Facts & Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism

Faits et Frictions: Débats, pédagogies et pratiques émergentes en journalisme contemporain

volume 1 number 1
tome 1 numéro 1

ÉCOLES J SCHOOLS Canada

J SOURCE THE CANADIAN JOURNALISM PROJECT

automne
autumn 2021

FACTS AND FRICTIONS is published by **J-Schools Canada**, Canada's national association for post-secondary journalism research and education. All content is Open Access and available via **J-Source** at www.j-source.ca, Canada's leading online source for journalism news and resources. For further information visit www.j-schoolscanada.ca.

FAIT ET FRICTIONS est publié par **Écoles-J Canada**, l'association nationale du Canada pour la recherche et l'éducation en journalisme postsecondaire. Tout le contenu est en libre accès et disponible via **J-Source** à www.j-source.ca, la principale source en ligne au Canada d'actualités et de ressources journalistiques. Pour plus d'informations, visitez www.ecolesjcanada.ca.

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WELCOME TO FACTS & FRICTIONS

When J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J-Canada decided to launch an academic journal, one of the first obstacles we encountered was collective writer's block on the name. To conquer this bottleneck, we turned to faculty and students at our 20 member institutions. Among the many suggestions, student Chelsey Devito offered 'Facts & Frictions.' We knew immediately we'd found our name. The title reflects our mission to publish rigorous, well-documented research (facts) that invites debate and discussion from multiple perspectives (frictions). It's also fitting that a student in the midst of transiting from an undergraduate to graduate journalism program chose the name. This reflects our second mission: to grow our discipline through mentorship and peer-reviewed publishing opportunities for emerging scholars and established researchers alike.

You can think of Facts & Frictions as an ongoing road-building project. Journalism has been with us for a very long time. You can read the news in clay tablets that exposed a mayor's wrongdoings in the Mespotamian town of Nugu in 1500 BCE. Yet journalism is still relatively young as a distinct academic discipline, compared to fields such as history or philosophy. Canada's first bachelor's degree in journalism was announced by Carleton University in 1945. Since then, journalism programs have been established by colleges and universities across the land, offering a diverse range of certificates to graduate degrees. As a caucus of the Canadian Communication Association, journalism faculty members have slowly built up a national network through specialized panels at the CCA's annual national conference. In 2018 this annual get-together was formalized into J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J-Canada, a year-round umbrella organization to "promote the value of journalism at home and abroad through journalism education, scholarship and best practices in Canada and around the world."

Facts & Frictions is a direct response to the requests of the new members of J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J-Canada. They wished for practical aids to advance journalism teaching and research in Canada. This included strengthened organizational support for J-Source (produced by J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J-Canada), an online hub for teaching resources and Canadian journalism news. We are very pleased to add Facts & Frictions to the J-Source menu.

On announcing the journal at the J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J Canada 2020 annual meeting, the response was immediate and enthusiastic. Amid many emails of congratulations were offers of volunteer time. From this we have built a strong editorial board that stepped up to draft a mission statement, issue the first call for submissions, shepherd articles into the fold, match articles to external peer reviewers, and assist with editing and proof-reading.

Many thanks are owed to board members Gene Allen (emeritus, X University[1]), Nicole Blanchett (X University), Brad Clark (Mount Royal University), Pascale Dangoisse (University of Ottawa), Amélie Daoust-Boisvert (Concordia University), Brooks Decillia (Mount Royal University), Paul Fontaine (University of the Fraser Valley), Archie Mclean (Mount Royal University) and Gabriela Perdomo (University of Ottawa), along with J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J Canada chair Susan Harada (Carleton University), and J-Source publisher Christopher Waddell (emeritus, Carleton University). Cheryl Vallender (Sheridan College) designed our logo and set up the online portal. We contracted Lindsay Hanna (X University) to create our Open Access website, while Charlotte Nieuwenhuis (University of Ottawa) provided translation services. It is my privilege to serve as volunteer editor-in-chief (University of Regina/First Nations University of Canada) among such an esteemed team of journalists and scholars.

The response to our call for submissions was great enough to require two volumes; additional articles

1 Formerly Ryerson University. See Indigenous Students at X University (2021). Introducing X University: An open letter to the community from Indigenous students. Yellowhead Institute, May 11 https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2021/05/11/welcome-to-x-university-an-open-letter-to-the-community-from-indigenous-students/

will be published in Issue 2 after the New Year. The inaugural issue opens with a crucial journalism topic: freedom of information. Authors Margaret Thompson, Elyse Amend and Luisa Marini of Concordia University's Department of Journalism take a close look at journalists' experiences with federal Access to Information legislation, revealing a "broken system rife with practical and ideological hurdles." Their article, *Canadian Access to Information and Journalism: Obstacles and Opportunities*, concludes with a call for policy makers to consider the many well-researched calls for reform that have been placed before them in recent times.

Next, *Le Passionné, le Surchargé, le Méritocratisé et le Déprimé : quatre subjectivités pour penser la composition de classe des journalistes qué*bécois, by Samuel Lamoureux of the Faculté de communication at Université du Québec à Montréal, examines the lot of journalists as labourers under the current capitalist system. Lamoureux posits four cleverly-named subjectivities—The Passionate, the Overloaded, the Meritocratized and the Depressed—to describe how Quebec's journalists are faring under the dictates of New Managerialism. He argues these conditions lead to the decomposition of journalists as a distinct class of worker, leaving fragmented camps of those who care enough to keep going, those who are overwhelmed by workload, those who benefit from a post-Fordist meritocracy, and those who work in states of disillusionment and despair. While this may seem a depressing scenario, the article is a clarion call for journalists to cast off their chains and reassert themselves as essential providers of the public good.

Our third offering, The Future of Canadian Journalism and Digital Med*ia*, by Matthew Guida of Carleton University, offers a response to Lamoureux by studying an alternative to the corporatized landscape, namely small-scale digital enterprises. To begin, Guida considers the primary force behind legacy media's latest and perhaps most difficult crossroads, the rise of social media and other competing free-of-charge digital platforms. Within this crisis, Guida spies opportunity, noting the internet has made it infinitely easier to share news worldwide in real time, a boon for both traditional and new media. Through interviews with participants in a digital news incubator, Guida seeks answers to the question: "How can we improve business models and digital media startups to allow them to adapt to this new environment?" It is an important question, and one sure to spark further discussions among our readers.

Our 'Research Notes' section looks at a fascinating new initiative. *Journalism Education and Call to Action 86: Exploring Conciliatory and Collaborative Methods of Research-Creation with Indigenous Communities* explores the potential of "slow, conciliatory journalism" as a means "to challenge the problematic norm of damaging negative and inaccurate representations of Indigenous peoples." Aphrodite Salas of Concordia University and Samantha Stevens of Carleton University describe how students and faculty at Concordia University's journalism department are working with Indigenous Clean Energy Social Enterprise and several Indigenous communities to create new ways of doing journalism that "foster long-term, reciprocal relationships built on trust between Indigenous communities and journalists." The ongoing project will ultimately involve creation of new courses and curriculum, a reason for *Facts & Frictions* readers to look forward to follow-up reports.

The issue closes with a review of *The end of CBC?*, a book by Mount Royal University's David Taras and J-Source publisher Christopher Waddell. "There's an old joke that every Canadian has two jobs: their actual job, and running the CBC," writes reviewer Daniel Bernhard. From his years observing and defending CBC as executive director of FRIENDS of Canadian Broadcasting, Bernhard finds the book offers a compelling portrait of CBC's current state, but may undersell at least one vital key to the public broadcaster's survival—more money.

But let us now speak of beginnings, not endings. We invite your future involvement in Facts & Frictions, as volunteers, article contributors and financial supporters of our online publisher, J-Source. We also welcome your suggestions for improvement.

It is my great honour to welcome you to Volume 1, Number 1 of Facts & Frictions.

Patricia W. Elliott
Editor-in-Chief

BIENVENUE À FAITS ET FRICTIONS

Lorsque J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J-Canada a décidé de lancer une revue universitaire, l'un des premiers obstacles que nous avons rencontrés a été le blocage collectif des auteurs quant au nom de la revue. Pour résoudre ce problème, nous nous sommes tournés vers les professeurs et les étudiants de nos 20 établissements membres. Parmi les nombreuses suggestions, l'étudiante Chelsey Devito a proposé « Faits & Frictions. » Nous avons immédiatement su que nous avions trouvé notre nom. Ce titre reflète notre mission, qui consiste à publier des recherches rigoureuses et bien documentées (faits) qui invitent au débat et à la discussion à partir de perspectives multiples (frictions). Il est également approprié qu'une étudiante en pleine transition entre un programme de journalisme de premier cycle et de deuxième cycle ait choisi ce nom. Cela reflète notre deuxième mission : faire progresser notre discipline par le biais du mentorat et des possibilités de publication avec comité de lecture pour les universitaires émergents et les chercheurs établis.

Vous pouvez considérer Faits & Frictions comme un projet de construction de route en cours. Le journalisme est présent depuis très longtemps. Vous pouvez lire les nouvelles sur des tablettes d'argile qui ont révélé les méfaits d'un maire dans la ville mésopotamienne de Nugu datant de 1500 avant notre ère. Pourtant, le journalisme est encore relativement jeune en tant que discipline universitaire distincte, comparé à des domaines comme l'histoire ou la philosophie. Le premier baccalauréat en journalisme au Canada a été annoncé par l'Université Carleton en 1945. Depuis lors, des programmes de journalisme ont été établis par des collèges et des universités à travers le pays, offrant une gamme variée de certificats et de diplômes d'études supérieures. Les professeurs de journalisme membre du caucus de l'Association canadienne de communication ont lentement construit un réseau national par le biais de panels spécialisés lors de la conférence nationale annuelle de l'ACC. En 2018, cette rencontre annuelle a été officialisée sous le nom de J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J Canada, une organisation parapluie fonctionnant toute l'année pour « promouvoir la valeur du journalisme au pays et à l'étranger par le biais de l'enseignement du journalisme, des bourses d'études et des meilleures pratiques au Canada et dans le monde. »

Faits & Frictions est une réponse directe aux demandes des nouveaux membres de J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J-Canada. Ils souhaitaient des aides pratiques pour faire progresser l'enseignement et la recherche en journalisme au Canada. Il s'agissait notamment de renforcer le soutien organisationnel de J-Source (produit par J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J-Canada), un centre en ligne de ressources pédagogiques et d'informations sur le journalisme canadien. Nous sommes très heureux d'ajouter Faits & Frictions au menu de J-Source.

Lorsque nous avons annoncé la création de la revue lors de la réunion annuelle de J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J Canada 2020, la réponse a été immédiate et enthousiaste. Parmi les nombreux courriels de félicitations, il y avait des offres de bénévolat. À partir de là, nous avons mis sur pied un comité de rédaction solide qui s'est chargé de rédiger un énoncé de mission, de lancer le premier appel de soumissions, d'acheminer les articles, de les jumeler à des pairs examinateurs externes et d'aider à la révision et à la correction.

Nous tenons à remercier les membres du conseil d'administration : Gene Allen (émérite, Université X[1]), Nicole Blanchett (Université X), Brad Clark (Université Mount Royal), Pascale Dangoisse (Université d'Ottawa), Amélie Daoust-Boisvert (Université Concordia), Paul Fontaine (Université de la

1 Anciennement nommé Université Ryerson. Voir : Indigenous Students at X University (2021). Introducing X University: An open letter to the community from Indigenous students. Yellowhead Institute, May 11 https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2021/05/11/welcome-to-x-university-an-open-letter-to-the-community-from-indigenous-students/

Vallée du Fraser), Brooks Decillia (Université Mount Royal), Archie Mclean (Université Mount Royal), et Gabriela Perdomo (Université d'Ottawa), ainsi que la présidente de J-Schools Canada/Écoles-J Canada, Susan Harada (Université Carleton), et l'éditeur de J-Source, Christopher Waddell (émérite, Université Carleton). Cheryl Vallender (Collège Sheridan) a conçu notre logo et mis en place le portail en ligne. Nous avons fait appel à Lindsay Hanna (Université X) pour créer notre site Web en libre accès, tandis que Charlotte Nieuwenhuis (Université Carleton) a fourni des services de traduction. C'est un privilège pour moi de servir en tant que rédactrice en chef bénévole (Université de Regina/Université des Premières Nations du Canada) au sein d'une équipe de journalistes et d'universitaires aussi estimés.

La réponse à notre appel à contributions a été suffisamment importante pour nécessiter deux volumes ; des articles supplémentaires seront publiés dans le second numéro après le Nouvel An. Le lancement inaugural s'ouvre sur un sujet crucial du journalisme : la liberté d'information. Les auteurs Margaret Thompson, Elyse Amend et Luisa Marini, du département en journalisme de l'Université Concordia, examinent de près les expériences des journalistes avec la législation fédérale sur l'accès à l'information, révélant un « système brisé, truffé d'obstacles pratiques et idéologiques. » Leur article, intitulé *Canadian Access to Information and Journalism : Obstacles and Opportunities*, se conclut par un appel aux décideurs politiques à prendre en considération les nombreux appels à la réforme bien documentés qui leur ont été adressés ces derniers temps.

Ensuite*, Le Passionné, le Surchargé, le Méritocratisé et le Déprimé : quatre subjectivités pour penser la composition de classe des journalistes québécois*, de Samuel Lamoureux de la Faculté de communication de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, examine le sort des journalistes en tant que travailleurs dans le système capitaliste actuel. Lamoureux pose quatre subjectivités habilement nommées -Le passionné, le surchargé, le méritocratisé et le déprimé- pour décrire comment les journalistes québécois se débrouillent sous les diktats du nouveau managérialisme. Il soutient que ces conditions conduisent à la décomposition des journalistes en tant que classe distincte de travailleurs, laissant la fragmentation des camps, de ceux qui se soucient suffisamment de continuer, ceux qui sont submergés par la charge de travail, ceux qui bénéficient d'une méritocratie post-fordiste, et ceux qui travaillent dans des états de désillusion et de désespoir. Bien que ce scénario puisse sembler déprimant, l'article est un appel au clairon pour que les journalistes se débarrassent de leurs chaînes et se réaffirment en tant que fournisseurs essentiels du bien public.

Notre troisième article, *The Future of Canadian Journalism and Digital Media*, de Matthew Guida de l'Université Carleton, offre une réponse à Lamoureux en étudiant une alternative au paysage corporatiste, à savoir les petites entreprises numériques. Pour commencer, Guida se penche sur la force principale derrière notre paysage médiatique et peut-être le plus difficile carrefour des médias traditionnels, la montée des médias sociaux et d'autres plateformes numériques gratuites concurrentes. Dans cette crise, Guida repère des opportunités, en notant qu'Internet a rendu infiniment plus facile le partage des nouvelles dans le monde entier en temps réel, une aubaine pour les médias traditionnels et nouveaux. Par le biais d'entretiens avec des participants à un incubateur de nouvelles numériques, Guida cherche des réponses à la question suivante : « Comment améliorer les modèles économiques et les innovations des médias numériques pour leur permettre de s›adapter à ce nouvel environnement ? » C'est une question importante, qui ne manquera pas de susciter de nouvelles discussions parmi nos lecteurs.

Notre section « Notes de recherche » se penche sur une nouvelle initiative fascinante. *Journalism Education and Call to Action 86 : Exploring Conciliatory and Collaborative Methods of Research-Creation with Indigenous Communities* explore le potentiel d'un « journalisme lent et conciliant » comme moyen de « remettre en question la norme problématique des représentations négatives et inexactes des peuples autochtones. » Aphrodite Salas, de l'Université Concordia, et Samantha Stevens, de l'Université Carleton, décrivent comment des étudiants et des professeurs du département de journalisme de l'Université Concordia travaillent avec *l'Indigenous Clean Energy Social Enterprise* et plusieurs communautés autochtones pour créer de nouvelles façons de faire du journalisme qui « favorisent des relations réciproques à long terme fondées sur la confiance entre les communautés autochtones et les journalistes. » Le projet en cours impliquera à terme la création de nouveaux cours et programmes d'études, une raison pour les lecteurs de Faits & Frictions d'attendre avec impatience les rapports de suivi.

Le numéro se termine par une critique de *The end of CBC ?*, un livre de David Taras, de l'Université Mount Royal, et de Christopher Waddell, éditeur de J-Source. « Une vieille blague dit que chaque Canadien a deux emplois : son emploi réel et celui de dirigeant de la SRC (CBC) », écrit le critique Daniel Bernhard. Grâce à ses années d'observation et de défense à la SRC en tant que directeur exécutif de FRIENDS of Canadian Broadcasting, Bernhard trouve que le livre offre un portrait convaincant de l'état actuel de la SRC, mais qu'il pourrait sous-estimer au moins une clé essentielle à la survie du diffuseur public - plus d'argent.

Mais parlons maintenant de commencements, et non de fins. Nous vous invitons à participer à Faits & Frictions à l'avenir, en tant que bénévoles, contributeurs d'articles et soutiens financiers de notre éditeur en ligne, J-Source. Vos suggestions d'amélioration sont également les bienvenues.

J'ai le grand honneur de vous accueillir dans le volume 1, numéro 1 de Faits & Frictions.

Patricia W. Elliott
Rédactrice en chef

Canadian Access to Information and Journalism: Obstacles and Opportunities

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Abstract

The Canadian federal Access to Information Act (ATIA) is an essential yet inadequate piece of legislation that, in theory, helps facilitate democratic engagement. Making use of this legislation is an essential way for journalists to hold power to account; to provide the public with newsworthy information; to illuminate government officials' decision-making processes; to verify information gained from other sources; and to provide context for their audiences. However, multiple challenges involved in navigating the federal ATI system pose significant setbacks for journalists. As a result, ATI is not being used to its fullest extent, the quality of journalism being produced is hampered by incomplete information, and the ability of citizens to make informed choices in their lives and in the political sphere is obstructed. Through interviews with 17 Canadian journalists, this research investigates the benefits and barriers federal ATI poses to their work. Its results point to a broken system rife with practical and ideological hurdles that have caused journalists to use it as a "last resort," or have motivated them to take an information advocacy approach in their reporting.

Keywords: freedom of information, access to information, investigative journalism

Résumé

L'accès à l'information au Canada et Journalisme : Obstacles et opportunités

La loi sur l'accès à l'information (LAI) est un texte législatif essentiel mais inadéquat qui, en théorie, devrait contribuer à faciliter la participation au processus démocratique. Le recours à cette loi est un moyen essentiel pour les journalistes de contraindre le gouvernement à rendre des comptes, de fournir au public de l'information pertinente, d'éclairer les processus décisionnels des représentants du gouvernement, de vérifier les informations obtenues à partir d'autres sources et de fournir un contexte à leur auditoire. Cependant, les nombreuses difficultés rencontrées lors de l'utilisation du système fédéral d'accès à l'information constituent des obstacles importants pour les journalistes. Ainsi, la LAI n'est pas utilisée dans toute sa plénitude et la qualité du contenu journalistique est limitée par de l'information incomplète ce qui nuit à la prise de décisions éclairées par les citoyens sur les enjeux qui les affectent au quotidien. Cette recherche examine, par le biais d'entrevues avec 17 journalistes canadiens, les avantages et les obstacles que la LAI pose à leurs pratiques de travail. Ses conclusions mettent en évidence un système défaillant se caractérisant par des obstacles pratiques et idéologiques qui ont motivé les journalistes à ne l'utiliser qu'en « dernier recours » ou les ont incités à opter pour une approche axée sur la défense de l'information dans leur reportages.

