Articles

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Teaching and learning journalistic responsibility in the post-digital revolution:

A three-year case study of a cultural historiographical pedagogy.

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As this Special Edition indicates, journalism education is increasingly concerned about how to maintain the profession's core skills, particularly the art of storytelling. As this Special Edition's call for papers pointed out, this (and other) core skills are being challenged by the demands of the 24/7 news cycle, shrinking newsrooms, and the online environment's imperative of simplicity and interactivity to keep audiences engaged.

But although journalistic practice has changed dramatically to accommodate the digital revolution, the basic reason for journalistic endeavour has not. Using the core skill of storytelling to ensure a diversity of public voices, to champion the underdog, and to scrutinise and criticise those in power, is just as much the journalistic responsibility today as it ever was in the pre-digital revolution.

And yet, somewhat ironically, in a predominantly skills-based course – such as that at Melbourne's RMIT University – the underpinning theory of journalism and its basic function can get somewhat lost as curriculum plays catch up with multi-platformism, audience interaction and technical skills.

This paper is about its author's use of a formulated cultural-historiographical approach to journalism peda-

gogy in a predominantly practice-based Journalism programme. It starts with an explanation of cultural-historiography as a theoretical paradigm, and its crucial elements related to the learning of journalistic theory through the practice of storytelling, then goes on to examine its relative success or otherwise through a three-year case study of its application in RMIT Journalism's first-year courses.

Introduction

This article is about the formulation and application of the pedagogical approach to RMIT's first-year journalism courses under the university's School of Media and Communication's restructure ('MC2015'). The Journalism programme's first year courses are foundational courses, which set up a professional mindset for success in second and third years, and beyond. This article describes the theoretical underpinning to the function of cultural-historiography theory in post-digital journalism education, particularly in the Australian context, then examines its application and impact as a pedagogy in the lead up to, and including, first-year journalism's 'MC2015' debut semesters. Drawn from Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning (1997), the cultural-historiographical approach to teaching can, theoretically, change a student's "frame of reference" from being a *scholar* of journalism, to being a *critically reflective practitioner*, through immersion into professional culture and history, and internalisation of professional values and beliefs through the experience of storytelling.

As this Special Edition has pointed out, changes in media habits have profoundly changed the practice of journalistic storytelling. Changes in journalism education logically follow. Students are now taught techniques of storytelling on a myriad of platforms; storytelling skills are developed in long-form, text-form, twitter-form, blog-form, using embedded links, and with sound, and moving and still images. They must learn to tell stories faster, with audience interaction, more than ever before. Journalism industry now demands new skills, altered ways-of-thinking and increased entrepreneurial abilities from our graduates. Journalism education, globally, has looked on these new demands as opportunities to implement innovative educational techniques.

No one disagrees the practice of journalistic storytelling has altered to be almost unrecognisable. But there appear to be distinct divergences in thinking about whether its core philosophy has changed with its practice.

If we listen to journalism scholars such as Queensland University of Technology's Stephen Harrington, previous journalism theories – the old 'Four Theories of the Press' model – are no longer applicable in the new media environment (2012). Indeed, Harrington sees some urgency in "breaking down" disciplinary boundaries and even "redefining" journalism's primary object of study. Harrington calls for a "reassessment" of journalism education's pedagogical and epistemological relationships, away from "specific rigid, professional" journalistic inputs, towards an "ever-growing" range of media outputs.

And there is some merit to Harrington's argument. If we think about what digitisation has done for the underpinning principles of participatory government - with the apparent democratic potential in "digital democracy", "cybercitizens" and "wiki-government" - journalism, as it was previously known, appears somewhat redundant (Keane, 2013).

But we know journalism *isn't* redundant. From within the torrents of information flooding society through the World Wide Web, it is still journalistic storytelling that mediates the flows, and makes sense of the deluge of supposed facts and opinions for the public, so that it can make informed decisions about who holds power. Indeed, it could be argued the professional selection and presentation process of information – and the underlying values and beliefs that informs that selection and presentation – is more important than before.

And yet, in Coventry, journalism academics Shelley Stevenson and Bianca Wright (2014) point out journalism education's "paradigm shifts" - such as those propounded by Harrington (2012) - have unforseen problems. They argue that time spent on focusing on "navigating" technology "reduces" time spent on learning, what they describe as, the "threshold" concepts behind the practice of journalistic storytelling:

> *Because the threshold concepts become buried in the midst of skill learning there is an obfuscation of the theory necessary to understand how journalism works (2014: 138).*

University of Melbourne academic, Margaret Simons warned of this happening as far back as 2007. While cautiously celebrating new technology and the consequent demise of journalism's business model, she also pointed out the situation left a vacuum waiting to be filled:

> *... just as the printing press made possible the business of media, new technology now makes something else possible as well. The bonds between media content and business are loosening ... everything is changing once again, and the change is full of threat and opportunity (2007: 20 – 21).*

The threat Simons identifies is clearly journalism's headlong rush towards bankruptcy. But the opportunities of which she speaks provide potential to allow a new type of journalistic theory – one unshackled from a professional culture of *business*, to one of *journalism*. The problem is that now, anyone – indeed, everyone – can be a 'journalist', even the need for journalistic education and training appears somewhat unnecessary. The more accessible degrees in 'Media Studies', 'Communication' and even 'PR' and 'Advertising' appear to be seen as viable alternatives to Journalism. The thinking appears to be that education in the methodologies of journalistic storytelling is unnecessary, provided the alternative teaches the necessary skills in digital technology.

