' he writes 'that journalists must rebel against this growing conformism, must push back the encroaching bonds of institutionalization and professionalism, and determine to exercise maximum freedom in their endeavours,' (Merrill, 1996, p.5). It is of course an over simplification to assume that communitarianism and existentialism have to stand in opposition to one another when it comes to creating a healthy editorial environment in which our students can flourish. Media Ethicists Clifford Christians, Mark Fackler and John Ferr argue that their brand of communitarianism, committed to civic transformation, "aims to liberate the citizenry, inspire acts of conscience, pierce the political fog, and enable the consciousness raising that is essential for constructing a social order through dialogue, mutually, in concert with our universal humanity," – classic existentialism exemplified (1993, p.14).

The 21st century student newsroom

If we accept the above short hypothesis then maybe it is now time to consider the development of the existential journalist as a key to transforming the culture of both student and industry newsrooms. At accreditation visits across the UK journalism lecturers are being encouraged to get the students out and about more. In The Journalist, Pete Lazenby (2012) explains, 'My advice to any young and enthusiastic reporter is: put yourself about a bit. Go for a pint in the pubs in the communities you serve. So enjoy a pint, and good hunting.' What Lazenby is (perhaps sub-consciously) describing is the beginnings of the existentialist process at work. He recalls with fondness how his newsdesk used to leave him to wander through Leeds' wonderful Kirkgate market. What he is in essence doing is stepping out of context, a key existentialist characteristic. But it should be about more than merely love of freedom and a sense of commitment to some goal or cause (in his case obtaining exclusives for the newsdesk). It also calls for an urge to action, a dedication to creative individualism. In Hunting Captain Henley, for example, the existentialist narrator chooses to walk away from the electronic newsroom, mobile phones and Twitter to physically pursue the elusive Henley. Importantly though, the narrator chooses to describe the whole process, including the editorial politics that lead to the beginnings of his journey.

With all of these qualities in place it is then possible to envisage at least the possibility of challenging the powerful forces that exist both within the journalism industry and inside its related institutions. In the following extract the narrator gets in training and goes to work by planning his own DIY project that acts as the pre-cursor to his own internal investigation into Scottish journalism:

> He often dreaded re-entering the rarefied atmosphere of the office. Tuesday afternoons are notoriously routine. Most of the reporters are static, still waiting on conference suggestions winging their way back from the editor's office. They'd do as they were told, they always did. No matter the spin, the angle, the twist, they knew they had to toe the line, come up with the goods - do the business. Fingers to Auld Nick and his motley crew.
>
> Billy is staring at the plain white bedroom wall now. It's as white as a pan loaf. Looking closely now at the whiteness. Feeling its aesthetic smoothness from here.
>
> Its simplicity is awesome.
>
> Triangular.
>
> Vertex.
>
> He'd pop into B&Q tonight. Get the paints to start this handywork, a bit of painting and decorating was needed. He was going to paint the wall. Except he doesn't actually want to do it. He

> merely wants to think about doing it. The actual act itself would be an anti-climax. There was something else. This thought would be his, and his alone. It widnae belong tae naebedy right. Not the state nor the authorities. Nobody at all. No point in rushing in. Do it all properly Billy. First of all get the poster with all the different colours, neon pink, mid-morning blue, yellow dreamsprout.
>
> Sit down with a big mug of tea and choose maybe your top five colours.
>
> 1. Rose White
>
> 2. Natural Saffron
>
> 3. Dreamy Peach
>
> 4. Apricot Crush
>
> 5. Tuscan Terracotta
>
> (http://www.mylivebook.co.uk/MyLiveBook/HuntingCaptainHenley/index.html).

It is once this creative project is in place the narrator is then able to begin thinking about the shortcomings he witnesses among some of his colleagues on the editorial floor, a nightmarish vision where journalism ethics are nonchalantly abused as journalists routinely work alongside corrupt police and government authorities to camouflage the truth. The narrator is then able to write freely what he sees:

> Uncle John knew Auld Nick when he was in Special Branch. Nicolson was a passer-on of information. You caught it from him like a virus. Yet he was immune. He had the pock-scarred face and a nose like a strawberry, the master of misinformation. Auld Nick man, what's he like? The pin-stripe troosers - like a broken doon banker! (ibid.)