Mots clés : liberté d'information, accès à l'information, journalisme d'investigation

The Access to Information Act (ATIA) is Canada's freedom of information law. It is a piece of legislation that grants any Canadian citizen or permanent resident the right to access government information. The purpose of the act is "to enhance the accountability and transparency of federal institutions in order to promote an open and democratic society and to enable public debate on the conduct of those institutions" (Government of Canada, 2021). The Canadian ATIA was implemented in 1983, and was seen then as a major accomplishment on the global stage. A country's adoption of a Freedom of Information (FOI) law continues to be perceived as an indicator of a healthy democracy today (Roberts, 2006a).

However, the existence of these laws belies their functional inadequacies. In Canada, critiques of the federal Access to Information (ATI) system have included lengthy delays, heavily redacted information, government officials meddling in request responses that are outside their jurisdiction, and high fees (Vallance-Jones, 2017; Roberts, 2006a; Appelgren & Salverría, 2018). Due to outdated laws and regulations, the continuing evolution of technology and digital data, and increased governmental partnerships with the private sector, the areas beyond the reach of ATI laws have multiplied (Information Commissioner of Canada, 2015). This has resulted in the ATIA widely being described as stagnant and out of touch (Gingras, 2012; Kazmierski, 2016). The chronology of the ATIA shows that government officials have largely neglected to modernize the act in a satisfactory manner. Canada was once a world leader in information access, yet despite global momentum towards increased government transparency, Canada's ranking has steadily fallen. As of 2020, Canada's FOI laws were ranked 52nd in the world (Center for Law and Democracy, 2020).

As recently as January 2021, a report from the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada lamented the dire state of the federal ATI system. In it, commissioner Caroline Maynard notes that while the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis has "highlighted the weak links in the federal access to information regime," the system has been in a state of disarray for many years (Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada, 2021, p. 5). Maynard writes, "The access regime had already entered a critical phase before the pandemic and *could soon be beyond repair* if certain serious problems are not resolved" (emphasis added) (Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada, 2021, p. 5).

This research attempts to understand journalists' experiences of navigating the Canadian federal ATI system to further their reporting. It also aims to situate Canadian journalists within the broad set of influences that impact the intersection of the ATIA and journalistic practice. To address these issues, this study conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 17 Canadian journalists regarding their professional experience using federal ATI.[1] The data obtained during these interviews was coded and analyzed according to recurring themes that emerged out of the data itself.

Beyond understanding the challenges that journalists face while navigating the ATIA, this study also aims to contribute to a larger conversation on the importance of journalism and civic responsibility, as well as contribute to advocacy efforts for improved FOI legislation. Drawing on these ideas, this study poses the questions: How does federal ATI function for journalists in Canada? How is it useful for their reporting? What are the barriers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before the ATIA came into force in 1983, the Canadian government was responsible for deciding what information could be made available without any recourse from the public. Larsen and Walby (2012) note:

> The ATIA offered the only challenge other than the courts to the otherwise absolute powers of the executive branch to determine which records remain confidential. It did so by forcing the release of requested information based on the law, rather than depending on the goodwill or political agenda of government officials. (p. 41)

1 This research is part of a larger MA thesis project by co-author Margaret Thompson.

On the global stage, Canada was one of the first countries to implement such a law, which fundamentally changed the way the Canadian public could engage with government information. Anne-Marie Gingras (2012) writes "information is considered vital to democracy" (p. 223) and reminds the reader of the 1997 Dagg v. Canada case (Minister of Finance), where Justice LaForest wrote:

> The overarching purpose of access to information legislation is to facilitate democracy by helping to ensure that citizens have the information required to participate meaningfully in the democratic process and that politicians and bureaucrats remain accountable to the citizenry. (Dagg v. Canada (Minister of Finance) [1997] 2 SCR 403, as cited in Gingras 2012).

There are three main ways FOI laws support democracy: (1) they are a foundational element in the embodiment of other fundamental human and democratic rights; (2) they help journalists in their 'watchdog' role of holding power to account (Carroll, 2016); and (3) they fortify the 'pro-democratic' role information plays in Canadian society.

Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects fundamental rights such as the freedom of thought, belief and expression. This section also applies to the press: "Since the media are an important means for communicating thoughts and ideas, the Charter protects the right of the press and other media to speak out" (Government of Canada, 2019c). Despite being instrumental in the expression of these fundamental rights, the right to access government information is not protected under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The argument FOI should be considered a fundamental right was briefly discussed in the media prior to the implementation of the ATIA nearly 40 years ago. In a 1980 *Globe and Mail* article, Harry Kopyto quotes the Canadian Bar Association as saying, "Access to information is a prerequisite to other fundamental rights and freedoms and, without such access, our other rights lose much of their meaning" (Kopyto, 1980). Yet, as Larsen and Walby (2012) note, "ATI was not enshrined as a Charter right of citizens that would be forever guaranteed. Instead, and perhaps as a result, the law has been resisted and undermined by successive governments since it was introduced" (p. 38). Others (e.g. Birkinshaw, 2006; Bishop, 2012) claim FOI laws should be protected as a human right alongside freedom of speech and access to justice. Birkinshaw (2006), for example, asserts FOI laws are primarily "instrumental in realizing other human rights" and, secondarily, "intrinsically important in establishing what governments do on our behalf and in our name" (p. 179).

One of the main ways politicians and bureaucrats are held accountable to the citizenry is through the profession of journalism in general, and investigative journalism in particular. The press as an institution is intended to act as a "watchdog" on those in power (Carroll, 2016). In the western world, journalists are united in their professional identity through a commitment to public service, objectivity, and autonomous, ethical and immediate reporting (Deuze, 2005). According to Thomas Hanitzsch (2011), the 'detached watchdog' is "the most 'prototypical' milieu of the western journalist" (p. 485). This is to say, the 'watchdog' role that journalism plays — to hold government and business elites to account — is one of the most important roles and is a central component to journalism in the western world. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) note "the purpose of the watchdog role also extends beyond simply making the management and execution of power transparent, to making known and understood the effects of that power" (p. 174). If authority figures go unchecked, relevant information about how the country is being governed is not made available to the public. So, the speed and quality of documents received as a result of an ATI request is of unique importance to journalists and to the public interest. Without the ability to access meaningful government information in a timely manner, journalists are seriously impeded from performing their professional duties and fulfilling the watchdog role.

The role information plays in a Canadian democracy is a central issue for journalists who use the ATIA to further their reporting. According to Gingras (2012), there is an "enduring tension"

(p. 222) between the democratic purpose of information—which increases transparency and facilitates democratic engagement—and information's strategic value, which is often associated with propaganda and political manipulation. These roles exist alongside each other, at once motivating political officials to advocate for increased transparency, while simultaneously building and benefiting from government structures, which increases secrecy. One of the difficulties of information being used for strategic purposes is that citizens are left in the dark and can potentially be manipulated by their political representatives.

According to journalist Thomas Rohner, the government's tendency towards information control is widespread and problematic. "Governments often wage a war on information control, and they generally win all sorts of times, untold times, because we literally don't know," he says (T. Rohner, personal communication, August 29, 2019). So, the accuracy and completeness of government documents, contextualized and disseminated to the public is essential for citizens to make meaningful fact-based choices in their lives. The ATIA theoretically supports the 'pro-democracy' role of information by allowing citizen and journalists to access information of their choosing. Although there are several important exemptions to ATI, such as documents related to national security and personal privacy, the legal right of journalists to pull information from the government theoretically helps to ensure that the 'pro-democracy' role of information is fortified.

Throughout the years, there have been repeated calls for reform of the ATIA. Susan Legault, Information Commissioner from 2009-2018, stated in a public address: "In 2013 the federal *Access to Information Act* will be 30 years old. Since 1977 there have been about 30 attempts—all fruitless—to reform or modernize it" (Parliament of Canada, 2012). Indeed, following numerous 2015 election campaign promises to modernize the federal ATI system, Justin Trudeau's Liberal government introduced Bill C-58, *An Act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*, which was touted as the first major reform to the ATIA since its inception. Despite becoming law on June 21, 2019, many critics have noted the changes do little to improve the federal system—and may even present additional barriers to access and transparency. For example, cabinet confidences continue to be excluded, and the Information Commissioner does not have order making powers to the extent that was promised.

FOI laws are difficult to update for several reasons. In Canada, these reasons include: politicians presenting FOI laws as a virtue signal to the public with little follow through for improvement (Schudson, 2015; Worthy, 2017; Gingras 2012); private entities increasingly being called on to complete government functions (Roberts, 2006a; Jordan, 2017); challenges some government officials experience in respecting the act while working under conditions that favour government secrecy (Roberts, 2006b; Savoie, 2003; Larsen & Walby; 2012); the evolution of technology (Roberts, 2006a; Larsen & Walby, 2012); and influences from the general public's expectation of accountability and transparency (Appelgren & Salverria, 2018; Schudson 2015). The challenges posed by these variables fall outside the realm of the practical considerations that journalists encounter daily, yet they impact the ability of journalists to access government information for their reporting. These factors influence the effectiveness of the ATIA and help to situate Canadian journalists fighting for improved government transparency in a larger context.

Some literature points to specific leading political parties in Canada influencing how easily government information can be accessed through the ATI system. Although there are numerous examples of every lead political party limiting government transparency since the ATIA was implemented, Stephen Harper's Conservative government provides some recent, noteworthy examples.

In spite of stepping into the Prime Minister's office with government transparency as a campaign promise, Stephen Harper's Conservatives continued to tighten their grip on the potential release of government information to the public (Larsen & Walby, 2012, p. 3). The Harper government accomplished this through informal practices, mainly by using the secure instant messaging feature of Blackberry phones, the development of an oral culture, and the destruction of documents (Gingras, 2012, p. 234).

Also, under Harper's leadership, some MPs were found to have deliberately and illegally held back information from the public and to have destroyed documents, rather than have them be admissible to public request under the Act (Gingras, 2012, p 234). Journalist Justin Ling states that while this happened under Harper's watch and in a general culture of increased government secrecy, these were isolated incidents and not unique to the Harper government (personal communication, September 3, 2019).

It is well known that many journalists find engaging with the Canadian ATI system a challenging task. However, we were unable to identify contributions in the academic literature that systematically collected and analyzed their experiences. The purpose of this research was thus two-fold. First, it was to begin to understand the experiences of journalists who navigate the ATI system as part of their reporting. Journalist accounts indicate they engage with the ATIA with an implicit understanding and acceptance of challenges inherent to the system. Bringing these issues to light in a systematic and critical way allows for deeper insight and analysis of how some of the democratically-motivated work that journalists do is influenced by government information laws.

Secondly, this study aims to situate Canadian journalists within the myriad of influences that impact the intersection of journalistic practice and the ATIA. Although the express purpose of the interviews was to evaluate the journalists' direct experience navigating the federal ATI system, the interviewees inevitably offered their thoughts and reflections on issues surrounding the ATIA. Including this information in the study allows for an enriched conversation about contemporary Canadian journalistic practice.

METHODS

This research was guided by the following questions: How does the federal ATI system function for journalists? How is it useful for their reporting? What are the barriers?

It is important to note that Canadian journalists routinely use municipal, provincial, and territorial Freedom of Information systems, as well as FOI systems in other countries to further their reporting. Considering these interconnected FOI systems and their different contexts and implications would have reached far outside the scope of this research, this article exclusively focuses on Canada's federal Access to Information regime to establish a clear and limited scope and to present a more cohesive understanding of journalists' experiences across the country.

To answer the research questions, one-on-one telephone interviews with 17 Canadian journalists were conducted between August 27 and September 12, 2019. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. A semi-structured design with open-ended interview questions was chosen over a fully-structured script, as some research suggests an unstructured approach may lead to the data-densest interviews (Corbin & Morse, 2003, as cited in Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The study participants were selected through a mix of targeted and snowball sampling. Canadian journalists who were well-known for their ATI-based reporting were targeted directly. These journalists were then asked for suggestions about who else might be appropriate to speak with on the subject. All participants in this study worked for major Canadian news organizations on a full-time (14) or freelance (3) basis. Each journalist regularly filed access to information requests for the purpose of their reporting, however the number of requests that qualified 'regular filing' was determined by the journalists themselves, in relation to their needs as a reporter, or their position in a news organization. While 11 of the study participants agreed to be identified by name, six journalists requested they remain anonymous (see Table 1). This study is limited by prioritizing journalists' experiences from large urban centers, over rural or local journalists. Despite contacting journalists from across the country during the initial recruitment process, several of the interviewees were based in Ottawa and Toronto and most other interviewees were from large urban centers. Although journalists regularly make use of the various FOI systems in Canada, use of the federal system is presumed to be more prominent among journalists based in the nation's political and economic centers due to the topics and types of stories they report on.

Interviews were transcribed for thematic analysis, during which the data was broken apart and coded according to distinct concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007). The data was organized according to themes that emerged out of a thematic coding method adapted from Corbin and Strauss' grounded theory approach (1998). This involved the systematic and constant comparison of data with categories that emerged from the data itself. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This was followed by further analysis of the relationships between these concepts, which were then grouped together according to these relationships, and then eventually formalized into major themes and subthemes.

FINDINGS

Following the thematic analysis, two significant major themes, each with a number of sub-themes, emerged from the interview data: (1) ATI and Journalists' Motivations, and (2) Journalists and ATI-Based Challenges.

Main Theme 1: ATI and Journalists' Motivations

Understanding what motivates a journalist to file an ATI request is significant because it indicates how important the ability to access government information is to their journalistic practice. It is not simply a tool that journalists sometimes use; it is an essential resource that is required for journalists to do their jobs and to produce quality original reporting (Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, 2015). Without access to government information, journalists are limited in their ability to expose government decision-making processes, failures and inadequacies that are crucial for the Canadian public to accurately understand the world around them and to make informed decisions about their lives and their political representation. A significant finding that emerged through the interviews is that most journalists considered the information gained from an ATI request as unattainable in any other way. However, while accessing government information may be essential to good journalism, a majority of interviewees noted the challenges inherent in navigating the ATI system and generally low success rates at obtaining relevant information often make requests a last resort in their reporting practices. For example, Jim Rankin, a data journalist for the *Toronto Star,* said:

> The golden rule for me, and for others who do this kind of stuff, is that it is your last resort. You want to do as much as possible before you go the formal route, because once you go the formal route, the systems are not perfect—some people have described them as broken. If you can get it through other means, you will get it quicker. (personal communication, September 4, 2019)

Even so, having the right to request documents from the government was largely perceived as giving a journalist the freedom to work on original stories and to pursue issues that are of public interest on their own terms. To this point, one anonymous participant noted, "The thing about an ATI-driven story is that I no longer have to play with a sort of [government] PR system. I have the story. Their choice now is whether they comment on it and whether or not they comment by my deadline" (Journalist F, personal communication, August 30, 2019).

Sub-theme 1.1: Perceived Roles

The role that journalists perceive themselves to be fulfilling is meaningful because it points to a deeper layer of motivation that goes beyond the practice of filing ATI requests. This theme indicates the importance of a properly-functioning government information law does not stop at a basic practical level; it also contributes to journalists reaching towards and participating in the democratic process. This theme emerged when multiple participants spoke about whether they include details of their ATI requests in their stories for the audience to understand. Examples of these details include simply stating that some of the information presented in the story was gathered through a request, to writing about the problems encountered along the way to gaining access, such as delays, redactions, and legal action.

This study revealed that the motivations journalists have for using ATI indicate how journalists conceive of their work in the bigger picture. There were two prominent ideas among the interviewees. The first group sees their role as fulfilling the requirements for being a "good journalist." This group was more inclined to share information obtained through ATI with their audiences to be transparent about their sources and their research processes, as well as to let the readers decide for themselves what to make of the information. The second main group conceived their role as being inherently activistic, and connected the practice of journalism to meaningful democratic action and maintaining a strong democracy. It is important to distinguish between journalists in this study who see journalism itself as activism (with the bias of accountability and pro-democracy) and others in the field who fuse the goals of activism and journalism to produce work that is intended to sway the audience. This latter type of journalism veers dangerously close to editorializing and may be accused of being 'fake news' (Adhikari, 2017).

For those who viewed their role as being a "good journalist," the specific rationales for reporting on the ATI request itself in a story include providing background and context for readers, being transparent about information sources, and showing the information took work to obtain, which implies a value of "good journalism." Journalist F stated it is important to consider the reader as the first priority and only mention information that would be meaningful to them. According to this journalist, the public is most often concerned about the information itself, and not how it has been obtained, which should be taken into consideration during story production and publication.

Those in the second group who viewed their role as an intersection of journalist-activist understood "good journalism" to be connected to a strong democracy. Participants who fell into this group listed a number of specific motivations for mentioning ATI request information in their stories, including: (1) journalism is inherently activism; (2) the importance of showing the public the inner happenings of how government decisions are made; (3) good journalism holds the government to account; and (4) showing journalists play a role in democracy.

For Thomas Rohner, a freelance investigative journalist based in Iqaluit, Nunavut, motivation for including such details goes beyond accommodating the reader's interest. He stated:

> I think that degree of resistance [of the government] to release information is a huge part of those stories; it is a huge part of the struggle to have a more open and fair society. So, in a way, *that is* the story, even if it is not the most exciting part of the story. (personal communication, August 29, 2019)

On the issue of maintaining "neutrality" in reporting on ATI-issues, he further reflected, "I don't believe in the objectivity of journalism…I think that what journalism has always been biased towards is the people—it is in the public interest" (personal communication, August 29, 2019). Similarly, one participant said it is essential that journalists move away from the traditional way of thinking—that objectivity is achievable, that they don't have a stake in the game. He encouraged journalists to see the bigger picture and their role in it, namely to hold the government to account (D. Beeby, personal communication, August 27, 2019).

For traditionally-minded journalists, 'objectivity' requires a balanced story that reports the facts and lets the reader decide for themselves what to make of the situation. Such journalists "are least likely to advocate for social change, influence public opinion and set the political agenda" (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 485). However, according to activism-inclined journalists, this perspective is problematic. For them, there is no such thing as a neutral position or conveying a story with objectivity. Each journalist carries their own set of personal biases and works within a news agency with its own general bias. This inherently affects what stories are told and how they are expressed. In addition, as this group of journalists noted, journalism itself is biased towards accountability. For these journalists, embracing the role of an activist or advocate is part of the job. Sharing the details of an ATI request with the audience adds a deeper layer to the story being told. It explicitly communicates to the reader to what extent the government is following through on their democratic responsibilities, especially transparency itself.

While the roles participating journalists perceive themselves as fulfilling do not practically affect how or why they use the ATI system, these motivations are sometimes reflected in how they engage with their audience. This indicates that if a journalist is motivated by a sense of activism or advocacy, they are more likely to advocate for their experience with ATI to be included in their stories. The traditional idea that journalists should somehow present unbiased information while remaining ‘invisible’ in the story itself is an idea that some journalists oppose. Although all interviewees agree transparency is important, the participants motivated by a sense of information advocacy were invested in sharing such details to communicate a deeper storyline about government transparency in the service of democratic values.

Main Theme 2: Journalists and ATI-Based Challenges

Based on previous accounts about the challenges journalists face while navigating ATI, it was anticipated participants would have encountered several obstacles. Every journalist interviewed as part of this study shared several examples of challenges they experienced. Chronicling and understanding these challenges shows specifically how and at which points journalism is compromised by a poorly-functioning ATI system. Detailing the challenges also illuminates a potential path forward to finding solutions.