It's not that journalism education should not encompass skills in digital technology; it's more that in amongst the demands for teaching skills in coding, CSS, HTML, Tableau, XL and Wordpress, we can not lose emphasis on the journalism's micro-cultural professional values and beliefs that define one as 'journalist'. As Simons says:

> *Affluence and consumerism are not bad, but they are not enough. We need more. We need values and meaning (2007: 20).*

Searching for a pedagogy

It was with these "values and meaning" that the 2015 RMIT University first year journalism restructure was concerned. Both previously and under the restructure, first year journalism at RMIT functioned as a foundation to the attitudes and professional practices expected from students in second and third years, and beyond into industry. The paradigm shift the rest of the program underwent was aimed at, what Harrington (2012) calls the "break down" of the disciplinary boundaries, away from "specific rigid, professional" journalistic inputs, towards an "ever-growing" range of media outputs. Although this approach is important to maintain the currency and relevance of course content, it also risked losing the "threshold" concepts within the professional stream of journalism.

So under the 'MC2015' restructure, it was first-year Journalism's function to establish the all-important "threshold" concepts, professional practices and attitudes towards journalistic storytelling in a manner that would ensure they remained with students throughout their academic and professional careers. Consequently, the cultural historiographical pedagogy was developed to alter a first-year journalism student's self-identity from being a *scholar* of journalism, to being a *critically reflective practitioner.*

Rather than concur with Harrington's call for the "break down" of boundaries between journalism and other communication disciplines in storytelling practice, the basic assumption underpinning the cultural-historiographical approach is that journalism cannot be considered 'the media'. As Simons argues, the delineation of journalism from the wider media culture may even be crucial to journalistic storytelling's ability to fulfil its democratic storytelling function:

> *Media and journalism are not the same thing ... 'Media' is the business of selling audiences to advertisers ... news and drama have older and more important purposes than the media ... [however in] the modern world they are supported by and enmeshed with the media (2007: 20).*

As journalism scholar, Angela Romano argued in her study of Indonesian journalism, and its changing culture, during that nation's political shift from dictatorship to a more democratic system in the early 2000s, the practice of journalistic storytelling is underpinned by a distinct subcultural ideology that is different from that of other communication disciplines (2003). Journalism, says Romano, is "imbued with a distinct sense of journalist collectivity" (2003: 9).

Romano further points out these communities function informally, even when the formal mechanisms of professional affiliations are "moribund" (Romano, 2003: 9). In other words, when studying journalism, it is wise to not only analyse the formal, standardised patterns of professional association and interaction, but also the "cultural discussion", or how journalists monitor the appropriateness of their own behaviour through interaction with other journalists (2003: 9).

The recognition that journalism operates as an interpretive community appears to be global. In the US, Barbie Zelizer demonstrates how journalism functions as micro-culture, when she points out reporters absorb "rules, boundaries and a sense of appropriateness about their actions without actually being informed

of them by their superiors" (1993: 221). Similarly, in Australia, John Hurst recognises the existence of a journalistic micro-culture in his anthology of Walkley Award winners:

> *They're [journalists] an interesting tribe, with their own strange totems and taboos, a close fraternity apart from, yet part of the crowd (1988: 6).*

Conceiving journalism as a micro-culture within the macro-cultures of the media and society itself, means we can examine the professional socialisation process of journalistic storytellers through a Cultural Studies paradigm. According to scholars such as Raymond Williams (1966; 1976), Richard Hoggart (1957; 1969; 1970a; 1970b) and Stuart Hall (1976; 1978; 1980a; 1980b), culture – and consciousness of it – is socially constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through explicit and implicit meanings in cultural products and practices. These cultural products and practices are interpreted and reinterpreted according to the Cultural Studies' concept of "tradition", or the norms and practices that members of a community (in this case, journalism's "interesting tribe") recollect and inherit. Historian Eric Hobsbawm (1998) describes this phenomenon as "memorial narratives" (in this case, journalism's "strange totems" and "taboos"). These narratives are constructed by communities around shared experience from the existing verifiable facts (Hobsbawm, 1998: 354 – 355). A "memorial narrative" affirms the value or meaning of an event, individual or institution or idea by heightening its more celebrated aspects, while downplaying others.