Using Literary Reportage

Writing Hunting Captain Henley gave me the opportunity to stand back from the journalism industry and use my literary skills to interrogate its weaknesses. I experimented with the idea of not only turning my journalistic curiosity inward but conveying what I saw using my own language or literary style, as recently demonstrated (Pratt, 2013). While existentialism therefore offers us firm alternatives (provided it is used in a measured way, affiliated to practical journalism) it could conceivably be further enhanced when combined with emerging forms of literary reportage. As Arnon Grunberg states in his summing up of the problematic relationship between journalism and truth, knowledge and reality: 'Dominant contemporary journalistic practice is neither the only nor the naturally privileged way to represent reality' (in Harbers, 2010, p.74). In the UK very understated attempts have already been made to highlight the necessity of understanding individual creativity and the emergence of a new literary journalism in which to express it. Jenny McKay points to a growing awareness that reportage is a critically neglected form. However, as UK journalism moves forward it may now be possible to begin to harness the energy generated by such creativity to offer a new way to change newsroom culture. Rob Alexander demonstrates the bildungs process as he describes it in which a protagonist finds his place in relation to the dominant social order of mainstream journalism. This is only possible, Alexander explains, because he is ultimately confident of his authority to stand outside of that order, a crucial dimension for the growth of grass roots alternative media. It first of all demands 'the articulation of a vision critical of the ethos of journalistic professionalism and the alienating effects of what Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao have called "the regime of objectivity" that sustains it' (Alexander, 2012, p.19). The term bildung refers to the German tradition of self-cultivation wherein philosophy and education are linked in a manner that refers to a process of both personal and cultural maturation. It is particularly relevant in the context of social media and citizen journalism where a wealth of projects are developed outwith the mainstream of British journalism anyway. There are three conceivable steps interested hackademics can consider to begin the bildung process among journalism students. Firstly, personalize the type of story material students want to cover. Secondly, point to alternatives to the self-censorhip generated by communitarianism and market driven news values – this can be done with reference to great examples of literary reportage: Kapuscinski, Hersey, Hemingway. Thirdly, create a basic introduction to the theory of the existential journalist. While I'm not suggesting in depth lessons on Nietzsche, Heidegger and Kiekegaard, it might be time to at least consider the journalism of Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre. In Nausea for example Sartre tells the story of an academic who becomes aware of the intense singularity of his own existence. Objects and even other people are completely outside of his experience. This leads to complete freedom but also complete isolation. The lessons we may learn from Camus in terms of post-Leveson journalism ethics and regulation are topical, maybe even controversial. It all begins with the principle that existence (our being) precedes essence (our purpose). If we exist before we are endowed with meaning, then that means we choose our own fates as we go through life. If we choose our own fate then there is no absolute code of ethics or principles. The idea is that we, as individuals (and individual journalists) are capable of living a pleasant, moral existence even if there is no higher being commanding it. If press freedom is not absolute then can we claim the reverse for its code of ethics? Far from creating statute in our framework we may even consider for a second the possibility of a form of de-regulation in the best interests of free thinking, coupled with a common sense approach to regulation that calls for more democratic accountability – call it regulation light, a system intelligent enough not to throw the creative baby out with the scummy bathwater. But it would be de-regulation that still acknowledges (yet isn't constrained by) what the Italian political analyst Norberto Bobbio refers to as 'the suppression of mediating bodies' (in Louden, 2010, p.274). Of course this, hypothetically, would only be possible for The Existential Journalist who is capable of considering news values and editorial hierarchies as being 'outside of his or her experience.' In practical terms, to get to that stage, it may be preferable for the new ethical existential journalist to firstly familiarize himself or herself with the arguments of the likes of Herman and Chomsky for example whose top news 'filter' is 'the profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms,' (1994, p.2). In other words, the post-Leveson journalist should not only be someone who is able to run the third eye over his own editorial colleagues (and an incestuous regulatory system controlled by a handful of proprietors and their appointed editors does not help this cause) but is also able to stand outside the demands of commerce which dictate news values, and express their perspectives in their own language, perhaps even challenging the stylistic and structural conventions of traditional news and feature writing. At UWS (University of the West of Scotland) for example we are in the process of creating the new copyrighted WORKING website http://workinglivesblog.wordpress.com/ which is an experiment in de-stylizing interviews with ordinary working people across the country. The project was inspired by the work of the late American journalist Studs Terkel (1912-2008) who won the Pulitzer Prize in 1985 for The Good War and whose book Working was described by critics as a work of art. Our approach is to capture in prose the poetry of real voices, the starkness of true life. The people we meet are not the result of a robotic survey. Their talk is fresh and straight, face-to-face, sometimes gritty, sometimes aspirational – it is both a form of literary reportage and oral history and is of note to this discussion for three reasons. Firstly, students who participate do not follow a conventional set of news values – there are no taut intros, no news leads and no spin – an interesting development given some of the discussions around Leveson. Secondly, the detached style of the interviews encourages students to think existentially about their interviewee and to balance that thinking with a form of progressive communitarianism. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the interviews are recorded (with interviewees permission) and transcribed to a painfully accurate level where every nuance of both dialect and content is minutely conveyed. In terms of Terkel we are, in effect, going back to the future to generate a partly new set of journalism ethics for our students that place the highest possible value on the interviewee, allowing them complete freedom of expression. The required house-style also circumvents any potential legal problems, always a consideration when dealing with outward facing student journalism websites. Working also creates an environment that encourages debate at the broadest level of engagement with participants (from bin-men to farmers) free to express their own ideas in their own words and dialect and one that, as Mick Temple explains, 'therefore helps to promote a less elite driven news agenda, one that recognizes the importance of the emotional and the apparently trivial and, in so doing, offers wider opportunities for political engagement to all sections of society' (2006, p. 257). In this respect the Working project also explores the concept of citizen witnessing (the world of work) and offers a platform to the contributions of ordinary people in a way that can hopefully help to reinvigorate journalism's responsibility within democratic culture. In the following extract from Liam's story (charity fundraiser) for example the existentialist approach of the journalist allows us to gain valuable insights into the interviewee's working experiences that other conventional structures may not. His apparently trivial observations are revealed as existential wonder, uttered by the most everyday of philosophers.