Upon filing an ATI request, journalists chorused the same complaints: excessive delays, redactions, and a backlogged complaints process. This set of challenges is especially important because these are the primary practical challenges that affect the quality of reporting. *Toronto Star* labour reporter Sara Mojtehedzadeh stated, “I can’t rely on [the ATIA], really, to accomplish anything except to show how obstructive the government can be” (personal communication, August 28, 2019). Depending on the circumstance, the challenges also extend into the complaints process, which is severely backlogged (J. Ling, personal communication, September 3, 2019). Other noted examples of challenges include the fact that standard timelines and habitual delays are a disadvantage for a fast-paced news cycle. In this case, it is not just that the system isn’t working as it should; it is that even if the system works well, it is not always advantageous for journalists working on tight deadlines.

Sub-theme 2.1: Secrecy and Lack of Accountability

The specific challenges journalists face represents the numerous practical ways reporting is inhibited by an improperly functioning ATI system. They can be attributed to inferior legislation and a sense of adversarialism, which is “typical of a government-wide pattern of resistance to the requirements of the ATIA” (Roberts 2006a). However, these same challenges also point to an additional, underlying concern: the idea that governments tend toward secrecy was repeatedly stated by many participants as a general explanation for why the ATIA has stagnated, and as an explanation for why some government departments and agencies are more difficult to obtain information from than others. This sub-theme helps bring to light a deeper and less tangible force that gives rise to significant challenges to functioning ATI legislation and administration. This theme was mentioned directly by 13 interview participants and indirectly mentioned by the remaining four interviewees, as a means of explaining the attitudes and cultures within the government that give rise to the day-to-day challenges they face while navigating ATI.

One interviewee stated she anticipates a problematic response to an ATI request about 80% of the time. These responses include “the file’s not there, it’s going to take months and months, it’s going to cost a lot of money, or they have nothing that’s met the description of what I’ve requested” (J. Ireton, personal communication, September 6, 2019). In regard to the federal ATI system, one interview participant said, “it is the worst of the systems in terms of transparency, procedures and timeline. There are long waits in long lines you don’t know what is going on” (J. Rankin, personal communication, September 4, 2019). He followed up with a story about a request to the RCMP in

2014 about missing and murdered Indigenous women:

> I didn't get anything for 17 months. When they did finally release something to me it was over 2,000 pages in a PDF. It was a ridiculously big document that took forever to open and it was heavily redacted...I made the request, knowing that I probably was not going to get [the information I requested]. But if you don't ask, then you don't know. (personal communication, September 4, 2019)

All interviewees, either directly or indirectly, connected the notion that governments tend towards secrecy to an explanation for the practical resistance they face while attempting to access information. However, this tendency is only one of a few major factors that are influential for journalists using ATI. Journalists were also asked to reflect on how accessing government information has changed over the course of their careers—the changes they have witnessed over time in the newsroom and in the government also provide an explanation for the challenges they face.

Sub-theme 2.2: Changes in the Newsroom Over Time

Of the 17 interviewees, 13 journalists noted a decline in financial resources tied to larger trends in the news media industry, which has resulted in less staff working under more pressure in Canadian newsrooms today. When combined with the challenges associated with navigating ATI, several problems emerge.

According to a participant who wished to remain anonymous, the confluence of reduced resources, increased pressure to produce, and the challenges of navigating the ATI system has resulted in an increase in simple news stories that require less research. "I think that there's a greater need for journalists to do things that are a little bit more complicated and more complex," he stated (Journalist F, personal communication, August 30, 2019). Such stories often cannot be summed up in a tweet, yet the pressure created by strained resources to constantly produce is prohibitive to a journalists' ability to follow up on stories that require more extensive research.

Although it may have become more difficult for journalists to file ATI requests given the ongoing financial, human resources, and time-related strains on the news industry, the evolution of technology and access to the internet has made an aspect of filing much easier and more accessible. Prior to a government initiative to move the request system online originally discussed in mid-2000, filing an ATI request had to be done through the mail (Roberts, 2006b). One participant noted: "It (online systems) makes the research process easier to accomplish and I think it is a positive thing for filing requests and researching the stories that have come out from requests" (D. Beeby, personal communication, August 27, 2019).

Sub-theme 2.3: Changes in the Government Over Time

The evolution of technology and the increased accessibility of the internet has not only positively affected the research work done in newsrooms (Krotoski, 2011); it has also positively affected how journalists engage with the government, on a practical level. Journalists were asked whether changes in government over time have had any influence on their ability to effectively use the ATI system as a reliable source for their reporting. The combined positive comments from interviewees were attributed to the improvement of technology and the extent to which the internet is widely available. Because of a federal government initiative to move the ATI request interface online, journalists stated they have an easier time filing with some government agencies, although others still require a letter and a cheque to be sent in the mail. A second positive change noted by some journalists was the government directive to not collect fees for ATI requests beyond the initial $5 fee per new request (Government of Canada, 2016).

In terms of transparency and ease of meaningful access to information overall, however, interviewees overwhelmingly said the political party in power at a given time has made little difference in the ability of the government to administer the ATIA effectively. One interviewee, who started working as a journalist just as the

ATIA was coming into effect in the early 1980s, commented on how he and other journalists have used it over the course of more than three decades of reporting. He recalled that initially, the boundaries of the law hadn't been tested, so bureaucrats were more inclined to lean towards transparency:

> I look back on the 80s as the Golden Age of Access to Information. Even though we would not have said that at the time, there were many more successes than failures…As time went on, the bureaucrats understood where the loopholes were, what they could get away with. There were a lot more court decisions about what they could get away with [not provide access to] and I think they became more emboldened. I think we, as journalists, lost more of those fights and I think it was a steady decline from there on. (D. Beeby, personal communication, August 27, 2019)

As the ATIA has been in effect for approximately 38 years, there was a trend noted among interviewees that acknowledged it has stagnated and is therefore worse now under the current Liberal leadership than under previous governments. One participant commented on the recent overall decline of government transparency. When comparing current Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to his Conservative predecessor Stephen Harper, Justin Ling said government transparency was incidentally better under Harper: "[It] wasn't a product of the fact the Harper government made [ATI] easier to use. That was a product of the fact that [the ATI system] has just slid further into disrepair in time" (J. Ling, personal communication, September 3, 2019). According to these journalists, government policies haven't actively made the ATI system worse. Rather, the ATIA has stagnated and, as such, has slid further out of touch with Canadian society in general, and journalists' needs in particular. According to one interviewee, "[The Act] was born before the digital age, before text message, before email. [Politicians] have been tinkering with [the ATIA], but it doesn't reflect the reality of government records today" (D. Beeby, personal communication, August 27, 2019). In response to the increase of practical challenges over the years, the same participant said, "At the end of my career I would be very selective about what to complain about because I knew it would often be years before I would get any type of response from the Information Commissioner, and sometimes that response would be a rejection" (personal communication, August 27, 2019). Another interviewee added:

> It frustrates me that I can go online to make an ATI request for the RCMP, but not for Public Safety Canada, which is the federal agency that oversees the RCMP. I've emailed and called Public Safety Canada over the years and asked them, 'Why are you still not online? Why do I still need to type out a letter, print it out, put it in an envelope and put a stamp on it, and write a $5 cheque in that envelope?' And they've never provided me with a clear answer on that. (Journalist E, personal communication, August 28, 2019)

Another main problem that was negatively attributed to the evolution of Canadian government over time was the discourse surrounding proactive disclosure and the fear it may eventually eclipse the ATI system. Although proactive disclosure of government information performs a similar role as a well-functioning ATI system—by releasing government information to the public—they are fundamentally different concepts. The ATIA is a law that guarantees citizens a right to access information, whereas proactive disclosure is a government initiative to make data and information easily available to the public. One participant stated proactive disclosure "sounds like a great idea, but…governments know that these [documents] are going to be public – of course they are going to frame them, word them carefully. It is not a genuine document. It is more publicity and propaganda of the government" (D. Beeby, personal communication, August 27, 2019). Regarding access to government information through proactive disclosure, one interviewee said information is "sanitized, they don't really release much, and there are a lot more redactions, so it has become less useful" (B.

Curry, personal communication, September 3, 2019). Another interviewee said, "What's actually worse and what is really scary to me, is that [the government] is trying to use proactive disclosure as a replacement for Access to Information, which is very dangerous, because what they are doing is basically manicuring [documents] for public release... anyone who uses ATIP can tell you it's one of the most useless documents" (J. Ling, personal communication, September 3, 2019).

Although the emergence of proactive disclosure was warily embraced by interviewees—it was generally acknowledged as a logical advancement and an important initiative—participants generally agreed it will not likely prove to be a quality source of information contributing to investigative journalism, due to the likelihood of banal, sanitized or re-framed information.

Findings Summary

In an effort to situate journalists at the intersection of journalistic practice and the ATIA, the following synthesizes the challenges, perceived causes of these challenges and changing factors in the government and newsrooms over time. This section also links these layers to the effects they have on journalists' ability to produce high quality reporting.

The challenges participants face while navigating ATI range from practical, localized challenges, such as the perceived overuse of exemptions which lead to excessive redactions, delays, fees and an inefficient complaints process. Noting these frustrations, *Toronto Star* labour reporter Sara Mojtehedzadeh said: "A Freedom of Information request gives you insight into how decisions are made that you wouldn't normally get. It improves the quality of your reporting and that is what we are losing by not having a system that works properly" (personal communication, August 28, 2019).

Some of the journalists interviewed attributed these challenges to inferior legislation and administration of the ATIA. More broadly, all journalists attributed these challenges to the notion that governments tend toward secrecy. This theme also included the reflections of journalists who have navigated the Act over the course of their careers. Increased access to technology and the internet have improved the ability of journalists to access information, yet the financial strain on the journalism industry at large has had a negative effect on the time and resources journalists have to file ATI requests. All interviewees whose self-assessment indicated they had adequate experience to comment offered the opinion that no particular government has had a better or worse track record with ATI than any other—all governments have allowed the ATIA to stagnate while in power. As journalistic practice and Canadian society have evolved over the years, the ATIA has largely stayed the same. Therefore, according to the interviewees, it is in a worse state now than at any other point in history.

DISCUSSION

One of the most significant contributions the current study makes at addressing questions about the federal ATI system and its impacts on journalism comes from the theme regarding the changes in government that journalists have observed over the course of their careers. While not all of the journalists interviewed for this study felt they had accumulated enough professional experience to adequately reflect on the question, those that did collectively offered two positive comments regarding the evolution of the ATIA advancing their ability to report. In the mid-2000s, the government initiated a transition to make more information available online (Roberts, 2006b). A number of journalists interviewed for this study reported this as a convenient and time-saving advancement for journalists in their research workflow. The second positive comment was related to the fees associated with ATI requests. In 2016, the federal government issued a directive to eliminate all fees beyond the $5 flat fee per new request in an effort to help "revitalize" the ATIA (Government of Canada, 2019b). One interviewee shared an experience of being quoted excessive fees prior to this change:

> I made a request in 2003. It started really well... and then I got a letter stating that they were ready to go ahead with my request, but we need a deposit to extract

> the data and the cost is $1.6 million. So, I filed a complaint to the Information Commissioner, and in 2005 I got a letter and a CD arrived in an envelope, and it was mostly what I had asked for. It was electronic summaries of 2.9 million records. The letter specified that it took five hours to extract the data and they waived all processing and reproduction fees, so I don't know how much it actually cost. So, at the end of the day it went from $1.6 million to free. (J. Rankin, personal communication, September 4, 2019)

Many journalists interviewed in this study reported the move to a $5 per request fee as beneficial, because it simplified the request process and has maintained a reasonable and reliable fee structure.

Aside from these two positive developments, both this study's findings and previous research indicate the ATIA has stagnated—it has become worse over time because of government inaction, to the detriment of journalistic practice.

The present study indicates journalists feel government transparency in general had reduced over the course of their careers. These journalists had the impression there were more redactions and exemptions used by the government in the ATI process at this point in their careers than earlier on. The journalists in the study also noted years of inaction and failed attempts at meaningful reform have allowed the law to stagnate. Collectively, they were clear that the specific political party in power had little to do with the condition of the ATIA. In this shared opinion, the study's participants cited widespread government inaction over time, which has led to an ATI system that is worse now than at any other time, regardless of who was in power.

As noted earlier, some literature, though, tells a slightly different story. Stephen Harper's government stands out in the history of the ATIA as an administration that facilitated a wave of transparency resistance across the Canadian landscape. After leading the opposition from 2004 to 2006, when Stephen Harper was elected prime minister in February 2006 he engaged in 'virtue signaling' about the importance of government transparency and promised reforms to the ATIA. In what is typical of opposition parties, once his government was elected to a majority in 2011, Harper dropped nearly all promises and instead developed a reputation for limiting government transparency (Larsen & Walby, 2012; Rathgeber, 2014). The tactics the Harper government employed to limit access to government information are well documented (e.g. Larsen & Walby, 2012; Gingras, 2012; Boesveld, 2011). However, other more-recently published reports acknowledge Justin Trudeau's Liberal government has continued to withhold information from the public at a worse rate (Linnitt, 2017), echoing what journalists who participated in the present study have experienced. However, findings from the present study ultimately did not cast significant blame on any specific political party or administration. For example, Dean Beeby stated during his interview that, "Mr. Harper was not a friend to Access to Information, but neither were his predecessors in that office. I think that there was a steady decline" (personal communication, August 27, 2019). Justin Ling added, "the [current] Trudeau government should bear a lot of blame for how bad this has become" (personal communication, September 3, 2019).

Regardless of the causes, the impact on journalists is clear—using ATI as an essential resource to produce high quality and complex journalism has become more difficult over time. Anna Mehler Paperny relayed the difficulties that journalists face while making FOI requests in a 2015 Canadian Journalists for Free Expression article. She wrote, "Even if you emerge from the months-long morass of ATI negotiations with your sanity, sense of purpose and ATI request intact, chances are you'll be handed an impenetrable sheaf of documents" (Paperny, 2015, para. 6). One interview participant in the present study also discussed these challenges:

> I think [the ATI] is essential, or it should be essential. Currently I can't rely on it to accomplish anything except to show how obstructive the government can be. I think that is instructive in and of itself but having a responsive freedom of information system makes a huge difference in my ability to report properly and accurately. (S. Mojtehedzadeh, personal communication, August 28, 2019)

Regardless of political leadership, a broken ATI system frustrates the ability of journalists to offer the public quality reporting. The findings of this study align with many of the past criticisms aimed at federal ATI, and indicate that, despite a few amendments that do advance the ability to file for access to government information, the system has clearly deteriorated to the detriment of journalistic practice.

Furthermore, a meaningful result of the intersection of ATIA and journalistic practice is that the democratic role information plays in Canada is strengthened. However, despite small improvements in the act, journalists continue to face significant challenges attempting to access government information, which ultimately compromises the Canadian public's ability to understand government decision-making processes. Additionally, this makes the public more susceptible to accept the strategic usage of information by the government, sometimes without being aware of it.

Bill C-58 and Proactive Disclosure

On June 21, 2019, Bill C-58 became law under Justin Trudeau's Liberal government. What was purported to be the first major revision of the ATIA since 1983, and promised a new era of transparency and accountability, materialized as a sly political achievement. The journalists interviewed for this research generally agreed the amendments to the ATIA will not advance reporting for journalists or for democratic goals of transparency in general—in fact, many claimed it will make things worse.

After many years of inaction, Bill C-58 was initially touted as a way to increase government transparency and improve the ATIA by: making information more freely available; limiting fees; expanding and empowering the role of the Information Commissioner; including ministers' offices within the scope of the ATIA; and committing to a legislative review every five years (Liberal Party of Canada, 2015). Each of these proposals would have positively affected journalists' ability to access information. However, a watered-down version of these initiatives was implemented. For example, the head of a government institution may require a fee of up to $25 per request (Government of Canada, 2021); while the Information Commissioner's role was somewhat strengthened—they can make binding orders to a government institution that has declined an ATI request—the institution still has recourse to fight this binding order in court (Information Commissioner of Canada, 2021); and cabinet confidences continue to be excluded from public access (Government of Canada, 2021).

Furthermore, as the journalists interviewed in this study generally agreed, the two most noteworthy amendments with anticipated impacts on journalistic practice have been the "vexatious requests" provision and the mandate for increased proactive disclosure.

The changes brought through Bill C-58 allow government officials to label ATI requests as 'vexatious' or 'filed in bad faith;' if approved by the Information Commissioner, these 'vexatious' requests are disregarded. Journalists interviewed in the study agreed this is a deeply problematic stipulation. However, for the 2019-2020 reporting period, there were a total of 156,222 ATI requests made to the federal government, six of which were reported as vexatious by various government agencies. The Information Commissioner declined four of these labels, (Government of Canada, 2020a), signalling that this is not yet a widespread issue.

Increased proactive disclosure was a provision of Bill C-58, yet has its roots in a 2003 mandate for select government officials to make travel and hospitality expenses known to the public as an initiative to increase transparency (Library Archives of Canada, 2019). The momentum towards proactively disclosing many types of government information has grown over time. But the literature and this study point to mixed results on how this affects journalists and their journalism. One general opinion that interviewees offered is, given the advancement of technology, the proactive disclosure of government information is an important and logical step forward; yet there is a sense that because government officials are aware documents will be made public, they will likely be sanitized and of little use to journalists (J. Rankin, personal communication, September 4, 2019). Larsen and Walby (2012) note that for proactive disclosure to contribute to government transparency, it must provide meaningful insight.

Otherwise, no understanding will be gained into the government decision-making process, and it will likely not be useful to journalists in holding power to account.

Other journalists interviewed for this study claimed proactive disclosure erodes the spirit of the ATIA and therefore will contribute to further challenges for journalists. The government pushing sanitized information to the public is what it has always done and is not the main purpose of the ATIA. One participant said:

> Governments have always had the final say in what they could release and what they decided not to release… [The ATIA] was kind of revolutionary, in that we the people had the ability to pull documents and not just accept what documents were pushed out to us by any government… [With proactive disclosure] they're undermining the rights of citizens to pull documents and they are covering it up with this bogus claim that somehow they are being open and transparent and therefore we don't need citizens meddling in the process. (D. Beeby, personal communication, August 27, 2019)

Others have highlighted this concern. For example, Michael Geist (2017) notes Bill C-58 sought "to conflate access to information with proactive disclosure, treating the information the government wants to make available as the equivalent to the information to which the public is entitled and may want to access" (Geist, 2017). The deliberate attempt at using proactive disclosure to unhinge the original purpose of the legislation from the way the ATIA can be engaged with may prove to be very problematic for journalists.

As noted in the literature, and expressed by study participants, the ATI system has stagnated and creates challenges for journalistic practice. It is worse at the current moment than any other point in history because of the combination of inaction, inadequate action and, more recently, with the proactive disclosure provision of Bill C-58, the possibility of unfavorable action, which all have negative impacts on the ability of journalists to use ATI to further their reporting.

CONCLUSION

The ATIA is a tool journalists use to hold power to account. To this end, it helps further the important and necessary work of contributing to and fostering democracy. It is well known many journalists find engaging with the ATI system a burdensome task, yet there have been no known research efforts made to systematically collect and analyze their experiences. The purpose of this research was to understand journalists' experiences of navigating the federal ATI system. In addition, this research situates Canadian journalists within the multiple and varied influences that impact the intersection of journalistic practice and the ATIA.