The assumption that culture is synthetic in nature suggests that Australian journalism's value and belief systems are not necessarily predetermined by influences such as political-economic structures, or the demands of digitisation, but by cultural-historiographical factors such as journalism-specific cultural products, narratives, people and the practice of journalism itself. Here we turn to Williams' definition of culture:

> *Culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values, not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture (Williams, 1966: 57).*

It is therefore, foundational to the development of any cultural-historiographical pedagogical approach to identify and analyse the "institutions" and "ordinary behaviour" – or, in Hobsbawm's words, "memorial narratives" – inherent in the "particular way of life" of the discipline's professional micro-culture. In this instance, the "strange totems" and "taboos" belonging to the "interesting tribe" known as professional journalists.

Popular misconceptions about journalism micro-culture, however, could potentially cloud the identification of its professional "ordinary behaviour". Frustratingly, first year journalism students often begin their professional education with these misconceptions dominating their motivations.

The dominant amongst these misconceptions relates to an idea that as members of the 'Fourth Estate', journalists have the same powers and protections as the other three estates – legislative, executive and judiciary. But while other western democracies have a Bill of Rights, the epitome of which is the US First Amendment, Australian journalism has no such official recognition. Consequently, as Julianne Schultz found in her 1998 survey, journalists themselves see the Fourth Estate function as a romanticised ideal, constrained by wider socio-economic "realities" (1998):

> *Now it [the 'Fourth Estate'] is best considered as an ideal, consisting of elements of truth, multiple meanings and lashings of ambition (Schultz, 1998: 49).*

Although the 'Fourth Estate' concept is useful to articulate journalism's role in scrutinising and criticising bodies of power, it isn't helpful in creating critically reflective practitioners. Not only is the 'Fourth Estate' concept a somewhat misleading institutionalised myth, of more significance, adopting the 'Fourth Estate' epitaph does not guarantee journalism any greater recognition or independence.

The same could be said of 'professionalisation'. But we cannot blame students arriving into journalism education with the notion that society will recognise, maybe even support, their storytelling activities as 'professionals'. Until relatively recently, journalism education has actively marketed itself as a pathway to professionalism (Henningham, 1988, 1989; Pearson, 1991). Scholars such as John Henningham and Mark Pearson argue a 'professional' identity is able to resist outside influence, as well as demand respect from those in authority and society itself. In his 1991 comparison between law and journalism, Pearson argues:

> *If journalism is taught as a profession, by professional tertiary educators, then the products of that education should be able to view themselves as professionals (Pearson, 1991: 107).*

Henningham argues that "professional consciousness" can be developed through compulsory journalism education, and membership of professional associations. In other words, journalism "should" not be "any

different" from other professions such as law and medicine (Henningham, 1989: 27).

Except telling stories using a journalistic methodology *is* different – very different - with unique challenges facing the fulfilment of its complex public responsibility. Journalistic storytelling is apparently key to the functioning of a western liberal democracy yet, if done well, attracts neither public praise nor institutional support. The slightly impractical obsession with professional recognition of journalism's function in – particularly Australian – society, and the inevitable disapproval quality storytelling often attracts, is at the heart of the 'cultural-historiographical' pedagogical approach. The 'cultural-historiographical' approach recognises that Australia still has no Bill of Rights protecting journalists from legal avenues obstructing them from going about, what academic Meg Simons calls, their "dirty vital work" (2007: 20). Although an implied Freedom of Speech was interpreted in the Australian Constitution in 1992, it is still left to a judge's discretion whether a journalist should have any further protection from defamation and contempt of court rules than any other citizen (Schultz, 1994: 189).

As Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) president, Christopher Warren reiterated in 2005, a free media "never emerges as a gift" from those in authority:

> *It needs to be fought for. It never attains a state of perfection, but rather sits on that uneasy fault line of power between a government's desire for control and continuing pressure from society. Above all, it depends on the preparedness of the media, itself, to push back that line away from the governmental regulation and towards a freer media (Warren, 2005: 3).*

Journalism's post-digital function

In this age of, what Professor John Keane (2013) calls "communicative abundance", with all its apparent potential for "digital democracy", "cybercitizenry" and wiki-government", journalism as a requirement for democracy may appear somewhat unnecessary. And yet, as Keane warns, the "communicative abundance" may not deliver the utopia it appears to promise. "There are certainly worrying counter-trends," he says. The age of "communicative abundance", says Keane, is "littered" with rumour firestorms, media bombing and "mean spirited" bloggers. He claims Google has its secret algorithms, and "whole organisations" are "victims" of "spiteful" hacking, spying and denial of services (2011). Keane describes this phenomenon as "media decadence" (2013):

> *Media decadence is dangerous for democracy ... communication media are used to promote intolerant opinions, protect inequalities of wealth and income and to restrict the public scrutiny of power by encouraging blind acceptance among citizens of the way things are heading (2011).*

Perhaps journalism students need to be taught how to tell stories that "push back that line" more than ever. However, pressures on journalists, particularly public expectations for entertainment, commodification of audiences, demands for multi-skilling and audience interaction in the digital environment, resulting in changing world views of journalists themselves, have played out in divergent, and often conflicting value and belief systems. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the employment of private investigators, carrying out 'journalistic' duties in the absence of professional discipline, resulting in the 2011 Leveson Inquiry. Although not all journalists knew about *News of the World's* actions, very few were surprised to learn of its practices. For more than a decade, tactics that were completely at odds with professional ideology, had tacit widespread professional acknowledgement.