Fundraising is about annoying people (laughs). You chap doors, door to door, trying to get people to sign up to charity. They say it's not really using sales tactics but I reckon it is. But yeah you just pitch people all day, that's it really, objection handle, if they give you any objections, but aye, it's just walking for miles. Peebles yesterday, Dumbarton today – you just meet up at the office, go get the train to where you're working or whatever – they'll give you the map. And then they'll go over the map with you but then its kinda pretty self-explanatory.

You get a break at half past-five for half an hour but you never really get to have a break because you're walking to the shop and then back to where you just left off again and then that's you until 9 o'clock and then that's you until finishing time, get the train back, whatever time it takes you can end up back at the house at 12 o'clock, 10 o'clock, just depends.

Sometimes I feel as if I'm guilt tripping people but I'm not really. You get different reactions. There's the instant slam, not interested. Some of them say 'I give to other charities,' or 'I don't like giving out my bank details.' 60% of the time you get invited in. 22,000 kids are dying every day, would you miss £2 per week you ask them? You're just trying to guilt trip me some people say. I reckon it's down to luck.

Our team leader sends us texts to stop us negging out (becoming negative). They'll say things like 'let's smash it,' or 'by 7.30 I want this target, or that target.' Sometimes if we do bad the team leader will sit quietly on the way back on the bus. I've spent time on the dole so I know what it's like. People do have a perception of you depending on what job you do. If you're not working you don't have a place in society, you're out the loop. If you're not working what are you going to do? You just need to do it. It keeps everyone off your back.

Regardless of literary or journalistic style and regardless of whether we are today in the presence of new statutory control of the press or not, changing the culture in newsrooms is, as Chris Frost underlined in his witness statement to The Leveson Inquiry (June 2012), 'one of the most important ways to improve standards.' That can only be achieved from the bottom up. To do so we must take bold steps: acknowledge the perils of communitarianism, contemplate the potential of the bildungs process, harness the creativity of literary reportage. Frost further argues that empowering journalists to make their own decisions in line with company, NUJ and PSC codes and guidelines would bring the ethics back to the individual, a defining characteristic of the 21st century existential journalist.