This study indicates that, for journalists, ATI functions as an essential tool to advance their reporting and hold power to account. Some perceive their use of ATI as a resource that helps them fulfill their watchdog role, while others take on an advocacy approach to their work biased toward open information and accountability. In both cases, "good journalism" is connected to building and participating in a strong democracy. However, in the latter case, journalists do not ascribe to some of the traditional values typically associated with journalism, such as being an objective, neutral observer that reports without bias. Rather, they see themselves as biased towards accountability and strive to offer their audiences a deeper understanding of government transparency—and often secrecy—in their stories.

Journalists face practical barriers to access, such as delays, redactions, and an inefficient complaints process. However, there are other barriers that negatively affect the ability of journalists to successfully navigate the ATI system such as the evolution of technology, the increasing complexity of government, and the trend that governments tend towards secrecy. The consequences of financial strain in the news industry show that over the course of their careers, journalists are doing more work today than ever, while simultaneously having fewer resources to devote to ATI research. This study also indicates the influence of particular government leadership has had little direct impact on the functioning of the ATI system in Canada, which is contrary to some literature. Rather, the study indicates the ATIA has stagnated and is therefore arguably worse now under current leadership than previous governments.

Looking ahead, there are areas around the intersection of the ATIA and journalistic practice that are beyond the scope of this study, yet would benefit from further research and action. They include continued advocacy-based reporting by journalists, improved civics education in journalism schools to help students understand how governments work, further scholarly research aimed at the links between ATI and journalism, and improvements in ATI policy.

Journalists, alongside newsroom producers and editors, should be encouraged to include more details about their research process and potential difficulties in their stories for their readers to understand. Expressing these issues inherently communicates concerns surrounding government transparency to the audience and reminds the reader that a primary role of journalistic practice is to hold the government to account. It also indicates to the reader how well the government is holding up to promises of transparency. In addition, relaying these details to the audience reminds them that important journalism is oftentimes hard work. Because using the ATI system requires a comprehensive understanding of government structure and process, a stronger civics education would be beneficial to those pursuing investigative journalism in school. Furthermore, the intersection of journalistic practice and the ATIA would benefit from further scholarly investigation into more localized areas of freedom of information legislation, such as provincial, territorial and municipal systems. These laws have their own particularities and are often a rich source of information for journalists who report on local news. Finally, this study urges policy makers to implement the numerous well-researched calls for reform that were included in the original proposal for Bill C-58.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank research assistants Etienne Lajoie and Kelly-Pimentel-Lopes for their help in data collection and interview transcription. The authors would also like to thank Concordia University and the Fonds de Recherche du Québec - Société et Culture (FRQSC) for financial support for this research.

TABLE 1: Participant Profiles

Name	**Gender**	**Based in**	**Specialization**	**Approx. years of working experience**
Beeby, Dean	m	Ottawa	Investigative + ATIP researcher	37
Curry, Bill	m	Ottawa	Parliament + Finance	20
Edwards, Peter	m	Toronto	Organized Crime + Beat Reporter	33
Ireton, Julie	f	Ottawa	Investigative + Journalism Educator	25

Ling, Justin	m	Toronto	Investigative + Facilitates ATIP workshops	10
Mojtehedzadeh, Sara	f	Toronto	Investigative + Labour	5
Pagliaro, Jenn	f	Toronto	Politics	10
Pugliese, David	m	Ottawa	DND + Military	37
Rankin, Jim	m	Toronto	Data, Investigative + Facilitates ATIP Workshops	25
Rohner, Thom-as	m	Iqaluit	Investigative + Long form	5
Welch, Mary Agnes	f	Winnipeg	General Assignment + Data	20
Journalist A	f	Ottawa	Parliament + ATIP researcher	1.5
Journalist B	m	Ottawa	Parliament, Money + Finance	12
Journalist C	m	Ottawa	National Affairs, Security, Justice, Transparency and Privacy Issues + Journalism Educator	30
Journalist D	m	Toronto	Data	5
Journalist E	m	Vancouver	General Assignment	10
Journalist F	m	Ottawa	General Assignment	8

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APA citation

Thompson, M., Amend, E., & Marini, L. (2021) Canadian access to information and journalism: Obstacles and opportunities. *Facts & Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism*, *1*(1), 1-18.

Le Passionné, le Surchargé, le Méritocratisé et le Déprimé : quatre subjectivités pour penser la composition de classe des journalistes québécois

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Résumé

Cet article s'intéresse à l'impact de la forme actuelle du capitalisme sur le procès de travail journalistique, et plus particulièrement sur les subjectivités des journalistes québécois. Suivant les recherches qui analysent la mobilisation de la subjectivité des travailleurs et des travailleuses par les nouvelles formes managériales du capitalisme postfordiste, nous postulons que le procès de travail journalistique actuel produit quatre types de subjectivités qui se superposent de manière cyclique : Le Passionné, le Surchargé, le Méritocratisé et le Déprimé. Ce cycle de subjectivités mène graduellement vers un processus de décomposition de classe, la sortie du métier étant une quête d'un cycle de subjectivités plus supportable.

Mots-clés : travail journalistique, composition de classe, subjectivité, cycle, souffrance au travail, méritocratie.

Abstract

This article examines the impact of the current form of capitalism on the journalistic labour process, and more specifically on the subjectivities of Quebec journalists. Following the research which analyzes the mobilization of the subjectivity of workers by the new managerial forms of post-Fordist capitalism, we postulate that the current journalistic labour process produces four types of subjectivities which are superimposed in a cyclical way: the Passionate, the Overloaded, the Meritocratized and the Depressed. This cycle of subjectivities gradually leads to a process of class decomposition. Leaving the profession is a quest for a more liveable cycle of subjectivities.

Keywords: journalistic labour, class composition subjectivity, cycle, work suffering, meritocracy.

Examinons avec un œil de sociologue la situation suivante : en mars 2016, le quotidien montréalais *Le Devoir* (Québec, Canada) publie un dossier concernant le déclin du métier de journaliste, à la fois numériquement, dans le sens qu'il y aurait moins de journalistes qu'avant, mais aussi symboliquement, à savoir que la profession aurait perdu de son lustre et de son attrait face aux multiples crises de l'industrie. À l'intérieur du dossier se retrouve un article sur la journaliste culturelle Marie-Christine Blais qui annonce qu'elle quitte le métier après une carrière de 25 ans, surtout au journal *La Presse*. Celle-ci relate son *burnout* et sa relation difficile avec un « patron toxique » et un climat de travail toujours plus rapide et exigeant. « J'étais brûlée et j'avais l'impression de marcher dans une vallée de cendre pendant deux ou trois mois » (Baillargeon, 2016), dit-elle en expliquant son choix de fuir sa profession à l'âge de 57 ans. Pour aller où lui demande l'intervieweur? Pour devenir mécanicienne lui répond-elle, en annonçant qu'elle suit déjà depuis plusieurs semaines une formation en mécanique de véhicules légers (moto, scooters, etc.). « Le journalisme change. Il doit changer. Mais je crois aussi que le système de l'information se renverse et que quelque chose est cassé » (Baillargeon, 2016), ajoute la critique culturelle en soulignant que « la mécanique, elle, demande de réfléchir ».

La question se pose d'elle-même : comment peut-on expliquer qu'un membre de la « classe créative », une des classes les plus prestigieuses et les plus attractives du marché du travail (Sandoval, 2016; Huws, 2010) qui comprend les emplois en journalisme, programmation, cinéma, mode, jeux vidéo, design, architecture, etc. (Howkins, 2001), peut-il quitter cette classe au profit d'un emploi de mécanicienne relevant de la classe ouvrière, bref un emploi répétitif, manuel, débutant au salaire minimum et dépendant d'une forte division du travail (Braverman, 1976)?

La réponse réside, et ce sera mon hypothèse, dans les contradictions de plus en plus fortes du procès de travail journalistique et dans la présente dé-composition de classe des travailleurs et des travailleuses créatifs, dont le rêve du métier libre et autonome se transforme lentement mais sûrement en cauchemar ponctué de précarisation, d'accélération constante, d'endettement et par conséquent d'épuisement professionnel (Cohen, 2019; Sandoval, 2016; Huws, 2010; Bryan et al., 2009).

Contrairement à la posture libérale qui prétend que l'évolution du travail dépend de l'adaptation aux différentes innovations technologiques (dans cette vision des choses, cette journaliste serait un dinosaure largué par les innovations), la sociologie critique du travail nous enseigne que le processus de travail est lié aux formes institutionnelles du capitalisme et à leur régime d'accumulation en place (Braverman, 1976). La forme actuelle du capitalisme financier reposant sur l'endettement de masse (Pineault, 2013; Hardt & Negri, 2013) impose une flexibilisation extrême du travail ainsi qu'une colonisation marchande des rapports sociaux (non-séparation entre travail et loisir) qui mine la supposée autonomie du travail créatif (Mumby, 2020; Deuze & Prenger, 2019; Huws, 2014). Mais chaque type de procès de travail, au-delà des injonctions déjà connues (intensification, marchandisation, accélération), produit aussi son type de subjectivité sur les travailleurs et les travailleuses le composant. Comme le dit Lordon :

> les structures objectives, comme l'avait déjà noté Bourdieu, mais Marx également, se prolongent nécessairement en structures subjectives, et que, choses sociales externes, elles existent aussi nécessairement sous la forme d'une inscription dans les psychés individuelles. (Lordon, 2010, p. 73).

Dans ce texte, j'argumenterai que le procès de travail journalistique actuel produit quatre formes de subjectivités dominantes : le Passionné, le Surchargé, le Méritocratisé et le Déprimé, chacune de ces formes communiquant ensemble, dans un cycle dialectique, l'omniprésence de la dernière forme causant la sortie du métier vers une classe porteuse d'un autre type de subjectivités (les mécaniciennes, par exemple).

Je reviendrai tout d'abord sur la littérature scientifique concernant les conditions de travail journalistique, qui est surtout dominée par une sociologie s'intéressant aux identités professionnelles. Je poursuivrai avec la présentation de certains concepts théoriques inspirés du marxisme autonomiste, particulièrement le concept de composition de classe. Je détaillerai ensuite les quatre types de subjectivités et leur lien dialectique avec la dé-composition de classe journalistique.

Revue de littérature sur le travail journalistique

La question du travail a longtemps été un angle mort des études médiatiques (Cohen, 2019; Im, 1997), sans aucun doute parce que la discipline s'est créée dans un paradigme libéral qui laisse de côté les questions concernant les contradictions du procès de travail aux dépens de réflexion sur les liens entre les médias et la démocratie (Lamoureux, 2021; Zelizer, 2013). Si le libéralisme peut être pertinent pour penser certains enjeux reliés au travail comme l'éthique professionnelle des journalistes, cette posture ne peut expliquer comment une presse évoluant sous un régime politique libre peut forger des conditions de travail éprouvantes pour certains travailleurs et travailleuses (Zelizer, 2013). Cela s'explique par le fait que le libéralisme en tant qu'idéologie ne pense pas le travail ou du moins ne l'historicise pas : le travail dans cette conception est une catégorie transhistorique qui dépend de l'innovation technologique et non pas de différents modes de production et des luttes de classe qui sont au cœur des perspectives critiques (Gorz, 1988 ; Örnebring, 2010).

Quand elles s'intéressent au travail, les études médiatiques, souvent d'inspiration ethnographique (et pas nécessairement libérales, mais davantage pragmatiques ou fonctionnalistes [Maigret, 2015]), analysent, comme le dit Ornebring, *le work*[1] et non le *labour* des journalistes. Bien que difficilement traduisible en français, il est possible de définir cette opposition entre un corpus d'études s'intéressant à la *profession* journalistique, avec des explorations concernant les pratiques ou les routines de travail, le contrôle social (management) ou encore les identités professionnelles (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015 ; Ruellan, 2011 ; Witschge & Nygren 2009 ; Demers & Le Cam, 2006) et non à *l'abstraction du travail* et à la relation entre le capital et le travail (Strauss, 2019; Cohen, 2015; Fuchs, 2014; Smyrnaios, 2013; Mosco, 2009, p. 138).

> The landmark studies of journalistic work practices and work routines (e.g. Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978) are primarily ethnographic and do not contain much information about, for example, salary levels, job security, degree of management control over labour processes, and conflicts in the workplace (Örnebring, 2010, p. 59)

Pour Örnebring, ce manque est avant tout contextuel : dans une situation économique fordiste de plein-emploi et de salles de rédaction avec de bonnes conditions de travail, il n'était pas très attrayant de formuler des analyses qui tentaient de problématiser les conditions de travail journalistiques (Örnebring, 2010, p. 59). Je rajouterais également que la sociologie des professions libérales (Maigret, 2015, p. 164) n'a jamais été tellement intéressée par le conflit social ou les thématiques relevant des classes sociales, ce type de recherche suggérant plutôt d'analyser les identités professionnelles et leurs mutations, par exemple la différence constitutive entre le journalisme et la littérature ou encore avec les sciences sociales (Le Cam & Ruellan, 2017 ; Ruellan, 1993). Si ce type de réflexion n'est pas dénué d'intérêt dans le sens qu'il permet souvent de formuler des recommandations pertinentes aux différents ordres professionnels au sujet des mutations des professions, il reste que son silence concernant le conflit social tend à pacifier les relations sociales au lieu de les problématiser — le conflit social étant pour les fonctionnalistes un dysfonctionnement du système et non pas sa force interne comme pour les postures critiques[2] (Fuchs, 2019 ; Voirol, 2015).

Or dès le début des années 2000, des mutations dans le capitalisme postfordiste qui précarisent et flexibilisent les conditions de travail journalistiques ont renouvelé l'intérêt pour une vision plus critique du procès de travail journalistique (Boczkowski, 2004 ; Deuze, 2007 ; Dooley, 2007). La concentration des entreprises médiatiques, mouvement de fusions et d'acquisitions parfois poussé à l'extrême, tend à standardiser l'information, considérée comme une marchandise reproductible à l'infini sur les multiples plateformes des multinationales de l'industrie (Birkinbine & Gómez, 2020 ; George, 2015). C'est sans parler de l'omniprésence des infomédiaires (les réseaux sociaux) qui accaparent les revenus publicitaires et les plateformes de publication (Rebillard & Smyrnaios, 2010). Dépassé par la baisse de son salaire, par l'accumulation des tâches, par la concurrence féroce, par le déclassement de certaines de ses compétences par les algorithmes, par l'accélération de son travail et

1 Le labor pour Örnebring se définit comme suit : « an exertion which generates surplus value and presupposes a contractual employer–employee relationship » (Örnebring, 2010, p. 59).

2 Cette analyse rapide tend à occulter que certains travaux en sociologie des professions libérales ont pu apporter des réflexions critiques très inspirantes, notamment sur les styles de gestion et sur les moyens de contrôler les journalistes dans une salle de rédaction (Bunce, 2017).

par la pression venant de l'armée de réserve située derrière lui, le journaliste est descendu de son piédestal et présenté comme un prolétaire comme un autre (Deuze & Witschge 2018; Accardo et al, 2007).

Si plusieurs chercheurs et chercheuses dénoncent la pression du commerce et du système économique sur le monde vécu des journalistes ou encore celle du champ économique sur le champ journalistique (Champagne, 2000, McChesney, 2008), d'autres actualisent plutôt la théorie du procès de travail marxisante pour démontrer que le travail journalistique est rongé par des contradictions internes (Cohen, 2012 ; Mosco, 2009). Le discours de l'innovation technologique entretenu par les représentants de la profession a fini par dégrader l'autonomie journalistique, les gestionnaires se servant de la montée des technologies de l'information ou de l'intelligence artificielle pour automatiser ou déqualifier des fonctions présumées à l'abri de la division du travail comme le travail d'écriture ou la couverture d'événements (Örnebring, 2010).

Cohen décrit ainsi les quatre caractéristiques propres à la salle de rédaction numérique marchandisée : la sous-traitance (la délocalisation de certains services comme l'écriture de blogue), l'exploitation du travail non payé (l'entretien d'un profil dans les réseaux sociaux ou la constitution d'un portfolio multimédia à l'extérieur de la relation salariale), les outils de mesure d'attention du public (comme Google Analytics, utilisé par les gestionnaires) et l'automatisation (Cohen, 2015). Ces quatre caractéristiques produisent, selon elle, trois effets fondamentaux sur les journalistes : une tendance à la constante mesurabilité des tâches grâce aux TIC ce qui provoque une intensification et une marchandisation accrue du travail (Cohen, 2019).

Ces lectures critiques sont également présentes chez les études s'attardant au journalisme québécois. La concentration de la presse et la convergence sont des phénomènes qui se répercutent de manière négative dans plusieurs salles de rédaction (Thibault et al., 2020 ; Bizimana & Kane, 2019 ; George, 2015 ; Brin & St-Pierre, 2013 ; Bernier, 2011), bien que le retrait de grandes entreprises comme Gesca a permis l'émergence de plusieurs projets coopératifs ou à but non lucratif dans les dernières années. À première vue, le journalisme québécois possède toujours un service public fort qui protège les journalistes des pressions marchandes. Toutefois, il faut rappeler que le néolibéralisme ne signifie pas la disparition du service public, mais bien une transformation de celui-ci où ce dernier adopte graduellement la logique des entreprises privées comme celle de la concurrence à outrance (Phelan, 2014). Cela explique pourquoi les pressions à la convergence, à la concurrence et à la rationalisation sont aussi présentes chez Radio-Canada, quoique se manifestant sous d'autres mots et d'autres formes (Hudon, 2013 ; Francoeur, 2012).

Synthèse et questions de recherche

Si les études d'inspiration critique sont donc intéressantes pour analyser comment les journalistes sont parfois poussés à bout dans leur travail qui ne s'arrête jamais et qui en demande toujours plus (MacDonald et al., 2016), elles en arrivent à des conclusions qui s'en tiennent à un marxisme somme toute assez classique. Marx parlait déjà dans le volume un du Capital du fameux passage de la soumission formelle à la soumission réelle de la pratique sociale au capital (Marx, 1977 [1867], p. 232), c'est-à-dire de la plus-value tirée de l'allongement de la journée de travail à l'intensification de la journée de travail.

Or une question plus originale et moins collée à un marxisme orthodoxe est celle de l'effet des contradictions du procès de travail sur la subjectivité des travailleurs et des travailleuses (Mercure & Bourdages-Sylvain, 2017). Le marxisme a tendance à décrire les travailleurs et les travailleuses comme des sujets automates, atomisés, narcissiques ou même schizophrènes (Vioulac, 2018 ; Jappe, 2017), mais la réalité est plus subtile, surtout pour les travailleurs et les travailleuses créatifs qui entretiennent souvent une relation amour-haine avec leur métier (McRobbie, 2018 ; Mathisen, 2017 ; Sandoval, 2016). Nous savons également que les nouvelles formes managériales du capitalisme postfordiste ont tendance à mobiliser la subjectivité des travailleurs et des travailleuses pour l'intégrer dans le processus de production (Mercure & Bourdages-Sylvain, 2017), mais comment se déploie précisément cette mobilisation dans le cas du journalisme ? Ma question de recherche pour cet article peut donc se formuler ainsi : quel est l'impact de la forme institutionnelle actuelle du capitalisme sur la composition de classe des journalistes québécois, et comment cette (dé) composition peut-être se découper en subjectivités ? C'est ici que la contribution des marxistes autonomistes italiens peut m'aider dans ma quête.

MARXISTE AUTONOMISTE, COMPOSITION DE CLASSE ET SUBJECTIVITÉ

Les marxistes autonomistes (qu'on qualifie parfois d'opéraïstes) commencent leurs activités dans une Italie post-1945 agitée par les luttes sociales. Ceux-ci constatent assez rapidement que les syndicats et les partis de gauche n'ont aucune intention de faire la révolution ; bien au contraire, ces derniers sont avant tout préoccupés par des revendications keynésiennes alors en vogue, surtout la hausse du niveau de vie des ouvriers et des ouvrières rendue possible grâce aux gains de productivité dans les usines (Wright, 2007).