This tension between journalism's fundamental responsibility and its ever-changing socio-political context has contributed to the creation of what Suellen Tapsall and Caroline Varley describe as a "crisis of identity" (2001: v). This "crisis" becomes even more urgent with changing nature of journalistic practice itself, where journalists are now out of the newsroom, often operating as an individual unit, with little or no role-modelling, mentoring or other guidance through the moral morass that is journalistic storytelling.

Because of the vagaries inherent in telling stories using a journalistic methodology, there are several norms and practices that are seemingly contradictory and not easily understood, let alone easily taught, outside of the internal journalism culture. As journalism academic, Dr Michael Meadows, argues, there are "important common practices" required to "make journalism" (Meadows, 1998: 10). The problem is that these "common cultural practices" can appear at odds with journalism's modern self-identity that is becoming increasingly aligned with other cultural industries in the post-digital era.

The challenge is, at least partially, explaining to well-educated, generally morally upstanding 'professionals' (potential journalists) that, as part of their job as journalistic storytellers, they may be required to build

affiliation with sources that could include criminals, crooked law enforcers, drug addicts or any number of down-trodden, dubious and possibly dislikeable characters. In a tertiary education environment, it can be a little uncomfortable explaining why it's so important to read *that* leaked document, or listen to *that* anonymous source, despite the fact that it could, quite conceivably, land them in dangerous legal waters. Not to mention the difficulties in explaining that gathering information may sometimes require seemingly suspect methods and, when everybody else is running away from that car accident/ bushfire/ tsunami/ bomb blast, it is their job to be running towards it, usually tweeting or filing down their mobile phones at the same time.

And it also up to journalism educators to assure students that if they do find themselves in trouble - legally, physically or psychologically – there is a whole culture of people who understand, and will support them in doing that "dirty, vital job" (Simons, 2007: 17).

Cultural historiography

It is this mindset that the 'cultural historiographical' approach aims to internalise into first year journalism students. If we go back to the Cultural Studies paradigm, we know we can construct, deconstruct and reconstruct journalism subcultures through industry-specific cultural products, practices, "strange totems" and "taboos" embroiled in industry-specific "tradition".

Here, it's important to remember that "tradition" does not necessarily equate to 'historical accuracy'. Indeed, if we listen to University of Illinois Journalism historian, John Nerone (1990), emphasis on historical 'facts' can indeed be of more hindrance than help to the internalisation of journalism culture:

> *The concentration on facts is dangerous. Facts are important, but they are not what history is about. History is rather a way of thinking about facts (1990: 17)*

Or, as James Carey argues, history, viewed from this perspective, is not "concerned merely with events", but with the "thought within them" (2011: 24).

Cultural historiography aims to encourage reflective analysis of the "thought" within journalism's "memorial narratives", coming from the viewpoints from within the journalism culture itself – in other words, how journalists behave according to their professional ideology. In this sense, it asks students to not only self-identify as journalistic storytellers (as opposed to storytellers of other communication disciplines) from an intensely introspective perspective, but to also recognise past-present relationships.

Cultural historiography starts with the most dominant of journalism's "strange totems" – that of Enlightenment thought. But rather than explore Enlightenment philosophers as the fathers of, what Nerone (2009: 19) mockingly describes as, journalism's "grand narrative" – the one that presents the press as the emergent champion of democracy, and the triumph of liberalism over authoritarianism - students as asked to distil their principles to a set of cultural values and beliefs that continue to have resonance with current professional practice.

So while John Milton may have said a lot of things in his Areopagitica in 1644, his salience lies in his core "thought" when he put pen to paper. In this case, the "thoughts" behind the Areopagitica were in open defiance of Parliament's 1643 Licensing order, making censorship official (or "pushing back that line towards a freer media"):

> *Many that be that complain of divine providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, He gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such as an Adam as he is in the motions (1644/1952: 394 – 395).*

Students are then asked if John Stuart Mill had the same "thought" as Milton when, in pieces such as Liberty of the Press (1825) and On Liberty (1859), he not only advocated defiance of the "magistrate", but also resistance of the "tyranny of the majority":

> *To refuse a hearing of opinion because they are sure that it is false is to assume that their certainty is the same thing as absolute certainty (original italics). All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility. Its condemnation may be allowed to rest on this common argument, not the worse for being common (1825; 1859/ 1962: 68)*

In other words, journalistic storytelling tradition is not only based on facilitating and protecting the public sphere from the "magistrate" (or social and political authority), but it's also about ensuring a diversity of opinion, including opinion that prevailing public opinion deems 'wrong'.