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Reviews

The reviews pages are edited by Tor Clark. If you have a book you would like to review or have come across a new book we should know about please get in touch. Also if you have recently had a book published and would like to see it reviewed, please contact Tor on tclark@dmu.ac.uk

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Welcome to the second reviews section of the liveliest new Journalism journal on the block. We are again small, but hopefully eclectic, with the aim of reviewing books our readers want to read themselves, use in their courses or recommend to students.

This edition's selection of new titles examines the history, practice and study of journalism across traditional print, broadcast and online platforms, so hopefully offers something for everyone, and certainly most courses.

Our aim is to introduce readers to, and offer useful judgements on, the latest texts about Journalism for the benefit of academics and students alike.

I should like to sincerely thank this edition's reviewers for their excellent contributions and invite all readers to consider if they would like to offer reviews for future editions. We are interested in hearing from potential reviewers, with or without specific texts in mind, publishers offering books for consideration and authors suggesting their own books for review.

I hope you all enjoy the Reviews Section and find it both interesting and useful.

Anyone interested in getting involved in the Journalism Education Reviews Section can contact me at TClark@dmu.ac.uk, 0116 207 8810, or at the Leicester Centre for Journalism, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH.

Tor Clark
Editor, Reviews Section,
Journalism Education.

The Online Journalism Handbook: Skills to Survive and Thrive in the Digital Age, Paul Bradshaw and Liisa Rohumaa

Review by Sallyanne Duncan, University of Strathclyde, UK

In the process of setting up a Master's degree in Digital Journalism this year I faced the daunting task of finding suitable reference materials for this new course. It's a tricky exercise to select the right key texts that will meet the needs of bright gradu-

ate students who come from diverse disciplines and who have mixed experiences of journalism.

A fine balance needs to be struck between recommending a book which challenges their intellect but does not assume they are all digital natives who only need to polish their inherent skills. Equally, students tend to expect something which goes beyond the basic skills-based manual which often fails to engage them in current debates.

Paul Bradshaw and Liisa Rohumaa's book The Online Journalism Handbook: Skills to Survive and Thrive in the Digital Age certainly does not fall into the latter category. This is a fine, nuanced resource, particularly for those with limited knowledge but who are keen to extend their understanding of not only their skills but also the context of digital journalism. For example, the first two chapters on the history and technology of online journalism are comprehensive scene-setters, written in an informative, concise and pacy style.

When I received it I was immediately struck by the look of the book, the manner in which data is broken into manageable chunks and the quality of the colour plates. I was also surprised by how compact it is – I expected a much larger tome – particularly when I examined the comprehensive contents. The authors pack in a great deal of material in only 203 pages. There are chapters on writing for the web, data journalism, blogging, audio, video, interactivity, user generated content, and the law. It is also written with a touch of levity on occasion, which assists in putting over complex issues and building the confidence of the reader, perfect for students who are all too aware of their lecturers' expectations that because they are young they will know all about this online stuff.

Throughout, Bradshaw and Rohumaa debunk myths about the internet by writing in an accessible, intelligent, clear style without any unnecessary techno-babble. The chapters are split into logical sections which gives the reader the opportunity to master one particular form of online activity before moving on to the next rather than confronting them with several platforms at a time. The colour plates are superb and it would be useful if these were available as slides (or other suitable format) so they could be projected on to a screen for use in class.

That said, there could be more on how journalists use online tools, social media and the invisible web to research routine news and features as opposed to data journalism which is dealt with extensively in Chapter 5.

There is a useful chapter on the law and online communication, saving the reader from having to search out relevant legal texts. This chapter looks at the usual suspects of freedom of expression, privacy, defamation, contempt of court and copyright but through the lens of convergence. Numerous examples support the discussion through 'closer look' sections on specific legislation, approaches to stories, and the efficacy of using terms and conditions.