Or les ouvriers et les ouvrières rencontrés par les autonomistes ne semblent pas du tout intéressés par un projet de vie à l'américaine axée sur la consommation de masse. Ceux-ci immigrent des campagnes pauvres du sud du pays pour changer de vie, mais se retrouvent dans de gigantesques installations parcellisant leurs tâches à l'extrême, par exemple l'usine de Fiat à Turin employant à un certain moment plus de 50 000 travailleurs et travailleuses — une situation que Mario Tronti qualifiera d'usine sociale (Mumby, 2020 ; Tronti, 1977).

Mais le premier réflexe des autonomistes n'est pas de rassembler les ouvriers et les ouvrières et de leur faire lire de la littérature marxiste comme les comités trotskystes à la mode. Non : ceux-ci décident de les écouter et d'organiser des assemblées autonomes. Danilo Dolci utilise par exemple les questionnaires et les récits de vie pour comprendre l'expérience vécue de ces travailleurs et travailleuses, une démarche qu'il qualifie de co-recherche et qu'on définirait aujourd'hui comme étant de la recherche-intervention ou de la recherche-action (Wright, 2007, p. 30).

Et c'est en comprenant les caractéristiques spécifiques de la classe auxquelles ils ont affaire (et dont ils font bien souvent partie) que les autonomistes vont formuler des recommandations qui leur conviennent (Alquati, 2013), par exemple une alliance avec les étudiants contre-culturels, la revendication d'un salaire social pour contrer la colonisation des rapports sociaux par l'usine sociale ou encore l'invention d'une pléthore d'actions directes originales comme les actions d'autoréductions (refuser la hausse des tarifs du transport en commun, par exemple [Wright, 2007]).

Pour Wright (2007), le concept phare forgé par le marxisme autonomiste n'est donc pas celui de travail immatériel ou de multitude comme chez Negri (2011), mais bien celui de composition de classe, défini comme la « transformation des comportements quand des formes particulières de force de travail sont insérées dans des processus de production spécifiques » (Wright, 2007, p. 54). Contrairement au marxisme classique, qui pense strictement l'opposition entre la classe ouvrière ne possédant que sa force de travail et la classe capitaliste possédant les moyens de production, les autonomistes proposent de mettre l'accent sur la subjectivité des travailleurs et des travailleuses face à chaque forme institutionnelle du capitalisme et à chaque type de technique qui lui est associée, et c'est précisément cette attention aux subjectivités qui permettra de comprendre l'aliénation au travail et de la surmonter (Armano & Murgia, 2013).

Car l'autre thèse des autonomistes est celle que les subjectivités, une fois comprises, peuvent être changées. C'était là par exemple l'objectif des féministes autonomistes, comme Mariarosa Dalla Costa ou Sylvia Federici, quand celles-ci appelaient au salaire des femmes ménagères : évidemment celles-ci n'ont jamais pensé qu'un salaire au travail ménager renverserait le système économique, mais plutôt que la simple formulation de cette revendication pourrait permettre aux femmes ménagères de constater leur situation et de tenter de se défaire de leur exploitation (Caffentzis et al., 2016).

C'est également ce qu'a tenté la deuxième génération des autonomistes avec la mobilisation du concept de travail immatériel (Lazzarato, 1996). Par ce concept les nouveaux autonomistes mettaient l'accent sur le fait que tous les travailleurs et les travailleuses étaient désormais appelés à utiliser leurs facultés cognitives, affectives et communicationnelles, ce qui leur permettrait possiblement de s'émanciper de leur relation d'exploitation. Les journalistes, puisqu'ils sont dotés d'une autonomie relative au point de conception du procès de travail (Cohen, 2012), représentent un cas typique de travail immatériel analysé par les autonomistes de la deuxième génération (Gill & Pratt, 2008 ; Lazzarato, 1996).

Dans la partie suivante, je propose donc de m'inspirer de ce type d'analyse autonomiste (en particulier, Hardt & Negri 2013) pour proposer quatre subjectivités – le Passionné, le Surchargé, le Méritocratisé et le Déprimé - représentant le travail journalistique en ce début du 21e siècle. Pour forger ces figures, j'ai puisé dans la littérature critique produite sur les conditions de travail journalistiques tout en me servant de données que j'ai récoltées grâce à neuf entrevues que j'ai réalisées avec des journalistes québécois ayant développé une sensibilité sur les questions de santé mentale (c'est-à-dire ayant publiquement pris la parole sur des questions de santé mentale, soit dans des congrès, des conférences ou des médias). J'ai réalisé ces entrevues dans le cadre d'une recherche portant sur la hausse du nombre de *burnout* dans le milieu journalistique québécois — les journalistes interviewés n'avaient pas nécessairement fait des *burnout*, ceux-ci devaient simplement avoir développé une sensibilité sur la question, une telle démarche m'évitant de chercher des gens encore traumatisés par leur expérience. J'ai transcrit ces entrevues en verbatim et j'ai anonymisé le nom des journalistes (J1 à J9).

Six des journalistes interviewés étaient des salariés au moment des entrevues, tandis que trois étaient des pigistes. Cependant, ces catégories étaient fluides dans le sens que la majorité des journalistes salariés avaient passé par la pige auparavant et les pigistes, quant à eux, avaient déjà été employés par de grandes entreprises. J'ai donc tenté dans mon analyse exploratoire de repérer un cycle de subjectivités qui peut s'appliquer à tout type de journaliste, bien que certaines subjectivités (comme celle du Surchargé) peuvent être vécues différemment selon les statuts d'emploi. De manière générale, le capitalisme postfordiste tend à flouter les différences entre les statuts d'emploi aux dépens de ce que Standing (2014) nomme la formation d'un « précariat », bref une force de travail de plus en plus précaire qui tend à l'instabilité permanente.

L'analyse a porté sur les thèmes qui ont émergé de manière semi-inductive lors de l'analyse des entretiens (Kaufmann, 1996, p. 78). En effet ma démarche critique (Smythe & Van Dinh, 1983), qui vise à produire un changement social en mobilisant la parole des journalistes, me place entre une analyse théorique et une analyse inductive, l'objectif étant d'opérer des va-et-vient entre les données et les hypothèses. La question de l'interprétation n'intervient donc pas à la fin, elle « traverse de bout en bout le processus de recherche et en ponctue chacune des étapes dans un va-et-vient incessant » (Gaulejac et al., 2007, p. 107), la posture du chercheur n'étant pas la neutralité axiologique, mais bien la création d'un cadre qui vise à transformer la réflexion en action émancipatrice.

Puisque certains des journalistes avaient vécu un *burnout* dans les dernières années de leur carrière, un risque éthique de la recherche était de leur faire revivre leur expérience traumatique. Or, conformément aux exigences de la sociologie clinique (Gaulejac & Laroche, 2020), les entretiens n'ont pas porté sur l'évocation des expériences traumatiques, mais bien plus sur les circonstances de vie actuelle et sur les soins reçus.

LES QUATRE SUBJECTIVITÉS DU JOURNALISTE ÉVOLUANT SOUS LE CAPITALISME POSTFORDISTE

Le passionné

La première chose que vous remarquez lorsque vous parlez à un journaliste est qu'il aime son travail : c'est un passionné. Comme tout travailleur créatif, les journalistes sont émotivement attachés à leur travail qui leur procure liberté et autonomie (Gill, 2010). Ou peut-être n'aiment-ils pas le travail qu'ils effectuent concrètement dans les différentes salles de rédaction, mais plutôt l'image que projette leur travail et surtout l'idéal qu'il représente (Le Cam & Ruellan, 2017).

Le journaliste est un chien de garde de la démocratie et son rôle est de surveiller nos représentants et de trouver la vérité. C'est souvent pour ce genre de représentations, véhiculées par la culture populaire comme les films ou les romans, que les jeunes journalistes souhaitent entrer dans la profession (Ruffin, 2003, p. 198). Les programmes universitaires en journalisme renforcent cette image en initiant les journalistes aux grands classiques comme Albert Londres, Nellie Bly ou la révélation du scandale du Watergate par le Washington Post dans les années 1970. Même s'ils sont donc confinés à des tâches subalternes à leur entrée dans les entreprises médiatiques, les journalistes vont avoir tendance à vouloir se sacrifier au nom de l'information et de la quête de l'intérêt public, un sacrifice passionné qui donne un sens à leur vie (Accardo, 2017, p. 6).

> Pour moi y'avait une espèce d'appel à ok ben c'est tellement important pour la société que ça soit là, que moi ça toujours été ça mon moteur, pi je pense quand même la majorité des collègues avec qui j'ai travaillé sont motivés par cette idée-là de l'information, de l'importance de l'information et de la recherche de la vérité (J1).

> Moi c'était vraiment d'apprendre et d'amener les autres aussi à apprendre. J'apprends en faisant l'article, les gens qui lisent ils apprennent aussi. Ça, ça n'a pas changé. Je me sens privilégié chaque fois que je parle à des gens intéressants et que je rentre dans leur réalité (J7).

En fonction de la spécialisation du journaliste, cette passion pour la recherche de l'information et l'éducation populaire peut prendre plusieurs formes. Pour le journaliste culturel, c'est la rencontre avec les artistes, ou encore avec les athlètes pour les journalistes couvrant le sport. Pour le journaliste évoluant dans des médias plus alternatifs ou de niche, ce peut être de donner la parole aux sans-voix.

> J'adorais l'idée d'aller à la rencontre des artistes de ce monde et voir la manière dont ils voyaient le monde (J2).

> C'était ça l'idée aussi d'être journaliste, c'était d'influencer ma société en dénonçant les inégalités ou en faisant connaître des initiatives inspirantes qui pourraient changer un peu les choses (J4).

Le journalisme est donc un métier passionnant parce qu'il met les travailleurs et les travailleuses de l'information en contact avec des sources inspirantes, mais aussi avec des collègues et un public toujours prêt à réagir. C'est à partir de la création de ces relations sociales que beaucoup de journalistes expriment qu'ils aiment leur métier parce que celui-ci leur permet d'apprendre tous les jours, ou encore d'être au cœur des événements ou de sortir de la banalité du quotidien (Le Cam & Ruellan, 2017). Dans toutes ces versions se retrouve ce qu'Hartmut Rosa nomme une résonance avec son travail, une manière de développer des relations responsives et de tenter de les entretenir en développant des axes de résonance avec le monde qui nous entoure et qui vient à notre rencontre (Rosa, 2018).

Et c'est précisément parce que les journalistes aiment leur travail qu'ils vont accepter d'en faire plus, qu'ils vont accepter des choses qu'ils n'accepteraient pas dans des travaux qui les engagent moins émotivement, par exemple le fait de travailler pour de la visibilité ou d'être mal payé pour un gros contrat avec un employeur prestigieux dans le cas des pigistes :

> dû à cette passion-là, ben ça fait qu'on accepte des trucs que normalement on n'accepterait pas dans un autre métier. Si c'est une job alimentaire, jamais on n'accepterait ces conditions-là, ou cette façon de faire là ou cette pression continuelle là (J1).

Bref, c'est parce que leur travail les passionne que les journalistes développent la deuxième subjectivité qui est celle du surchargé.

Le surchargé

La deuxième chose que vous remarquez souvent chez un journaliste, c'est qu'il n'a pas le temps de vous en parler : il est surchargé. Non seulement le journaliste doit-il accumuler les projets, c'est-à-dire commencer plusieurs articles en même temps qui n'ont bien souvent pas de lien entre eux, mais il doit en plus déployer plusieurs techniques pour réaliser chacun de ces projets (Deuze, 2007). Pour les pigistes s'ajoute une pression à devoir produire eux-mêmes leur employabilité, c'est-à-dire produire leur comptabilité et acquérir constamment de nouvelles compétences (Gorz, 2017 ; D'Amours, 2014).

C'est le retour de l'homme-orchestre ou de la femme-orchestre : à la fin du 19e siècle, les journaux étaient bien souvent possédés par une seule personne qui y réalisait toutes les tâches, de l'acquisition de capitaux jusqu'à l'imprimerie, et qui parallèlement accumulait le profit et le prestige politique qui était associé à son journal (Nerone & Barnhurst, 2003). Cette figure qui avait disparu au 20e siècle aux dépens des multiples spécialisations et de la division du travail dans les grands médias tend à réapparaître au 21e siècle : le journaliste qui sort en reportage doit en même temps enregistrer des témoignages, prendre des notes, poser des questions pour contourner le cadrage des événements par les relations publiques, observer, prendre des photos, parfois filmer des extraits et même live-twitter le fil de l'événement, le tout, en ne récoltant aucun profit ni prestige (Brédart, 2017 ; Francoeur, 2012). Et comme les tarifs pour les piges ne cessent de diminuer depuis le début des années 2000, pour les journalistes indépendants se rajoute donc bien souvent la précarité, les forçant en plus à accumuler les dettes ou à se trouver d'autres travaux plus payants qui se superposent à leur travail de journalistes déjà surchargés (D'Amours, 2014). C'est particulièrement vrai pour les jeunes qui doivent faire leurs preuves en acceptant n'importe quel type de contrat ou des stages non payés (Cohen & de Peuter, 2015).

Ainsi pour Huws, l'intensification du travail et des compétences *(labour intensification vs skill intensification*) et l'accélération constante sont constitutifs des métiers créatifs sous le capitalisme postfordiste (Huws, 2010, p. 512-513).

> Un journalisme aujourd'hui fait trois, quatre, cinq fois plus de tâches qu'un journaliste du milieu du siècle, c'est hallucinant, si on inclut les médias sociaux, si on inclut le fait qu'un journaliste a souvent plus qu'un sujet par jour. Qu'un journaliste doit, ben c'est ça produire une version écrite, une version vidéo, c'est fou (J1)

> Moi je suis toujours sur 5-6-7 projets en même temps aussi et là-dedans y'en a qui sont bénévoles, y'en a d'autres qui sont payants et je ne suis pas super toujours bonne pour prioriser. Je ne suis pas un super bon exemple à suivre (J4)

La surcharge de travail et la précarité qui l'accompagne tendent à allonger la journée de travail et à éliminer toute distinction entre travail et non-travail. Le courriel pour le contrat espéré ou le retour d'un intervenant pressé pour survenir à n'importe quel moment et il faut toujours être aux aguets. La vie au complet du journaliste devient une façon de travailler, ce que Deuze nomme un *workstyle* (Deuze, 2007). Une journaliste m'explique sa situation sociale qui a précédé son *burnout* :

> L'année dernière c'était une joke à quel point y'avait pas, y'avait aucune distinction entre mon travail et mes loisirs, mais genre aucune distinction j'étais toujours un peu en train de travailler, en plus une équipe de travail avec laquelle je travaillais, notre manière d'échanger des idées ou de brainstormer c'était un groupe Facebook et une conversation inbox, alors ça arrêtait juste jamais (J5).

La surcharge mène logiquement vers deux nouveaux types de subjectivité : vers ceux et celles qui réussissent grâce à leur effort soutenu à passer outre la surcharge et à s'élever dans les échelons (les méritocratisés) et ceux et celles qui au contraire échouent à surmonter la surcharge et qui sont contraints de perdre le rythme et de développer des symptômes de *burnout* face à leurs collègues ultrarapides et récompensés (les déprimés).

Le méritocratisé

Le méritocratisé est parfaitement adapté au discours néolibéral de la réussite personnelle et de l'entrepreneuriat de soi (Ehrenberg, 2010, p. 16). S'il a réussi, c'est grâce à ses efforts. S'il a obtenu sa promotion ou son prix prestigieux, c'est grâce à lui-même. Et s'il échoue, c'est parce que les institutions traditionnelles le bloquent dans le développement de sa capacité d'agir : ne reste plus qu'à déserter et à créer lui-même son emploi.

Pour Wolfgang Streeck, le discours de la méritocratie émerge avec le déclin du fordisme à la fin des années 1970. Les jeunes générations réclamant plus d'autonomie et de créativité sur leurs lieux de travail sont séduites par l'idée que le marché du travail devrait être considéré comme un « défi sportif » (Streeck, 2014 ; Ehrenberg, 2010 ; Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999). Que le meilleur gagne donc, mais aussi que le meilleur gagne grâce à son entrainement individuel et à son aptitude à gérer la douleur — une attitude que Taylor tentait désespérément d'enseigner aux ouvriers non motivés par la hausse de la productivité à la fin du 19e siècle (Gorz, 1988, p. 115-118 ; Braverman, 1976).

Le milieu journalistique depuis la montée du néolibéralisme dans les années 1980 (Phelan, 2014) est, comme tous les métiers créatifs, particulièrement affecté par ce discours méritocratique qui est en partie responsable du déclin des mobilisations collectives et de la solidarité dans les salles de rédaction (Accardo, 2017 ; Storey et al., 2005 ; Ruffin, 2003). Développé lui aussi dès les bancs d'école, ce discours pousse les journalistes à prendre des risques individuels (partir en voyage dans une zone risquée pour proposer des reportages, s'exiler en région éloignée, fonder une entreprise médiatique qui embrasse la dernière innovation technologique, apprendre à coder dans ses temps libres pour renforcer ses compétences) pour améliorer leurs portfolios ou pour acquérir de l'expérience de manière indépendante (Deuze & Prenger, 2019). Ceux-ci doivent également développer des avatars sur les différentes plateformes de réseaux sociaux pour entretenir des liens avec le public, un travail bien sûr non payé (Siapera, 2019).

À cet égard, une journaliste utilise des métaphores guerrières et sportives pour expliquer comment elle est passée par des moments difficiles au début de sa carrière avant de s'épanouir et de s'acheter une maison. Une autre souligne qu'elle a surmonté son *burnout* en écoutant davantage son corps et en prenant des pauses plus longues, un discours rationnel, mais individualiste, qui élimine toute responsabilité sociale de la cause de l'épuisement professionnel.

> Les nuits étaient courtes ; des fois je pouvais travailler jusqu'à minuit, une heure du matin. Je me relevais le lendemain à 6 h du matin. C'était une grosse pression, mais en même temps financièrement c'est sûr que là, ben j'me suis acheté ma maison. J'avais une vie, je voyageais c'est ça. Mais aussi c'est un cheminement personnel. Faut que tu apprennes à faire des choix, à décider ce qui est important pour toi. [...] Moi je me suis battue, moi je ne me sens pas précaire vraiment. Pi je me suis battue pour ça parce que pour moi c'était pas une option d'être précaire et de voir mon salaire diminué (J7).

> J'ai été longtemps en congé en *burnout*, mais à moment donné j'ai réalisé que même si j'ai pas le temps, de toute façon mon corps à moment donné il n'est plus capable de travailler, il n'est plus aussi efficace donc il faut que je lui donne une pause pour revenir plus efficace. J'ai trouvé des trucs pour devenir plus efficace, comme prendre plus de pauses, oui j'avance peut-être un petit peu moins vite, mais ça va être tellement plus efficace quand je vais revenir que je vais rattraper le temps perdu et ça va être plus simple pour mon corps et pour mon esprit (J3)

Le discours du méritocratisé est aussi lié au fétichisme technologique, le fait de croire qu'il est important de s'adapter à toute innovation technologique sans en contester les fondements (Comor & Compton, 2016), notamment au fait qu'une bonne utilisation des réseaux sociaux permettrait de développer sa visibilité et sa carrière. Un journaliste explique que parfois quand ses « stories » sur Instagram sont vraiment efficaces, des éditeurs le contactent pour les transformer en article :

> Je ne pense pas que j'aurais la carrière que j'ai présentement sans les réseaux sociaux. Je pense que c'est une super belle façon de te faire connaître, de faire connaître ta plume, de faire connaître tes opinions. C'est vraiment niaiseux, mais j'ai eu beaucoup de contrats à cause d'Instagram. (J6).