Students do not appear to have a problem with taking on the "transgressive Adam" identity – after all, that's kinda like Australian journalism hero, Peter Greste, right? It's when students are confronted with the idea that protecting diversity of opinion, including opinion that they themselves may deem as 'wrong', that they start to undergo what Mezirow would describe as "perspective transformation" (1997: 5).

To do this, we set a series of controversial viewpoints – animal welfare, same sex marriage, tertiary education regulation, etc., – and ask students to then list all the points that go against their own personal values and beliefs. We then come together, as a group, and critically reflect on how we, as journalistic storytellers, can ensure our professional attitudes are fair and balanced to take in all worldviews, including those we may find abhorrent. We then ask them to tell stories, in written form, using the basic journalistic methodology that fairly, and in a balanced manner, represents all points-of-view, including those that students may find abhorrent. As Mezirow (1995) says, transformative learning usually results from a "disorientating dilemma", triggered by challenging predicament. Here, we are facilitating such a predicament that confronts part of a student's base personal moral understandings (1995: 50).

However, to make the Enlightenment's fundamental principles more relevant to students, we contextualize their development in a specifically Australian "memorial narrative". Unlike the USA or Britain, Australia has never achieved an official, legally binding, "freedom of the press". Originally, the press in the remote gaol of exile functioned purely as a government organ, edited by the governor's own hand. Australia's tradition of press freedom was achieved only after two young British lawyers audaciously smuggled a printing press into Sydney, deliberately neglecting to tell authorities they had started publishing Australia's first newspaper "without authority". William Wentworth and Robert Wardell escaped punishment only because the new legislative council was a mere two years old, and not yet functioning (Walker, 1976: pp 6 – 7). In other words, it was only through the defiance and daring of journalists themselves to "push back that line" that Australia achieved freedom of the press. Such audacity has reverberated throughout the generations of Australian journalists, creating a well-established "memorial narrative" of anti-authoritarianism and a defiant commitment to the facilitation and protection of the public sphere from within the institution of Australian journalism itself (Vine, 2010: 271).

Cultural historiography aims to shift students' frames of reference from being *scholars* looking *into* journalism as an institution, to being *critically reflective practitioners* looking *out* from *within* journalism as a collective of people with similar values and beliefs that have evolved from the Colonial press. Here we aim to create a very real sense of 'belonging' to the journalistic culture. By immersing students into journalism micro-culture's "tradition" at the point of its earliest evolution, they start to view journalism ideology as 'their' ideology, how it grew from 'their' antecedents, and gain a sense of their own responsibilities as conveyers of this same ideology to future generations of the journalists.

This responsibility is established – on the advice of Nerone – through exploring the "past-present relationship" (1990: 18) between Colonial journalists and students' own activities as journalistic storytellers. So, armed with the knowledge that 'their' profession is defined by industry-specific ideological values evolved over time, students are asked to explore the relationship between 'their' antecedents' values and beliefs with those of present. Here students explore the different sets of current codes of conduct that articulate journalism's implicit values and beliefs. These include the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance's Code of Ethics, the Australian Press Council's Statement of Principles, Australian Communication and Media Authority's Codes of Practice, the International Federation of Journalist's Code of Principles. We then distil these to thematic consistencies. As journalism educators, we know common themes (or "strange totems" and "taboos") will be centred around:

Fairness ('transparency'; 'do no harm')

Balance ('right-of-reply')

Accuracy

Freedom and diversity in the Public Sphere

However, to actually change frames of reference from being a scholar of 'Fairness', 'Balance', 'Accuracy' and 'Freedom', to *practising* such values, as Mezirow says, students need to experience them through some sort of "disorientating dilemma" (1995: 50). 'Cultural-historiography' facilitates these "disorientating dilemmas" in the students' very first day of journalism education. This involves, both explicitly and implicitly, treating first year students as practising journalistic storytellers as they walk through the door of their first tutorial. The problem is, however, that these students *are* first years, and cannot be expected to gather and produce stories to professional standards, so opportunities for experiential learning need to be provided in a safe, teacher-guided, environment.

Cultural historiography: teaching ethical storytelling

With this in mind, when the first class finishes with a task that asks students to go out and 'gather' 'news', using the framework of values and beliefs they have just explored. As teachers, we first draw on our extensive links to industry, and 'word up' the external institutions involved – Melbourne's courts, Parliament, City Council, football clubs and news organisations. However, in order for this activity to function as a "disorientating dilemma" that can shift "frames of reference", students remain unaware that they are expected. Students are put in a "challenging predicament" where the must gather 'information' from these various centres of journalistic activity. This involves their engagement with one of journalism's most basic cultural practices – introducing '*who'* they are (RMIT Journalism students); *'where'* they are from (RMIT) and for *'what'* they are going to use the information (a tutorial exercise). In other words, students are practising 'transparency' and 'fairness'. Students are required to ask permission to take a photo of themselves outside the institution, which then forms a critical self-reflection presentation the following week, on the journalistic values and beliefs that underpin the process of gathering information for journalistic storytelling.