Overall, The Online Journalism Handbook is a valuable guide for the reader who wants to extend their knowledge of digital journalism, and one that should be recommended reading on every university journalism course. It certainly tops our reading list.

The Online Journalism Handbook: Skills to Survive and Thrive in the Digital Age by Paul Bradshaw and Liisa Rohumaa, published by Pearson Education Ltd, 2011. 203 pages; ISBN-978-1-4058-7340-6 RRP: £26.99.

The Broadcast Journalism Handbook, Gary Hudson and Sarah Rowlands

Review by Gurvinder Aujla-Sidhu, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK.

The Broadcast Journalism Handbook, first published in 2007, has been updated for 2012, with greater emphasis on covering recent changes in the industry. This text is

essential reading for journalism students and trainee journalists hoping to pursue a career in broadcast journalism.

It is a very practical guide, covering essential skills such as writing for on-air and online, interviewing, using equipment on the road and putting together the material for television and radio. The layout has been revised slightly, making it easy for the reader to pick out key points. Useful features include 'remember' boxes, case studies, a closer look, think-pieces, and key quotations in large fonts.

One of my students rated the 'remember' bulletin point list very helpful because it summarises the key points of the chapter so clearly. She and her fellow students liked the way chapters were divided so they could dive in and read sections related directly to their current studies.

Other features include updated cases studies or recent examples from the news which allows the user to put the theory into context. I am fond of the Tip Boxes and Closer Looks, littered throughout the text, which give helpful advice for journalists starting out.

Social media as a journalistic tool is a topic covered in various books but this text presents the reader with an explanation of how to really utilise it and to best exploit its advantages, rather than just giving the theory or background to social media. The reader is advised on using tools such as Twitter on a daily basis, and on how to subscribe to groups to monitor output in their local area or region.

With the growth of technology and social media it can be easy to overlook that good writing is an essential skill for broadcast journalists. This text doesn't just tell the reader the basics, on using short words for instance, but encourages students to delve deeper to understand the story they are trying to tell. It has numerous examples of headlines, scripts and news cues to put broadcast skills properly into context.

This second edition places a greater emphasis on the online element of the broadcast journalist's job, forcing readers to think about how they can deliver their work on other platforms. Most broadcast journalists are now expected to tell the story online with headlines, images, fact boxes etc, often with little additional training. Hudson and Rowlands offer useful advice to the novice on writing headlines which fit the character limits and contain the key words to be found on searches, and breaking up long text. The art of trying to sum up a story in 140 characters is also touched on, but is clearly a skill that comes with experience.

A particular highlight throughout is the authors' use of testimony from leading broadcasters, who share their advice and disaster stories, but also offer insight into their job by focusing on how they tackled particular stories.

This text is fairly expensive for students, and I do feel the authors could have given more room for online skills - perhaps even a chapter devoted to it - as this is now a crucial element of the job, but overall it is very useful and I recommend it as it a core text on my course.

The Broadcast Journalism Handbook (2nd edition), by Gary Hudson and Sarah Rowlands. Published by Pearson Education (2012). ISBN 978 1 4082 4521 7. RRP £29.99.

A Century of Journalism 1900-2000, Dennis Griffiths

Review by Claire Wolfe, University of Worcester, UK

This is a launch title from a new publisher which aims to focus on specialised books related to journalism and the history of the press. It offers a brief guide to key moments and players in the last century.

The author stacked up half century 'doing' journalism then turned to 'documenting' it. Previous publications include 500 Years of the Press (2006, The British Library)

His new book shows how quickly the landscape changes. The Rebekah Brooks entry, appearing in a list of 'movers and shakers', has her resignation noted in July 2011 but no details of why. These are the perils of documenting living people when the timescale is fixed with a precise end-point. Likewise with the entry for Conrad Black, now a disgraced fraudster and no longer running the Daily Telegraph Group.

The book opens with a summary of 100 years of journalism which had to be shoehorned into 46 pages. This is a bit like squeezing Leveson into a page lead.

Nonetheless this sprint through time with the 'press barons' era covered succinctly does provide a framework for the Biographies section, which focuses on 100 influential people. There are lots of relevant and interesting facts, tales of skulduggery and some drama.