Le système méritocratique est également entretenu par l'existence de multiples prix ou concours renforçant la concurrence entre les journalistes, le plus emblématique de ses concours, dans le cas québécois, étant par exemple le prix Judith-Jasmin. Mais tous les types de journalisme ont leurs concours (le prix du journalisme de loisir, même les étudiants avec le prix Lisette Gervais) ce qui contribue à une mise en concurrence généralisée (Accardo, 2017, p. 56). Il semble impossible en journalisme d'écrire quoi que ce soit sans avoir à être sujet d'un concours, d'une compétition ou d'un prix quelconque.[3] Certains rituels, notamment les congrès professionnels, les conférences ou les ateliers payants avec des vedettes du métier renforcent aussi la mise en scène de personnages ayant réussi grâce à leurs efforts (McRobbie, 2002). Comme le démontrent Le Cam et Ruellan (2017), les journalistes les plus connus, par exemple les présentateurs télévisuels, vont souvent parler de comment ils ont réussi grâce à tels choix de carrière difficiles ou comment ils ont surmonté telles épreuves de leurs vies professionnelles — certains présentateurs allant même jusqu'à écrire plusieurs autobiographies, chacune témoignant d'un défi surmonté. Une journaliste raconte que lorsqu'elle a effectué son premier stage professionnel :

> On était 14 cet été-là à avoir été embauchés en sachant très bien qu'à la fin de l'été il en resterait deux. Ou un ou deux ou trois si on était vraiment chanceux et si on avait une bonne cohorte. Alors y'avait cette pression-là déjà à l'époque où j'me souviens très bien on allait régulièrement vomir dans les toilettes parce que c'était trop stressant. Pis je me souviens, si je reviens juste un peu en arrière dans les cours de journalisme, les profs nous disaient ah c'est un milieu super difficile, c'est un milieu de loups, c'est extrêmement difficile de percer alors cette impression-là que mon dieu c'est extrêmement difficile de faire sa place elle était omniprésente (J3)

Face à l'accumulation des tâches et à cette pression de devoir faire sa place dans un milieu ultra-compétitif où tout le monde est en concurrence les uns contre les autres, un journaliste qui n'a pas le privilège d'être ultra-performant et flexible (parce qu'il a une famille, de l'endettement) peut échouer à s'élever parmi les belles âmes méritocratiques et se brûler et vivre des symptômes d'épuisement professionnel (Charon & Ramat-Pigeolat, 2021; Ekdale et al., 2015). C'est la figure du déprimé.

Le déprimé

Le déprimé est la dernière forme de subjectivité et conduit à deux portes de sortie : soit une pause et un retour dialectique à la formule du passionné et du surchargé, soit l'expulsion du métier lorsque ce dernier stade prend toute la place (ce que la journaliste décrite lors de l'introduction, Marie-Christine Blais, nommait sa « vallée de cendres »).

Dans son étude quantitative sur la santé mentale des journalistes, Reinardy (2011) écrit que seulement 25 % des journalistes interrogés avaient la ferme intention de rester dans le métier, les autres étant atteints de nombreux doutes face à leur avenir dans la profession (voir aussi Reix, 2020; Bertaux, 2019 & Brédart, 2017). La situation semblait encore plus critique pour les jeunes journalistes travaillant depuis moins de cinq ans dans le métier (Peters, 2010). C'est en effet souvent dans ces premières années

3 Les journalistes ne sont pas obligés de participer aux concours d'écriture, mais ils sont fortement incités à le faire par leurs employeurs, et on pourrait dire que ne pas participer aux concours, c'est courir le risque d'une marginalisation au sein de la profession. Un risque que ne peuvent pas se payer les jeunes précaires.

qu'un journaliste développera des symptômes de *burnout*. Macdonald et al. (2016) soulignent plusieurs causes poussant les journalistes vers des problèmes de santé mentale comme l'accumulation des tâches, les bas salaires, les longues heures de travail, la précarité de l'emploi, la non-séparation entre travail et non-travail, le mépris des gestionnaires qui s'appuient sur une rationalité algorithmique pour décider des sujets et des horaires, etc. (Ekdale et al., 2015).

La figure du déprimé a également plus de chance de rejoindre certaines catégories de journalistes comme les femmes ou les minorités culturelles. Un grand rapport publié sur les conditions de travail des journalistes femmes en Belgique en 2018 met en lumière les nombreux obstacles qui se dressent devant les femmes dans l'obtention d'un emploi digne, notamment le plafond de verre, le harcèlement, le machisme des patrons ou des gestionnaires et l'impossible conciliation travail-famille (Le Cam, 2018). Ces phénomènes, notamment la difficulté de concilier carrière et famille ou encore de monter les échelons sans adopter un style de leadership « masculin », sont présents aussi au Canada[4] (Smith, 2015).

Une journaliste interviewée a tenu à me raconter ses symptômes de *burnout* vécus dans ses premières années de métier. Celle-ci décrit un stade de sa vie où elle était complètement envahie par l'anxiété et l'insécurité reliée à son travail, ainsi qu'une incapacité à réaliser les tâches élémentaires. Une autre évoque ses longues nuits d'angoisse où elle se réveillait en sursaut pour vérifier qu'une tâche avait bien été effectuée.

> C'était vraiment un état mental, physique et psychologique que j'avais jamais vécu de toute ma vie. J'étais, j'avais pu aucune concentration, mais comme aucune concentration. Moi dans la vie, mon sommeil et mon appétit sont pas facilement affectés et là je me suis mise à ne plus être capable de dormir, perte d'appétit, alors là j'ai fait comme ouf ok ça c'est comme un red flag un peu intense qui transcende justement les moments où j'étais en train de travailler, ça devenait envahissant dans plein de sphères (J5).

> Je me souviens que souvent je me réveillais en pleine nuit avec des angoisses ah shit j'ai écrit telle affaire dans mon texte et je pense que ce n'était pas ça et de me lever, d'aller ouvrir mon laptop, d'aller ouvrir mon cahier de notes à deux heures du matin pour aller vérifier est-ce que j'ai vraiment écrit ça ou est-ce que je me suis trompé est-ce que si est-ce que ça (J3).

En terminant, quelle est la relation entre les quatre figures ? Mon hypothèse est que le journalisme, tel qu'il est conçu en ce moment, produit en tout temps ces quatre figures coincées dans un mouvement dialectique, c'est-à-dire de relation, de mouvement, de négation et de sublimation. Dans une journée de travail, un journaliste, et mes entrevues le confirment, peut se sentir à la fois passionné, surchargé, méritocratisé et déprimé, le tout de manière cyclique. Et c'est précisément la composition de ce cycle dialectique qui est toxique pour ceux et celles qui le vivent : il coince les journalistes dans des « up and down » qui finissent par ronger leur santé, définie comme « la possibilité de dépasser la norme qui définit le normal momentané, la possibilité de tolérer des infractions à la norme habituelle et d'instituer des normes nouvelles dans des situations nouvelle » (Clot, 2017, p. 96). D'où la nécessité pour ceux et celles qui quittent ce métier de chercher un travail qui offre une composition plus supportable.

Le procès de travail actuel produit en ce sens une décomposition de classe : il fait éclater la profession qui pouvait encore créer de grands conflits de travail à la fin du 20e siècle (Demers & Le Cam, 2006) en de multiples entrepreneurs de soi qui tentent tous de conquérir un marché du travail ultra compétitif (Accardo, 2017 ; Ehrenberg, 2010, p. 13), les perdants devant quitter la profession ou

4 Si les analyses féministes sont intéressantes à analyser dans le cas du travail journalistique, il reste qu'une loupe intersectionnelle est difficile à appliquer car le travail créatif émerge à la base au sein d'une division internationale du travail qui confine bon nombre de femmes racisées dans la sphère du travail non-créatif et ménager (Huws, 2014). D'où la nécessité d'une critique des critères à l'embauche au sein des grandes entreprises de presse.

jouer sur la limite entre le journalisme et d'autres métiers de la communication comme les relations publiques ou l'écriture corporative (Deuze & Witschge 2018; O'Donnell et al., 2016).

> Long-term planning and 'moving up the ladder' have been replaced by job-hopping and a portfolio work life as news professionals increasingly have contracts, not careers in journalism. As a consequence, stress and *burnout* are on the rise among newsworkers, with many journalists considering to leave the profession altogether. Precarity and a 'culture of job insecurity' have come to define the lived experience for many inside the contemporary newsroom (Deuze & Witschge, 2018, p. 170-171)

Le défi pour le chercheur, mais aussi pour les journalistes qui veulent changer leurs conditions, est donc de trouver comment briser ce cycle de subjectivités et comment en faire émerger un nouveau, ou plutôt comment organiser des luttes qui par leur nouvelle forme de socialité créeront potentiellement de nouvelles subjectivités. Pour Cohen et de Peuter (2020) l'avenir du métier est lié aux différentes luttes syndicales ou à la transformation des relations sociales de propriété existantes. Le projet de recherche Cultural Workers Organize, pour laquelle ces auteurs collaborent avec trois autres chercheurs et chercheuses, a en ce sens créé une ligne du temps de toutes les luttes syndicales menées par les salles de rédaction anglo-saxonne depuis 2015 et les gains revendiqués (Cohen, 2016). Il est donc possible de s'organiser et ce site web offre un guide utile et stratégique.

CONCLUSION

Que dire, maintenant, de notre journaliste-mécanicienne en devenir (qui a, au final, continué à collaborer à temps partiel pour Radio-Canada) ? Visiblement, Marie-Christine Blais était coincée dans un cycle où la subjectivité du Déprimé dominait son quotidien. Pourquoi alors fuir vers une autre classe sociale ? Peut-être justement pour vivre un autre cycle plus supportable. Bryan et al. (2009) rappellent que les métiers flexibles colonisés par la financiarisation du capitalisme, comme le journalisme, imposent de plus en plus une forme de rémunération qui varie en temps réel selon la performance du travailleur ou de la travailleuse (Bryan et al., 2009, p. 467). Ce type de rémunération est insupportable et fait éprouver une certaine nostalgie pour la rémunération fordiste stable qui arrivait toutes les deux semaines.

Mais peut-être est-ce aussi la simple action de fuir qui fait du bien. Une des journalistes que j'ai interviewée m'a indiqué que lorsqu'elle a quitté le métier après son *burnout*, elle a « ressenti un vide et en même temps un calme. J'avais l'impression de me retrouver après un long moment où j'étais comme en mode pilote automatique » (J2). La fuite soigne la déprime, elle libère l'imagination (Laborit, 1976). Beaucoup de journalistes déprimés fuiront et c'est tant mieux pour eux. Mais la question reste celle du après : quoi faire pour éviter de revivre le même cycle, si ce n'est mieux s'y adapter et supporter la douleur ? Pour les marxistes autonomistes, les changements de subjectivité arrivent dans des moments de mobilisation collective. C'est à ce moment que la puissance d'agir peut se décupler (Negri, 2011).

Cela ne veut pas dire que des contradictions n'attendent pas les journalistes qui voudront lutter. De nombreuses divisions existent au sein de la profession, notamment entre les salariés et les pigistes, les temporaires et les permanents ou encore entre les stagiaires et les vedettes. De nombreux obstacles devront être surmontés pour véritablement opérer un changement en profondeur. Cela commence entre autres par la mise en visibilité des déprimés et des « brûlés » qui sont individualisés ou relégués vers les divans des psychologues par le discours professionnel. Cette recherche d'inspiration critique, bien qu'exploratoire et se heurtant à quelques limites (particulièrement le nombre d'entrevues qui reste limité), visent à faire un pas dans cette direction.

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APA Citation

Lamoureux, S. (2021). Le Passionné, le Surchargé, le Méritocratisé et le Déprimé : quatre subjectivités pour penser la composition de classe des journalistes québécoispenser québécois. *Facts & Frictions / Faits et frictions: Débats, pédagogies et pratiques émergentes en journalisme contemporain, 1*(1) 19-34.

The Future of Canadian Journalism and Digital Media

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Abstract

By examining the digital media startups and publications that participated in the Digital News Innovation Challenge and Facebook's Local News Accelerator, this article identifies the factors that contribute to promote digital news innovation and sustainable journalism. This article shows that the two aforementioned programs play a vital role in helping digital media startups, tech companies, and digital publications adopt new ways to connect with readers and generate sustainable revenue. However, consistently funding startups is not a permanent solution. It is also important to address factors such as promoting public service journalism and community engagement to help ensure sustainability.

Keywords: Facebook, new media, digital innovation, local news, media business

Résumé

Le futur du journalisme canadien et médias numériques

En examinant les jeunes entreprises de technologies ainsi que les publications de médias numériques qui ont participé au défi d'innovation en presse numérique et à l'accélérateur de nouvelles locales de Facebook, cet article identifie les facteurs qui contribuent à promouvoir l'innovation dans le domaine de l'information numérique et le journalisme durable. Cet article montre que les deux programmes susmentionnés jouent un rôle essentiel en aidant les entreprises de médias numériques, celles technologiques, et les publications numériques à adopter de nouveaux moyens de communiquer avec les lecteurs et de générer des revenus viables. Cependant, le financement systématique des entreprises n'est pas une solution permanente. Il est également important de prendre en compte des facteurs tels que la promotion du journalisme de service public et l'engagement communautaire afin de garantir la durabilité.

Mots clés: Facebook, nouveaux médias, innovation numérique, actualité locale, entreprise médiatique

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Since the 1750s, Canada's journalism industry has been forced to constantly evolve and adapt to a variety of social and technological obstacles. Kesterton (1967) describes the evolution of the Canadian journalism industry from 1752 to 1967 through Four Press Periods, from the First Press Period, where journalism was reliant on government support and primitive media technology, to the Fourth Press period, where the newspaper industry was in its prime. From the 1990s onwards, the rise of the internet and social media platforms such as Facebook have proved especially challenging for the journalism industry. Since the internet was introduced during the 1990s, the total paid circulation of Canada's daily newspapers has severely declined (Communications Management Inc. [CMI], 2011; 2019). With Facebook reaching over two billion monthly users, many news publishers have come to rely on Facebook to publish and distribute their articles through their platform (Ingram, 2018). While there are numerous indicators that the internet and social media have negatively impacted traditional media, both arguably have several advantages as well. The benefits provided by the internet include the development of online tools that make it easier to: access and gather information; disseminate information from anywhere in the world in real-time; and gain access to digital databases containing information from official and institutional sources (Castells, Parks & Van Der Haak, 2012; D'Haenens, Hermans & Vergeer, 2009; Pavlik, 2000). However, with the world more digitally connected than ever before and the old traditional business models failing, we must ask ourselves: How can we improve business models and digital media startups to allow them to adapt to this new environment?

This article explores how programs such as the Digital News Innovation Challenge (DNIC) and Facebook's Local News Accelerator contribute to innovating the field of digital media, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Canadian journalism industry, and identifies additional factors that must be considered to further promote sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this article consists primarily of interviews with people who were involved, affiliated, and familiar with both the DNIC and Facebook's Local News Accelerator between September 2019 and May 2020. They include Kevin Chan, head of public policy at Facebook Canada; Asmaa Malik, associate professor and graduate program director at Ryerson University's School of Journalism; Roslyn McLarty, co-founder of The GIST; Armel Beaudry Kembe Tchemeube, CEO and founder of Trebble FM; Jeremy Klaszus, founder and editor of The Sprawl; Mario Vasilescu, co-founder of Rewordly Inc. and Readefined; Harleen Kaur, CEO and co-founder of Ground News; Jeanette Ageson, publisher for The Tyee; Farhan Mohamed, former editor-in-chief at The Daily Hive; and Christopher Dornan, associate professor and former director at Carleton University's School of Journalism.

All participants were sent an email invitation asking if they would be willing to participate in the research for this article. After providing confirmation, each participant was emailed a consent form to review and sign. The form outlined the research objectives; re-iterated that participation was voluntary; explained that they would be made identifiable; that the interviews would be recorded; and that the results of the research would be made publicly available. It also gave the participants an option to withdraw within a week of being interviewed. Chan, Malik and Roslyn were interviewed in person, and the rest of the participants were interviewed over the phone. Each interview lasted between 20 to 60 minutes.

THE DIGITAL NEWS INNOVATION CHALLENGE

The DNIC was a Canada-wide incubation program undertaken to help entrepreneurs—both inside and outside the field of journalism—to identify and improve new business models for digital media and tech startups that can help drive innovation in Canada's journalism industry (K. Chan, personal communication, November 21, 2019; April 29, 2020). It consisted of a partnership between the Ryerson School of Journalism, the Digital Media Zone—a leading accelerator for tech startups in Canada—and the Facebook Journalism Project, a global initiative that supports the broader news ecosystem by working with publishers to improve the relationship between journalists, the communities they serve, as well as the local news industry (K. Chan, personal communication, November 21, 2019; Facebook Journalism Project, 2019). The DNIC featured five different startups that participated in weekly workshops and received mentorship by industry professionals from various fields, as well as funding capital that went towards improving their startups.

In two interviews, Facebook's head of public policy, Kevin Chan, said that when he came up with the original idea for the DNIC, the intent was for Facebook to help support innovation in the news industry, such as an accelerator program for digital news innovators (personal communication, November 21, 2019; April 29, 2020). Facebook then took that idea to Ryerson's Digital Media Zone (DMZ) where it was further developed and refined into the DNIC:

> This was the first time we did anything like this in the world and so we wanted to make sure we were in a place that had the

> right sort of capacity. Ryerson was in the biggest city in Canada and housed one of the best accelerators in Canada, but also one of the best journalism schools. (K. Chan, personal communication, November 21, 2019)

Ryerson University's Asmaa Malik—who was also part of the DNIC's steering committee—said that Facebook first reached out to the Digital Media Zone. From there, the DMZ's director Abdullah Snobar reached out to Ryerson's school of journalism in Fall 2017. Malik said that Ryerson had prior experience with news incubators and recognized that the DNIC offered a unique opportunity:

> I think that there is a really big space for innovation in the news in Canada and there's not a lot of investment. There are a few successful startups. But not a lot of deep pockets to invest in them. So, it was a great opportunity. (personal communication, December 10, 2019)

The DNIC was officially announced in November 2017 by the Facebook Journalism Project. In January 2018, Malik, along with other members of the steering committee—including Richard Lachman from Ryerson's Radio and Television Arts School of Media and Natasha Campagna, the director of the Digital Media Zone's Sandbox, a space that helps emerging entrepreneurs refine and develop their business ideas and skills—launched the program with a conference on the future of news (A. Malik, personal communication, December 10, 2019; DMZ, 2017).

The DNIC's open application period lasted between January 25 and March 9, 2018. During that time, around 70 to 80 applications were submitted by startup founders and entrepreneurs—both individuals and teams—with innovative ideas on how to change digital news and storytelling (A. Malik, personal communication, December 10, 2019). Ideal participants—preferably those with journalism, digital media or tech experience—were considered based on a variety of criteria (see Appendix A for a complete list of program requirements). In summary, ideal applicants met required criteria such as: being Canadian citizens; proof of concept; at least one dedicated full-time founder; a robust lean canvass business model; pitched an idea with a core technological component; whether applicants pitching an existing business made less than $100,000 in previous annual revenue; whether the participants could provide diverse voices in underserved communities; as well as having a plan to help resolve issues affecting digital news and journalism in Canada (A. Malik, personal communication, December 10, 2019; DMZ, n.d.).