This is often a student's first experience of information-gathering, independently learned through real-life experience without teacher supervision – something they will be required to do throughout their three-year degree and in industry. Here, we are challenging their implicit preconceptions that journalists are somehow 'handed' stories to them via more senior journalists, or Public Relations machines. This relates to one of journalism's most fundamental "strange totems" associated with elusive skills in developing a 'nose-for-news', and industry's implicit demand for both friendly and aggressive competitiveness among journalists.

But while competitiveness is certainly an unspoken "strange totem" in journalistic culture, the trait can encourage 'unethical' behaviour. The line, however, between acceptable and unacceptable journalistic behaviour is fuzzy, and difficult to understand without undergoing ethically-challenging experiences. In other words students need to experience competitiveness *as it undergoes the process* of altering from existing as an acceptable "totem" to being an unacceptable "taboo". It is this first tutorial exercise that provides the course's initial "disorientating dilemma".

It is natural that journalism education draws on guest speakers from industry to speak on professional "taboos" such as: covering incidences of suicide; maintaining source anonymity; gathering information from victims of trauma; covering crime, and all within a framework of 'fairness', 'balance' and 'accuracy'. But the practical application of dealing with these theoretical dilemmas - fundamentally between 'fairness' and 'freedom on the public sphere' – is, at heart, skills-based and, according to 'transformative learning theory', students "must" learn to make their "own interpretations" (1997: 5) in order for true understanding to occur.

So it is with these guest speakers that we start to immerse students into the more challenging of journalism's "taboos", related to the coverage of sensitive issues. This means bringing in guest lectures such as representatives from 'Compassionate Friends' (a support group for family members of suicide victims), and run the lectures as if they were press conferences. This means we ask students to research representatives prior to the lecture, and develop question schedules in order to write news stories on return to the following class. Other guests invited to our 'press conferences' include representative from the Hunter Institute of Mental Health, local government representatives, members from the Muslim and Indigenous communities and the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, as well as journalism practitioners themselves. These are particularly sensitive subjects that need to be dealt with carefully. Over the years we have developed strong relationships with such groups, and gain their official 'informed consent' in order the run their lectures as press conferences. There is also a risk students may be adversely affected. We meticulously follow Dart Center (http://dartcenter.org/asia-pacific) and Hunter Institute (http://www.mindframe-media.info) guidelines, warning students of lecture and tutorial content, allowing students to withdraw from participation if necessary and making clear contact details of RMIT and journalism-specific counselling services.

Journalism's professional values around 'fairness', 'accuracy' and 'do no harm' are particularly challenged in the modern move towards digital journalism, where stories are expected to be told immediately, with very little time for legal or ethical considerations. Again, on the advice of Mezirow (1995; 1997), we immerse students into a "disorientating dilemma" between ethical conduct and immediacy, by asking them to update social media during our 'press conferences' on sensitive issues. However, because these *are* first years, and not yet ready to put their storytelling on such sensitive subjects on the public sphere, we set up a G+ closed community, so we can monitor any storytelling that offends industry ethics, or ignores legal considerations.

In classes immediately following each 'press conference', students engage in a debriefing involving critical reflection on how to cover sensitive issues within a framework of journalistic ideology, and are then asked to write a basic news story. These set storytelling exercises, done every week, are handed in at the

class's end. This develops the ability to tell stories within tight deadlines - something industry increasingly requires, particularly in the current digitised environment. Along with their G+ community activity, we sub-edit each story to industry standard, and hand them back to students in the following class with individual (and confidential) feedback. We then start each proceeding class by going over common errors in general, and ask students to integrate feedback into the next storytelling exercise. These formative storytelling exercises build up to final summative assessments in both Semesters 1 and 2.

Cultural historiography: teaching political and legal storytelling.

Immersion into journalism's cultural values and beliefs continues on into the second semester of first year, with trips to the Victorian Parliament, and the Melbourne Magistrates Court, where we organise with these institutions to allow students to join the press galleries in action, and provide presentations on expected protocols of behaviour from journalists.

Meanwhile, students spend several weeks working on formative storytelling tasks based on fictional court cases and political debates, culminating in a final summative assessment involving the telling of real-life court and political story narratives, in both social and traditional media platforms. Here we ask students to draw on the Public Record to tell stories about who is being charged with what, the business interests of politicians, where they live, and their family lives. Again, this is a "disorientating dilemma" for students, between 'privacy' and 'freedom on the public sphere'. Students direct their own learning in this course by choosing on which cases and debates to report, and how far to invade the privacy of public figures. These are then assessed according to their application of contempt of court and absolute privilege theory, and their critical reflection on 'trial by media' and the privacy of political figures.