We hear how a young Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) galvanised readers into action with a competition in 1888 offering a pension of £1 per week for life as the prize. Circulation soared to 700,000. I daresay if you stuck a few noughts on the end of the annual payout you could do the same today - provided the readers trusted the pension fund wouldn't go bust... or worse. The Robert Maxwell section recounts how The Mirror owner also saw pensions as a pot of gold, but in this case plundered £300 million from his employees' fund.

But Harmsworth's foray into newspaper competitions helped him to stash up enough cash to launch the Daily Mail in 1896 and the rest, as they say, is history.

Some sections are so condensed that at times I wanted more, for instance about Beaverbrook's campaign which sparked Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's famous quote about newspaper owners seeking 'power without responsibility'. There is, of course, now the well known text of that very name, and others, to add detail.

I was surprised there wasn't a section on the emergence of the 'new media' but just hints of what was to come, largely through Rupert Murdoch's crystal ball-gazing.

Yet, in 1994 the Guardian began developing online publication with its technology section going online in 1995. The Guardian Unlimited network of websites launched in January 1999 and by March 2001 they had more than 2.4 million unique users.

The author seems to have stuck with his area of greatest knowledge, or maybe he is saving up material for the next instalment?

The biographies cover everyone from Sir David English and Eve Pollard to Eddie Shah and Michael Foot, who of course, was not only a Labour Party leader but a distinguished journalist. A former editor of the Tribune, he was involved in an attack on the Government over the disastrous retreat at Dunkirk. He came up with the title 'Guilty Men' for a book penned by his Evening Standard colleague, Frank Owen.

This new text provides a useful snapshot of an era and its leading personalities and there are useful references at the end of each entry for those hungry for more.

A Century of Journalism 1900-2000, by Dennis Griffiths. Published by Coranto Press: Oxford. ISBN 978-0-9572232-0-2. RRP £10 available directly from Coranto Press, 2, Gloucester Court Mews, OX286HX sparbles@live.co.uk

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Changing Journalism. Peter Lee-Wright, Angela Phillips and Tamara Witschge (2012)

Review by Mick Temple, Staffordshire University

Based on a large-scale empirical study of news journalism, this timely book concentrates on three specific areas of journalism. As the book's title implies, change is the dominant motif. The first section examines changing political and economic struc-

tures, section two focuses on changing journalistic practices (in particular the impact of new technology), while the final section looks to the future of news journalism.

Throughout the book is the view that news is too important to be left to 'the vicissitudes of the economic cycle' (p.20) leading to a conclusion that some form of 'public intervention' is probably necessary in order to ensure the informed populace necessary in a democracy. The authors argue that 'if the market in news seems likely to fail, then governments across the world should step in' (p.153), a view that will not find favour everywhere.

The final substantive chapter's examination of transparency and ethics specifically addresses the problems of an increasingly commercial news environment. And the views presented by some journalists who attempt to stand up for 'truth' in their news reporting – that editors literally don't care whether the news 'is true or not' (p.139) – chime with much of the evidence uncovered by the Leveson Inquiry. This lack of journalistic autonomy, of course, is not necessarily new, although the implication of the book is that the pressure on journalists to toe a proprietorial line has increased in recent years.

The book also offers a much-needed reaction to the technological determinism that has driven the adoption of news media. Within the newspaper industry the belated enthusiasm for 'going online' has introduced many ill-considered practices and, as Tamara Witschge argues, closed off a number of paths that might have used new technology in 'more progressive ways' (p.113).

One 'progressive' way in which new technology might have been utilised is for greater audience participation. But as other researchers have found, news organisations have tended to adopt the most minimal form of interaction with their audiences. Surprisingly, the research found that local journalists were even more dismissive of the value of user participation than those working in national news - perhaps the greater threat to their jobs from the hyper-local citizen journalist explains this.

The belief that news organisations should adopt clear and accountable ethical standards and therefore emphasise their 'unique and valuable' product is offered by the authors as both a contribution to democracy and as a technique for survival in a highly competitive market. The public need to trust their news sources – and trust is a valuable commercial commodity. Such a message is not unusual within university journalism departments. The problem is selling that message to commercial news organisations.