From more than 70 applicants, the committee narrowed the list down to five finalists who were notified in March 2018. On April 23, 2018, the finalists began a five-month incubation period at the DMZ's Sandbox, where they participated in weekly workshop meetings to develop and scale ideas while being coached by industry professionals such as Malik, an expert in journalism, Corrine Sandler an expert in marketing, as well as Uzair Chutani, an expert in digital marketing and business development (A. Malik, personal communication, December 10, 2019; DMZ, 2017, K. Chan, personal communication, November 21, 2019; April 29, 2020).

According to Chan each group of participants initially received $20,000 out of the $100,000 seed capital. In co-operation with the mentorship team, the applicants established performance goals and milestones. Chan explained that the challenge was designed in a way that, theoretically, not all the teams would be able to receive the maximum funding (personal communication, November 21, 2019). Ultimately, the participants surpassed expectations and completed their performance goals and milestones, allowing them to access the maximum amount of seed capital for improving their startups. Participants also received $50,000 worth of Facebook ad credits which contributed to the scaling and growth of their startups (A. Malik, personal communication, December 10, 2019; K. Chan, personal communication, November 21, 2019). While Facebook was not part of the steering committee or the selection process they did organize symposiums, bring in academics for discussions, invite experts to coach the teams and provide funding capital (A. Malik, personal communication, December 10, 2019; K. Chan, personal communication, November 21, 2019).

On Sept. 28, 2018, the participants had the opportunity to present the results of their startups on "demo day." While the participants from all five startups surpassed expectations, Chan said the real test would be to see how they perform in the years following the DNIC (A. Malik, personal communication, December 10, 2019; K. Chan, personal communication, November 21, 2019).

FINDINGS

The GIST

The GIST is an online news startup that focuses on sports content and contextualizes it for female audiences (Pope, 2018). Roslyn McLarty is one of the co-founders of The GIST, alongside Ellen Hyslop and Jacie deHoop. McLarty explained:

> The purpose of The GIST is to empower women through sports and fill a gap in the traditional sports media landscape that is really targeted towards the avid male fan (...) It can really bring people together, create community and be a big equalizer in workplaces (personal communication, December 10, 2019).

In 2018, UNESCO reported that less than 5% of sports news was devoted to women's sports and only about 12% of sports-related news was reported by women (UNESCO, 2018). "For a lot of women, it's a social currency that they don't have access to and is a community and conversation that they are often excluded from," said McLarty (personal communication, December 10, 2019).

According to McLarty, the DNIC provided their team with the opportunity to be mentored by industry professionals like Malik, work with other entrepreneurs, as well as obtain seed capital and Facebook ad credits (personal communication, December 10, 2019). This helped The GIST expand awareness and readership, which grew from a few thousand to the 10,000 range during their time at the DNIC. Since the end of the challenge, this growth has continued; as of April 2020, the GIST had more than 90,000 members across North America (deHoop, 2020; R. McLarty, personal communication, December 10, 2019; April 17, 2020). Towards the end of April 2021, The GIST surpassed a revenue target of $1 million in seed funding from various investors (Canning, 2021).

Additionally, The GIST also participated in other programs such as The Future of Sport Lab in early 2019, which focuses on sports innovation in the news ecosystem. They also participated in an accelerator during Summer 2019 known as Techstars—a global platform that seeks to advance innovation and help entrepreneurs to succeed—where they had access to a variety of experts and professionals who assisted them (R. McLarty, personal communication, December 10, 2019). In August 2019, the group launched The GIST USA. By September 2020, The GIST had local newsletters in cities across the United States, including New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, as well as Chicago (deHoop, 2020).

In terms of its business model, The GIST focuses on brand partnerships with partners such as FanDuel, Lululemon, Adidas and the NBA (Canning, 2021; Shapiro, 2019; Romero, 2021). They also had a partnership with the NHL's Ottawa Senators, through which The GIST brought some of their subscribers to Ottawa for a Senators game and hosted a panel where they interviewed players and notable women from their organization (R. McLarty, personal communication, December 10, 2019). Their decision for that model was because not all members of their audience are avid sports fans willing to pay for content they can find on other sports sites. Instead, they focused more on making both sports content and the sports community more accessible to women (R. McLarty, personal communication, December 10, 2019; April 17, 2020). As they continue their expansion into the United States, The GIST plans to continue using brand partnerships but are also looking for opportunities to expand into direct consumer streams by offering content of value that their audience would pay to access, such as exclusive memberships or even premium content (R. McLarty, personal communication, December 10, 2019).

One of the challenges they faced was acquiring sufficient capital investment to help build audience numbers and getting the interest of brand partners. According to McLarty, it takes a significant amount of money for a startup eager to become the first to own and market a space that not many people have tried to access before, such as the case with female-centric sports (personal communication, December 10, 2019). McLarty stated that for startups like The GIST to become sustainable, their audiences must reach sufficient size to generate enough revenue to cover operating costs. In the case of The GIST, McLarty estimated this would be somewhere in the 100,000's range (personal communication, December 10, 2019; April 17, 2020). McLarty also said that it is also important to listen to what their audience wants by collecting feedback and data to identify what resonates best with them and use that information to improve their startup (personal communication, December 10, 2019).

After reaching a sufficient audience size, The GIST was able to pursue brand partners. The experience also pushed them to think about what else they could do to improve and expand their startup such as how to leverage and integrate new technology, introduce offerings of value such as premium content, as well as expand to multiple media platforms (R. McLarty, personal communication, December 10, 2019; April 17, 2020).

In terms of long-term impact, McLarty and her co-founders' want to make The GIST a go-to source for sports for women in North America:

> There's kind of been a shift in society towards women's empowerment. As you know, people are growing up. Younger and younger generations, they're not necessarily looking for an authoritative source for news. They're looking for something where they can build relationships with that news provider, be a part of a niche community around where that's coming from and be able to voice their own opinions within that too (R. McLarty, personal communication, December 10, 2019).

Overall, McLarty said she and her co-founders were grateful for the opportunity to be part of the challenge. She also said that their mentors at the DNIC helped them to think about how and what they could do to improve the growth of their startup in the future.

The Sprawl

Jeremy Klaszus is the founder and editor of The Sprawl, a form of pop-up journalism in Calgary that focuses on local civic affairs and covers in-depth local stories and issues, such as how Calgarians have opposed plans for reckless urban development (J. Klaszus, personal communication, December 12, 2019; Lambert, 2020; Sandbox by DMZ, 2018). The Sprawl's business model sustains itself through crowdfunding: "It's not a subscription model, but a membership model where nothing is behind a paywall that people can sign up for. They sign up because they believe in the work and they value it" (J. Klaszus, personal communication, December 12, 2019).

Through crowdfunding, The Sprawl was earning more than $9,000 per month as of April 2020. Klaszus said this amount goes towards paying salaries for him and his team and contributes to the publication's freelance budget (J. Klaszus, personal communication, December 12, 2019; April 17, 2020).

The Sprawl listens to its audience to identify what they would like to see covered, according to Klaszus. During Fall 2019, Klaszus surveyed the Sprawl's members by emailing them a Google form, then later held a meeting at a local pub for further discussion. According to Klaszus, the in-person component is vital in helping to build a community around The Sprawl (J. Klaszus, personal communication, December 12, 2019). At the start of the DNIC, The Sprawl had between 300 to 400 monthly contributors. Towards the end of April 2020, their number of monthly contributors has increased significantly to more than 1,000. This increase in membership comes with additional benefits, such as paying more for freelance pieces (J. Klaszus, personal communication, December 12, 2019; April 17, 2020).

In terms of challenges, Klaszus (personal communication, December 12, 2019) said that one of their ongoing struggles was building an audience. He also explained that one of the issues he had with the DNIC is how they constantly refer to the idea of "going to scale"—which he described as expanding The Sprawl to other markets and replicating its model in other cities. Klaszus said that this idea did not correspond with honing The Sprawl's model "for the community that it serves"

(J. Klaszus, personal communication, December 12, 2019; April 17, 2020).

> I think that's more of what the challenge is. When you do that, and you focus on doing better in the area you're serving—serving your audience—then that does drive people to engage with it and drives new people to sign up. So, I guess I came at it from a new angle (J. Klaszus, personal communication, December 12, 2019).

Klaszus said that the challenge did touch on the topic of local focus and community, but that it was mostly geared towards helping startups "go to scale." While he understands the importance of going to scale, he also said that it should not be the overarching aspiration:

> I think that with incubators like this, they need to be a little more conscious of the reality of running these things. For example, a small journalism startup is not a tech startup. The idea is not to take it to scale or to replicate it in cities elsewhere. That might be a model but it's not necessarily the model (...) The tech startup world is all about growth and growing fast and journalism is not about that if you're going to do it sustainably. (J. Klaszus, personal communication, December 12, 2019)

In terms of ensuring sustainable journalism in Canada, while Klaszus is more focused on sustaining journalism on a local level in Calgary than across Canada, The Sprawl still provides an inspirational model for others to replicate and contribute to the "ecosystem of emerging digital journalism startups" (J. Klaszus, personal communication, December 12, 2019).

Overall, participating in the DNIC helped to increase their number of monthly contributors and the $50,000 in Facebook ad credits helped to promote people's awareness of The Sprawl and its philosophy. The funding capital they received also allowed them to create a new and improved website (J. Klaszus, personal communication, December 12, 2019).

Trebble FM

Armel Beaudry Kembe Tchemeube is the founder and CEO of Trebble FM, an online platform where a variety of media publications, such as *CNN* and *CBC News*, can produce micro podcasts, or shortcasts, across voice-activated devices such as Amazon Echo, Google Home and Samsung voice systems (Pope, 2018; A.B.K. Tchemeube, personal communication, December 13/16, 2019; April 20, 2020).

> Trebble makes it easy for people to stay informed in a short amount of time (...) The way it works is through our mobile app, you follow different people and different organizations that you trust and every day you get a personalized feed of shortcasts that you can listen to. (A.B.K. Tchemeube, personal communication, December 13/16, 2019)

Despite not having a journalism background, Tchemeube's experience in software development proved useful in creating Trebble. Around the start of the DNIC, Trebble was originally a web platform and its business model involved charging media publishers. After updating its business model, Trebble offers its product for free and generates revenue by charging the "listener experience" instead of the publishers (A.B.K. Tchemeube, personal communication, December 13/16, 2019).

Tchemeube said the reason for this was because they realized that Trebble would not receive enough money by charging publishers. Instead, they decided that because of the new media ecosystem, the best way to attract publishers was to offer it for free:

> The current business model is really to run all your ads for people that are listening to the conventional platform or to allow publishers to provide premium content. So, we could publish premium content for like a dollar a month, then Trebble would get a percentage of it and then the publisher would get the rest. (A.B.K. Tchemeube, personal communication, December 13/16, 2019)

If publishers choose to provide content for free, Trebble will "put ads between their content and a percentage of the revenue generated through those ads will go to the publisher." However, Tchemeube said that if a publisher offers Trebble shortcasts—for example, say $1-2 per month—then Trebble would receive 20% of the revenue (A.B.K. Tchemeube, personal communication, December 13/16, 2019). According to Tchemeube at the time of the interview, they were not yet monetizing content (personal communication, December 13/16, 2019; April 20, 2020). Before deciding to monetize—which he said was expected to go into effect by the end of 2020—they were more focused on raising awareness for Trebble and building its audience, rather than generating revenue.

When Trebble joined the DNIC, they ran into difficulties competing with Google and Amazon, which had access to features that Trebble lacked. As a result, they refocused their efforts to work on a mobile app. In April 2019, Trebble launched its app and, after a year, it was downloaded by around 7,000 people (A.B.K. Tchemeube, personal communication, December 13/16, 2019; April 20, 2020).

One of the biggest challenges that Tchemeube faced was that most media publishers prioritized their core business and were not likely to try new products unless it was shown to be beneficial to them. "They wanted to be sure that this was going to bring them revenue right away or increase the popularity of their main business," Tchemeube said (personal communication, December 13/16, 2019). When reaching out to publishers, Tchemeube said he looked to both traditional and new media (personal communication, December 13/16, 2019). While people in new media were more open to trying new things and had fewer restrictions, they were also less likely to try Trebble unless it could bring them revenue and benefit their business.

One of the advantages offered by Trebble is that it is not only limited to publishers but can also be beneficial for local media. According to Tchemeube, independent journalists can also use Trebble to distribute news information through shortcasts, which could potentially create a sustainable way for them to generate revenue:

> We've seen that a lot of local newspapers have limited their reach or content because it is very difficult to sustain the operation of running local media publications. We think by offering a new way to reach the audience and a new way to monetize the content distributed to the audience, we can track and create a sustainable way for independent journalists to do their job. (personal communication, December 13/16, 2019)

Overall, Tchemeube said that he benefited from the DNIC's weekly workshops and being mentored by Malik, and the other mentors in the fields of business, digital marketing and media. As well, the $100,000 in financial support and $50,000 Facebook ad credits helped raise awareness for Trebble online (personal communication, December 13/16, 2019).

Readefined

Mario Vasilescu is the CEO and co-founder of Rewordly Inc., a corporation that includes the startups Rewordly, Readefined and Readocracy (M. Vasilescu, personal communication, January 24, 2020). During the DNIC, Vasilescu and his team were focusing on Readefined, a continuation of Rewordly, which provides content analytics to online publishers who use it to verify how intensely people pay attention to and engage with their content (Pope, 2018; M. Vasilescu, personal communication, January 24, 2020).

During the DNIC, Vasilescu said they were trying to determine which type of publishers they wanted to help such as bloggers, as well as both local and large publishers. The business model used by Readefined is known as "Business to Business Software as a Service" or B2B SaaS. It is considered the "backbone" of most contemporary businesses and relies on a subscription-based model where businesses pay for a subscription to regularly access tools and software to help their operations run more efficiently (Coleman, 2021; M. Vasilescu, personal communication, January 24, 2020; April 17, 2020). As cited on Readefined's website, they offered either "The Lean Blogger" option, which costs $5 a month, or "The High Potential" option, which offers additional services and benefits for $19 a month. These services were also offered for free via the startup's "Partner & Ads program (Readefined, n.d.).

According to the website, the monthly rates for both options corresponded to limited beta pricing.In terms of issues faced when first starting up, Vasilescu explained that there is “no playbook for doing a startup correctly,” and that each startup and its challenges are unique. In terms of challenges, people often underestimate how difficult it is to find new ways to make money in ways that no one has done before (M. Vasilescu, personal communication, January 24, 2020).

Vasilescu said a recurring problem for most startups—especially in the journalism and publishing spaces—is that, while they are likely to receive plenty of interest, this is mostly an opportunity for people to educate themselves and their colleagues for free on the latest trends in the ecosystem. Even if some people show interest in a startup, this does not mean they have the desire to buy what it is offering (personal communication, January 24, 2020). “Getting the meetings, getting people excited is very easy. Closing the deal is a different conversation and that is a recurring issue everywhere, but especially in journalism,” he said (M. Vasilescu, personal communication, January 24, 2020).

Another common problem is that many startups that attempt to engage in journalism spaces often end up diverting into non-journalism spaces or shut down completely because of how hard it is to succeed (M. Vasilescu, personal communication, January 24, 2020). For example, in the case of the failed media startup OpenFile.ca, many in legacy media recognized its potential to change online news and community journalism. However, due to financial issues, it suspended operations in 2012 (Renders, 2018).

The DNIC’s workshops and learning from experienced mentors helped them identify which publishers would be best for Readefined. Both during and after the DNIC, Vasilescu said they found beta partners to help generate early revenue. While participating in the DNIC did generate some publicity for Readefined and the Facebook ad credits did help in terms of running ad campaigns and experiments which generated exposure, Vasilescu said they found a lot more exposure with other organizations such as the Online News Association, which gave them a lot more brand awareness (personal communication, January 24, 2020).

For programs such as the DNIC, Vasilescu said that they force participants into a schedule and add milestones, which provides structure to startups, especially early ones, and narrows their focus towards a single objective. Vasilescu added that the funding was also beneficial when building something technological, and can help with testing, experimenting, and producing a viable product (personal communication, January 24, 2020); April 17, 2020).

The validation of working with a reputable institution, organization or program, was also beneficial, as it can promote people’s interest in a startup and what it has to offer. However, as a Canadian program, the DNIC would not be as well known outside of Canada or to people unfamiliar with the journalism space. According to Vasilescu, one thing that would have made a big difference in the DNIC was the possibility of establishing formal partnerships with Canadian publishers (i.e. the *Globe and Mail,* the *Toronto Star*, etc.), which could potentially result in beneficial opportunities for the tech and digital media startups, such as testing their products or collaborating on a media series (personal communication, January 24, 2020).

While journalism is not the primary focus of Vasilescu and his team, the broad objective of their startup is to have an impact on the information ecosystem in digital media and to change how people value and think of information online (M. Vasilescu, personal communication, January 24, 2020).

Ground News

Harleen Kaur, a Ryerson alumnus and a former space system engineer affiliated with NASA, is the CEO and co-founder of the tech-based digital media startup Ground News (Pope, 2018; H. Kaur, personal communication, February 28, 2020). According to Kaur, Ground News is the first news source comparative platform that helps audiences better understand the news ecosystem by consuming news derived from over 50,000 news sources worldwide (personal communication, February 28, 2020).

All Ground sources, including suggestions for under-represented publications, are properly vetted and fact checked, before being allowed on their site. (H. Kaur, personal communication, February 28, 2020; Ground News, n.d.). Along with helping people understand and identify potential media bias by showing both sides of the news spectrum, Ground News also addresses misinformation. As an engineer, Kaur was surprised by the fact that most people can't easily get access to reliable news. "We have so much tech around us that we can send spacecraft to Pluto, but people, if they're reading news on Facebook or something, they can't tell if a piece of news is real or not," she said (personal communication, February 28, 2020).

In recent years—especially during Donald Trump's presidency—the rise of fake news and misinformation has negatively affected many people's trust in the media, including traditional media (H. Kaur, personal communication, February 28, 2020; Newman et al., 2020; Strömbäck et al., 2020). Nowadays, most young adults between 18-24 years old—especially during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic—are more likely to get their news from social media but are also likely to encounter false and misleading information (Vorhaus, 2020; Newman et al., 2020, p.9-10). Ground News is intended as a tool to help people with no journalism experience better understand how a news story is covered by different media sources (H. Kaur, personal communication, February 28, 2020; Sampathkumar, 2020). In terms of their targeted audience, Kaur said an ideal consumer for their startup is someone who reads the news but is not tied down to a single source and is open to multiple perspectives of the same news story (personal communication, February 28, 2020). During the DNIC, Ground News had around 5,000 to 10,000 users worldwide. In February 2020, Ground had more than 30,000 daily users (H. Kaur, personal communication, February 28, 2020).

Ground News relies on a subscription-based business model where people pay for the pro-version for either a monthly or yearly fee. According to Kaur, a subscription-based model makes more sense to her than an advertising one. "We think ads are not the way to go forward. Ads have done a lot of disservice to the news industry," she said (personal communication, February 28, 2020). Studies have shown that media outlets that rely too much on advertising are more likely to engage in media bias (Ellman & Germano, 2009, p. 680-681, 699; Brangwynne, 2020).