In 2014, we took experiential learning of the privacy of political figures a step further with the UniPollWatch project, in which RMIT, LaTrobe, Melbourne and Monash journalism programmes collaborated to cover the November State Election online. Although the online coverage was designed for third year students, we wanted to take advantage of the 2014 State Election and integrate it into first-year curriculum as a 'real-life' storytelling experience. As part of the first-year assessment, we introduced a political research-report, designed for the first-year cohort's third-year colleagues to use in their online political coverage. First years were put into groups of three or four, and each group was assigned an electorate on which they were required to conduct in-depth political and socio-economic research. In a vertical teaching situation, and reflecting industry practice, our first year students' more senior 'journalism' colleagues relied on their research, establishing the importance of 'accuracy'. The UniPollWatch site received 66,839 hits during the four-month period it operated. Like all junior journalists, first-year students are not yet ready to make their reportage public. However, in developing research, exposing the private lives of public figures and contributing to a publicly-available news product, immersed them into the real-life risks of journalistic storytelling.

As part of our cultural historiographical approach's focus on experiential learning, we set up twin online learning environments through the G+ community and Twitter. Half of the five-hour tutorial occurred during ABC TV's programs, 'Media Watch' (a weekly 15-minute 'Fifth Estate' critical reflection on issues in the media, on at 9.15pm) and 'QandA' (a 60-minute panel discussion involving politicians and other public figures, moderated by a journalistic host and in front of a studio audience). To our knowledge, this approach is unique, and was an outstanding success in terms of experiential learning that directly contributed to the wider media landscape. Within a framework of journalistic ideology, students were asked to join the twitter conversation on these programs. First-year students' tweets were broadcast on 'QandA' on several occasions and at one stage the #UJCOMM2657 hashtag was trending, meaning our tweets were extensively retweeted, including by high-profile journalists themselves. Again, these tweets formed part of their final assessment, which also included critical reflection on the challenges to journalism's cultural values and beliefs in a social media context.

Outcomes

Theoretically, the cultural historiographical pedagogical approach should start to internalise professional values and beliefs within journalism students. These values and beliefs cannot be 'taught' in the traditional manner, because they are implicit within industry-specific cultural products and in the experience of journalistic storytelling itself. However, according to the Cultural Studies paradigm, if we immerse students into

journalism-specific cultural products and experiences (the "strange totems" and "taboos"), we can, theoretically, start to construct a journalistic sensibility – a sense of belonging to the "interesting tribe" called journalists - within first year students.

We can start to analyse whether this theory works in practice by examining what RMIT describes as the 'Course Experience Survey' (CES). This survey is administered to all students in each course. It gathers both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data measures each course's 'Good Teaching Scores' (GTS) and 'Overall Satisfaction Index' (OSI), and articulates it as a percentage. This is useful for a snapshot of student approval. But it is the more qualitative data that is gathered in these surveys that is useful to educators in assessing core pedagogy and its application.

Qualitative CES data goes back as far as 2013, when the cultural-historiography pedagogical approach was initially strategically applied to first year journalism courses.

At the end of semester 1, 2013, "interest" and "engagement" were thematic consistencies in response: "What were the best aspects of the course?" Almost 28 percent of responses said students were "interested" and "engaged". This was an encouraging result. However, of more interest to whether the 'cultural-historiography' pedagogical approach achieved its intended aims of developing a journalistic sensibility was the more than 50 percent of comments about the course's "relevance" or "usefulness" to the journalistic careers. For example:

> *The course is very closely linked to* **our lives** *as journalists, and what the industry would expect of us (emphasis added).*

However, surveying the same cohort in their second semester, we can see "interest" and "engagement" thematic consistency had decreased to about 12 percent, to be replaced by 60 percent of comments on the course's industry "relevance" and "use". But of more excitement to those hoping 'cultural historiography' can internalise journalism's cultural values and beliefs, 60 percent of comments indicated students were now feeling part of the journalistic community, often using personal pronouns to articulate their place in the wider news culture. For example, in response to the question: "What are the best aspects of the course"?

> *Learning the ethical and legal implications of* ***my operations*** *as a media practitioner (emphasis added).*

> *I have really felt an improvement in* ***my journalistic capabilities*** *in the past semester. While this course has more focus on the regulations of journalism, it allowed* ***me to develop my journalistic style****. (emphasis added).*

> *[The course] makes us feel as if* ***we are already working in the industry****.*

> *[The course] gives us the opportunity to* ***experience what life is like as a journalist.***

> *We're taught to be independent and not rely on our tutor to find stories, just like real journalists.*

The following semester (semester 1, 2014), the same pedagogical approach was applied to a new cohort. Here, "engagement" and "interest" continued as a thematic consistency (20 percent), but now comments relating to "values" and "ethics" and their "relevance" or "use" to their future as journalists began to emerge (30 percent). Further, the same number of comments suggested deliberate critical reflection was occurring. For example:

> *The content is very challenging [and] has really encouraged me to question big concepts and [made] me eager to learn more about tricky scenarios when dealing with ethics.*

Semester 2 of the same year, in which our cultural historiographical pedagogy continuing to underpin the curriculum of the same cohort, saw comments related to "interest" and "engagement" plateau at about 25 percent. And again, about 62 percent, articulated industry relevance. And again, the second semester began to show that students felt 'belonging' to journalistic community, through the use of personal pronouns to articulate their place in the wider news culture. For example, in response to the question: "What are the best aspects of the course?"