The individual chapters are well-written and well-informed, but three authors contribute to a somewhat disjointed analysis: the book works best as a selection of articles on different aspects of journalistic change rather than as a coherent overview. That said, the authors deserve considerable credit for the quality of writing and the range of contemporary issues they address.

Peter Lee-Wright, Angela Phillips and Tamara Witschge (2012) Changing Journalism. London: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-415-57955-1 (paperback)

A classic from the Journalism bookshelf:

The Universal Journalist, by David Randall, first published 1996, fourth edition published by Pluto Press in 2011.

Review by Tor Clark, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK.

After a while, we all develop our own ways of carrying out the basics of journalism effectively. This can make it difficult for journalism lecturers to recommend

any single 'how to' textbook from the many available to students. David Randall's new edition of The Universal Journalist makes the task a little easier. I was made aware of this book by a colleague of a similar vintage who also made the switch from the newsroom to the classroom. She said to me: "You think you know all about journalism, then you discover a book like The Universal Journalist and realise how much there is to it."

The back cover blurb bills The Universal Journalist as 'the world's leading textbook on journalism...' This hyperbolic claim can be offset against the obvious quality of the product and the home it finds on so many Journalism reading lists. In their useful 'critical bibliography of newspaper journalism', the final chapter in the excellent Newspaper Journalism (2010), Peter Cole and Tony Harcup sing its praises: "There are a number of good books concerned with newspaper journalism written by current or former practitioners and aimed at journalism students. One of the best is The Universal Journalist by David Randall ... Devoid of bibliography and references it might be, but it is full of insight and good advice from a reflective practitioner..." (p197)

Randall's approach is to encourage journalism students and trainee reporters to strive to become great reporters and he bookends his text with the introduction and resolution of this aim. He stresses he does not consider himself 'a great reporter' but that he has been privileged enough to work with a few over the years and it is his aim to try to describe the skills and attributes which went into making these titans of our trade. In this sense Randall's other notable work The Great Reporters (Pluto Press, 2005) which features great contemporaries Hugh McIlvanney and Ann Leslie among a wider historical cast, is something of a companion volume.

Randall breaks his chapters down into small sub-headed chunks of advice and good practice, often setting it out as lists of things to do, or avoid. As well as the many 'how to' chapters, Randall also explores investigative journalism in a practical way and takes a timely fresh look at ethics. This latest edition usefully brings current newsroom practice up to date with a discussion of online research techniques and includes a section on handling numbers and statistics, a vital if overlooked aspect of reporting.

This is then an excellent book, and I did not disagree with most of Randall's suggestions, but two issues could perhaps do with addressing for the fifth edition. The first was the lauding of a reporter who had to 'call the father a of a suicide victim seven days in a row before he will agree to talk' (p5). This was obviously intended as an example of journalistic determination, but to me unfortunately jarred badly as a stereotypical example of unwarranted intrusion into grief, which I thought had been consigned to the past by the PCC Code.

The other problem, the 'world's leading journalism textbook' claim, is almost certainly not of Randall's making, as throughout the book he champions accuracy and rails against unnecessary journalistic hyperbole. Hopefully in future editions the quality of the book might be allowed to speak for itself and allow this claim to be avoided.

Randall's approach is thorough, useful, intelligent and persuasive. Whilst there are a lot of textbooks out there offering advice to would-be journalists, few do it as well and it is to be hoped that a few of this book's readers may indeed eventually develop into the great reporters Randall so admires.

The Universal Journalist. Published by Pluto Press: London (2011) 252 pages, ISBN: 978 0 7453 3076 1, RRP: £17.99.

If you have a book, TV programme, film or event relating to journalism that you would like to review, or you have come across a new book we should know about, please get in touch. Also, if you have recently had a book published and would like to see it reviewed here, kindly contact Tor Clark at De Montfort University on t.clark@dmu.ac.uk.

Information for contributors

We accept original articles about journalism education and topics linked to journalism and education that are not offered for publication elsewhere at the time of submission. Articles for peer review should be in the range of 5000-7000 words.

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