> *Applicability of what we learn to* ***our*** *industry (emphasis added).*

> *I can really see how the final two assessments [political and court reportage] are relevant … to what we will be doing in* ***our careers*** *(emphasis added)*

And again, there was evidence of critical reflection:

> *This course made me realise the importance of ethics and regulations in journalism.*

Semester 1, 2015, again started with a new cohort of first-year students, who were this time engaging in

a brand new restructured course, with the added curriculum of real-time online teaching through the G+ closed community, and Twitter. About 20 percent of comments related to "interest" and "engagement". What had increased significantly, however, was the 96 percent of comments related to industry relevance. These results could be directly related to the use of social media to interact with publically broadcast news products and as a storytelling technique:

> *It has been great to physically practice news, rather than just learning the theory behind it … I especially appreciated the weekly QandA sessions, and using Twitter as a media platform.*

> *From the very beginning we are treated as journalists, which inherently implies a sense of respect between students and tutors.*

And this brings us to the last semester in which data was gathered: semester 2, 2015. This was the same cohort as in semester 1, 2015, whose curriculum continued to be underpinned by the cultural historiographical approach, but this time involved field trips to court and parliament, as well as the learning activities via the G+ community and Twitter during the ABCTV news and current affairs programs, QandA and Media Watch. Here we saw CES comments relating to "interest" and "engagement" plateau to just over 23 percent, and comments related to "relevance" and "use" decrease to about 42 percent. But if we look closely, we can see that comments imply students' world-views are continuing their journeys from being scholars of journalism, to being critically reflective practitioners. For example:

> *I have really enjoyed going on excursions to Parliament House and The Magistrate's Court. It was really exciting to be reporting on real stories and writing them in a way that aligns with the legal and ethical issues that we have been learning in class.*

> *That it's highly interactive, going and acting like we are part of the Journalism industry. The work is very interesting to do and makes me motivated to do well (emphasis added).*

> ***We** are all so passionate about what **we** are doing, and the course recognises and encourages that (emphasis added).*

According to the data, the cultural historiographical pedagogical approach can assist in shifting a student's "frame of reference" from being a *scholar* of journalistic storytelling, to being a *critically reflective practitioner*. However, we can see that this takes more than one semester, and it would be interesting to systematically apply such an approach to second and third years. The problem is, however, that within the demands to teach technical skills in coding, CSS, HTML, Tableau, XL and Wordpress, it is difficult to fully immerse students into journalism's history and culture, and how to tell stories within the framework of *their* professional ideology. While first year is designed as an introductory year to develop storytelling skills and knowledge of ethics and regulations, the second year is designed to teach the technical skills, and the third year designed so students apply these skills in professional placements and the RMIT newsroom itself. Within this structure, the best we can hope to do is maintain - indeed, perhaps increase – cultural historiographical values and beliefs in first year.

Part of the problem facing the cultural-historiographical pedagogy is the lack of recognition that journalism history has a place in journalism education. In Australia, journalism history is seen as somewhat outside the education of journalism practitioners, and more relevant to academic, rather than skills-based programs. When the author of this paper proposed a text on journalism history, three separate publishers found that no journalism programme in Australia included a course on journalism history, and thus no demand.

This is maybe because of misperceptions about the relevance of journalism history to its current practice. Currently, Australian journalism history is suffering from a lack coherence. There are disparate groups of biographical and autobiographical material on the rise and fall of media empires, their owners, and a few on the journalism "greats". In other words, we have some research that focuses on names and facts, but this does not take account of ordinary journalists on the newsroom floor, and how the specific, yet all-elusive, journalistic sensibility grew. As Nerone (1990) points out, although names and facts are important to the teaching of history, focusing exclusively on such aspects can be of more detriment than help. The "idiocy of fact", says Nerone, causes boredom and anxiety, and a 'will this be on the test' type mentality (1990: 17). Nerone calls for a different perspective on history, one that approaches names and facts with arguments, one that develops critical thinking about past-present relationships, one that acknowledges 'the past' occurs in everyday activity (such as news-gathering, news-writing and storytelling). It is this that a cultural-historiographical approach strives to achieve through experiential learning, so students themselves discover how journalism's "strange totems" and "taboos" function in practice. The evidence suggests that this approach can indeed internalise a journalistic sensibility to "push back that line" towards a "freer media".

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