Before the launch, Ground News was a free product. For the last two years, including the time at the DNIC, the team has been gathering data to test and evaluate people's responses to Ground News and whether they liked its features. Overall, Kaur said the responses were positive, and the number of users continues to grow following the launch of the pro version in January 2020 (H. Kaur, personal communication, February 28, 2020).

When it comes to challenges that Ground News faces, Kaur identifies marketing as one of the biggest, saying, "Making people aware that a product exists is a very difficult and expensive task to do for a small company" (personal communication, February 28, 2020). In the long term, Kaur hopes that Ground News will not only become a vital news tool but a self-sustaining organization. Furthermore, by helping people to better understand how the news is presented from multiple sources, it helps to restore people's trust in the media ecosystem (H. Kaur, personal communication, February 28, 2020).

Overall, Kaur described her time at the DNIC as a valuable experience. She said the team learned a great deal from mentors like Malik and Chutani, who provided valuable insight into the news industry, marketing and how to grow a user base. The $100,000 in funding and the Facebook ad credits also contributed to the growth of Ground News (personal communication, February 28, 2020).

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF DNIC PARTICIPANTS

Overall, the participants responded positively to the DNIC and described it as a beneficial experience. Correlating benefits include being mentored by industry professionals with expertise in journalism, marketing and business, as well as the funding capital and Facebook ad credits used to promote growth and awareness for their startups.

According to each of the participants, areas of improvement include:

1. Provide access to a model where participants could choose from a diverse selection of mentors best suited to assist them;
2. Avoid making "going to scale" assumptions and taking into account that some models may want to maintain a local or hyperlocal focus instead of expanding or replicating into a model that covers larger areas;
3. Increase the duration of the program which can lead to more support;
4. Devote their focus to establishing formal partnerships with Canadian publishers, as well as making connections and increasing access to news organizations.

According to Carleton University's Christopher Dornan, programs such as the DNIC and Facebook's Local News Accelerator help address the difficult circumstances affecting the journalism industry. "Certainly, just on their own merits, both the local news initiative and the digital media startup funds are indeed welcome as they're beneficial contributions to a difficult situation," he stated (personal communication, April 21, 2020). On the other hand, Dornan also said that while the DNIC startups had original and worthwhile ideas, they are not sufficient. The startups consisted of mostly digital tools and niche publications—which Dornan said are doing well in the current information landscape—that focus on specific information interests (personal communication, April 21, 2020). Overall, the DNIC startups do not solve the issue involving the collapse of the public service community journalism's business model (C. Dornan, personal communication, April 21, 2020). This was also a concern expressed by Bob Franklin (2014) when presenting at the conference *The Future of Journalism: in an Age of Digital Media and Economic Uncertainty* when he refers to the "crisis of civic adequacy" (p. 482).

Dornan argues that digital news startups that acquire funding must use what they receive to become self-sustaining, rather than constantly rely on "cash injections" such as Facebook's Local News Accelerator, which he said fails to address the structural financial issues affecting local news, as a form of life-support (personal communication, April 21, 2020). Likewise, Franklin (2014) presents evidence citing that most hyperlocal media do not possess the same resources that local newspapers had when it comes to "local government coverage" (p. 482).

While Dornan says Facebook's initiatives do help support the journalism industry (personal communication, April 21, 2020), others argue it should be doing more. Instead of relying on platforms such as Facebook to provide funds for journalism innovation and production, some experts claim that another option would be to subject social media companies to a tax or levy similar to the CanadaMedia Fund, which receives levies and fees from cable and media companies that go towards funding the production of Canadian content (*Financial Post,* 2017; Menzies, 2020). According to Dornan , this would yield revenue that can be used to support the civic journalism that platforms such as Facebook have negatively impacted (personal communication, April 21, 2020).

HOW DID COLLABORATION BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS HELP?

During the DNIC, the participants benefited by learning from and helping each other to develop solutions to different problems. Interestingly, The Sprawl's Klaszus was the only DNIC participant with a traditional journalism background.

> I think everybody in our cohort brought something different to it. Some had more of a platform or a tech solution. Certainly, I was coming from the journalism side (...) We bounced around ideas and kind of supported and gave each other insight of what was working in our worlds and what wasn't (J. Klaszus, personal communication, December 12, 2019).

McLarty and her co-founders from The GIST, who have backgrounds in business, seemed to benefit from a lack of traditional journalism experience:

> The fact that we did not have a journalism background ended up being a competitive advantage to us because we ended up being able to create this voice that just sounded like it's your sports-obsessed witty best-friend that's telling you the gist

> of what's happening in the sports world (R. McLarty, personal communication, December 10, 2019).

Similarly, Kaur said that despite not being a journalist, she did not have any trouble running Ground News. Both she and Tchemeube from Trebble FM also benefited from interacting with their fellow participants (H. Kaur, personal communication, February 28, 2020; A.B.K. Tchemeube, personal communication, December 13/16, 2019).

> It's not just us doing everything on our own. Because this is an ecosystem challenge of what the future of news could be online. That is not something that any one entity or institution can figure out. It is important to work with partners. (K. Chan, personal communication, November 21, 2019)

While it is uncertain if the DNIC will be repeated, it still proved a successful pilot project considering the positive experiences reported by the five startups. Building on the initial idea of the pilot, Facebook went on to conduct a three-month local news accelerator for local news publishers in North America (Chan, personal communication, November 21, 2019).

FACEBOOK'S LOCAL NEWS ACCELERATOR

First announced in February 2019, Facebook's Local News Accelerator is a global effort to support and promote innovation in the journalism industry by assisting local publishers to develop effective self-sustaining business models. This project, in collaboration with the Canadian Journalism Foundation, invited 11 publishers from across Canada as part of a $2.5-million investment. For more than three months, the program provided resources such as tools, training, and access to industry professionals to assist with digital audience development (Dinsdale, 2019).

The Tyee and The Daily Hive, which are both local publications with a focus on digital media, were among the participants.

The Tyee

The Tyee is a digital news magazine in Vancouver, B.C., that publishes mostly provincial stories, along with a few international ones, on a variety of topics. Jeanette Ageson, the publisher of The Tyee, said their business model is mixed with approximately half of their budget coming from ongoing investments from The Tyee's owner. Thirty-five percent and growing is from the "Tyee Builders"—a reader donation program—and the rest of the funding comes from advertising and renting out office space (Ageson and Cooper, 2019; J. Ageson, personal communication, March 6, 2020).

The Tyee was invited to participate in Facebook's Local News Accelerator, which provided three in-person multimedia workshops, where they were given training and presentations from industry leaders who introduced them to audience development concepts and practices such as how to attract people to their site, get them to sign up for their email list, as well as how to convert readers into paying members. They also received a $100,000 grant after submitting a plan for how they were going to use the funds, followed by a report explaining how the funds were spent (J. Ageson, personal communication, March 6, 2020).

According to Ageson, their coach was not an expert in journalism, but rather digital marketing (personal communication, March 6, 2020). They were introduced to basic marketing concepts and best practices on how to attract readership to The Tyee, which has seen noticeable improvements in recent months. In December 2019, they launched a fundraising campaign that increased the number of monthly donors by 25%. They also introduced a newsletter sign-up campaign at the end of January 2020 which increased their email list by 11% (J. Ageson, personal communication, March 6, 2020). The Tyee's "Follow Us" webpage, reports some 30,000 subscribers read their eNewsletter each week (The Tyee, n.d.). According to The Tyee's 2020 Impact Report, along with support from the Facebook Journalism Project, over 6,500 people supported The Tyee, which received a total of $553,000 in revenue, a 58% increase compared to 2019 (The Tyee, 2020, pp. 11-12).

According to Ageson, The Tyee faces challenges such as figuring out how to develop and adopt a business model that can generate revenue, as well as promote discoverability:

> Getting your materials out there to new people is a different kind of challenge than working with a print product (...) Getting your publication in front of the right people and bringing them on board and making them loyal readers, that can sometimes be a challenge, especially if you don't have a huge marketing budget. (personal communication, March 6, 2020)

Ageson said the program allows participants the opportunity to learn from each other and other industries, allowing them to come up with potential solutions and adapting them to the digital journalism space (personal communication, March 6, 2020).

The Daily Hive

The Daily Hive is an online newspaper founded in 2008, where it started as a two-person opinion-focused blog based in Vancouver (F. Mohamed, personal communication, March 9, 2020). Today, The Daily Hive is part of Buzz Connected Media and operates across North America. They focus on covering local news in the cities they are based in, as well as some coverage of national and international stories (F. Mohamed, personal communication, March 9, 2020). Their business model generates advertising revenue through sponsored content and display advertising. According to Mohamed, their primary focus during the program was not on how to make more money, but rather how to grow and develop their audiences (F. Mohamed, personal communication, March 9, 2020).

As a digital media platform, most of the work and growth they have done has been on social media. According to Mohamed (personal communication, March 9, 2020), the growing level of competition within the social media space has been especially challenging. However, despite this, Mohamed said that there is also room for opportunity. This includes finding new ways to overcome digital media issues, such as diversifying revenue streams.

Mohamed explained that The Daily Hive participated in the Local News Accelerator to find new opportunities to learn from their peers in the industry, both local and international. "It was really interesting to learn about what people were doing and how they were growing. Everyone has different challenges they were facing, but they all pretty much line up," Mohamed said (personal communication, March 9, 2020).

According to Mohamed, one of the best things about the accelerator is that participants can talk about the problems they face with experts and professionals and come up with different solutions to address them. "Not all of us are in direct competition with one another. The market is huge, and we will all benefit from working together rather than trying to tear each other apart," Mohamed said (personal communication, March 9, 2020). Additionally, Mohamed said that in the journalism industry, it is not sufficient to rely solely on journalism experience:

> One of the biggest weaknesses of the industry is that there's been just a sole focus on journalism. There is more to it, a business can't just be that. You have to look at all the different facets of the business and all the different factors that are weighing into it. (personal communication, March 9, 2020)

CONCLUSION

Historically, journalism has always been considered one of the most resilient institutions in a civilized society (Kesterton 1967, p.1). Even now, it continues to survive and adapt to the evolving media ecosystem. However, compared to previous press periods, the rise of the internet and social media platforms has created new challenges that threaten traditional media.

To ensure their survival, most traditional media have turned to the internet and digital media platforms and are still considered a trusted source of news by most people (News Media Canada, 2019; *The Economist*, 2006). Programs such as the DNIC and Facebook's Local News Accelerator encourage startups, tech companies, and digital publications to adopt new ways to connect with readers and generate sustainable revenue. They provide similar resources such as access to funding to support startups and promote awareness, networking opportunities, as well as experts and professionals from different industries and disciplines, all collaborating to come up with viable, innovative solutions. Additionally, while most digital media startups benefit from expanding and replicating their model in different cities, some startups are better suited towards maintaining a hyperlocal focus.

When it comes to digital journalism startups, the elements to ensure their success and growth include:

(a) building audiences' interest in a startup;

(b) listening to the audience's feedback on how they can improve it;

(c) creating a sense of community with the people that follow them—preferably with an in-person element;

(d) tapping into markets that receive little attention or are underserved by mainstream media;

(e) being familiar with journalism and other fields such as business, marketing and digital strategy;

(f) having a reliable source of revenue; and

(g) promoting awareness of the startup.

In the case of tech startups within the journalism space, they must be able to generate revenue, promote a publication's popularity, as well as increase their readership and traffic. Despite not producing original content, the tech startups interviewed for this study provided benefits to both traditional and local media. The DNIC participants provided positive feedback on the usefulness and advantages gained from participating in it and have taken advantage of the benefits provided to further develop and improve their startups.

Additional factors must be taken into account when looking into future sustainability. Firstly, consistently funding digital media startups is not a long-term solution. Secondly, it is important to address the issue surrounding public service journalism, which is not adequately addressed by the DNIC startups. Additional efforts to support public service journalism must allow for greater engagement at a community level through digital media. Consequently, this could also contribute to promoting readership and developing sustainable business models.

Developing effective business models in the digital ecosystem is a top priority. The DNIC and Facebook's Local News Accelerator are a necessary lifeline to assist in empowering digital media and tech startups to identify barriers and determine potential strategies they can implement to ensure their success and viability.

APPENDIX A

DIGITAL NEWS INNOVATION CHALLENGE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Source: https://dmz.ryerson.ca/digital-news-innovation-challenge/

1. INTRODUCTION

Ryerson University (the "Sponsor") and Facebook Inc. have collaborated to create this Digital News Innovation Challenge. The Sponsor, through the Sponsors' university incubator the DMZ has launched 'Digital News Innovation Challenge' to find and support leading digital news ideas and early-stage tech companies driving innovation in journalism and news organizations and to establish a customized incubation program (the "Program").

2. APPLICATION OPEN PERIOD

(a) Applications for the Program will be accepted between the period of January 25, 2018 and 11:59 p.m. on March 9, 2018 (the "Application Open Period"). To be considered, your Application (defined below) must be submitted during the Application Open Period.

3. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

(a) The Program is open to individuals, teams or start-up businesses (each an "Applicant) who meet the eligibility requirements set out in this Section.

(b) If the Applicant is an individual or team, each individual must:
(i) be a resident of Canada;
(ii) be of the age of majority in their province of residence at the time of submission of the Application; and
(iii) be willing to incorporate a business if selected as a Program Participant.

(c) If the Applicant is a start-up business, the Applicant must:
(i) Have prior year annual revenue of less than $100,000 for the business that is the subject of the Application;
(ii) Have at least one dedicated full-time founder who is able to bind the start up business and who is resident of Canada and the age of majority in their province of residence at the time of submission of the Application (the "Representative");
(iii) be incorporated or willing to incorporate the start-up business if selected as a Program Participant; and
(iv) not have any bankruptcy, insolvency or other similar proceedings brought by creditors or government agencies pending against the business.

(d) An individual, team or start-up business is not eligible to have any Application considered if the individual, any team member or any directing mind (founder, co- founder, CEO, president, officer, director) of the start-up business is: a) an employee (except an employee who is also a student of Ryerson University), officer, director, governor, representative or agent of either Ryerson University or Facebook, including each of their subsidiaries, affiliates or related companies (the "Sponsor Parties").

(e) Applicants must,

(i) Have a driven and coachable leadership team
(ii) Have a robust lean canvass business model;
(iii) Plan to solve a compelling problem within the Canadian digital news and journalism landscape; and
(iv) Have an idea that has a technological component at its core.

4. HOW TO APPLY?

(a) An Applicant may apply for entry into the Program anytime during the Application Open Period by completing and electronically submitting the application form available at: https://dmz.ryerson.ca/digital-news-innovation-challenge/ (the "Application Form" and once submitted, the "Application").

5. CONDITIONS TO APPLICATION

(a) There is a limit of one (1) Application per Applicant (individual, team or business) during the Application Open Period. If it is discovered that any Applicant attempted to submit more than one Application, that Applicant (including all individuals associated with the Applicant) may be disqualified from consideration for the Program.
(b) All Applications are confidential and will be used by the Sponsor (and any other company or individual engaged in the provision services related to this Program, including judges and mentors) for the sole purpose of administering and judging the Application. Applications will not be returned to the Applicants.

(c) By submitting an Application, the Applicant agrees as follows:
(i) to comply with these Program Requirements and with the decisions of the Sponsor, which are irrevocable and are binding in all matters related to the Program;
(ii) the Application, including the technological solution developed or conceptualized by the Applicant does not violate the rights of any third party (for example, it does not defame, infringe or violate publicity or privacy rights or any person, living or deceased, or otherwise infringe upon any person's, entity's, or organization's personal or property rights, including but not limited to, intellectual property rights); and
(iii) if selected as a Program Participant:

(A) the Applicant (including the team) must be willing to locate at the Sandbox by DMZ during the 5 month incubation period starting on or about April 23, 2018, exceptions will be at the discretion of the Sponsor;

(B) the Applicant must sign a Program Participant Agreement that includes performance based targets for access to seed capital;

(C) a member of the Applicant (the individual, team member or Representative) must be present at one of the four weekly meetings with the Entrepreneurs in Residence at the DMZ in Toronto, Ontario;

(D) the Applicant must be present in person on demo day, on or about September 28, 2018; and

(E) the Applicant must be present or have a virtual presence for in-progress demos during up to three (3) public events during the Program.

6. PROGRAM DETAILS

(a) There are five (5) Program participant spots available for the Applicants that obtain the highest scores for admission judging in accordance with these Program Requirements.

(b) The Program consists of:

(i) acceptance into a customized digital news incubation program for a period of five (5) months at the Sandbox by DMZ, including access to academic and business mentorship and workshops;
(ii) Sponsor and the Program Participant entering into the Sponsors Digital News Innovation membership agreement (the "Program Participant Agreement"), including performance based targets and milestones for the new business;
(iii) if necessary, establishment of a business entity for the Applicant; and
(iv) potential access to seed capital of up to $100,000 (payable to the business entity only) if performance targets and milestones (as set out in the Program Membership Agreement) are met to the satisfaction of the mentorship team for the business.

7. PROGRAM PARTICIPANT SELECTION

7.1 Stage 1 - Shortlist

(a) A panel of judges (the "Stage 1 Judges") will be appointed by the Sponsors to judge each Application on the basis of the following criteria ("Stage 1 Criteria"):

	Evaluation Criteria	**Weight**
(a)	Business is scalable and has viability to solve a problem in digital news innovation (measured by size of market opportunity)	20%
(b)	Make innovative use of technology (software) as part of their business solution	20%
(c)	Quality of a lean canvas business model and, if applicable, prototype.	20%
(d)	Have an effective brand/business presentation	20%
(e)	Have evidence of a well-developed set of milestones and goals for the 5 month program	20%

(b) Each Application will be given a score (the "Stage 1 Score") by the Stage 1 Judges. Applications with the top ten (10) Stage 1 Scores will be selected as eligible shortlisted Applicants ("Eligible Shortlisted Applicants"). Judging is scheduled to be completed on or about March 16, 2018 (the "Stage 1 Selection Date"). In the event of a tie between two or more Applications based on the Stage 1 Score, the Application that receives the highest combined score in criterion (d) of the Stage 1 Criteria will be deemed to have the higher Stage 1 Score.

(c) The Sponsor, or its designated representative, will make a maximum of three (3) attempts to contact the representative for the Applicant (as set out in the Application) of each of the Eligible Shortlisted Applicants by telephone or email (using the information provided on the Application) within three (3) days of the Stage 1 Selection Date. If the representative of the Eligible Shortlisted Applicant winner cannot be contacted within three (3) days of the Stage 1 Selection Date, or if there is a return of any notification as undeliverable, then the applicable Applicant will be disqualified, and the Sponsor reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to select an alternate Applicant as an Eligible Shortlisted Applicant. Eligible Shortlisted Applicants will be contacted on or about March 16, 2018. Once confirmed, the Eligible Shortlisted Applicant will become a "Shortlisted Applicant".

7.2 Stage 2 – Selection for the Program

(a) The Shortlisted Applicants will be invited to make a twenty (20) minute in-person pitch to a separate panel of judges appointed by the Sponsor (the "Stage 2 Judges) on March 27 and March 29, 2018. The Stage 2 Judges will judge each pitch on the basis of the following criteria 9the ("Stage 2 Criteria"):

	Evaluation Criteria	**Weight**
(a)	Sze and importance of the problem addressed (economic or social).	20%
(b)	Quality of lean canvas business model (robust, well thought out).	20%
(c)	Uniqueness of the solution (relative to competitors and in terms of intellectual property).	20%
(d)	Clarity and effectiveness of the business presentation.	20%
(e)	Have a leadership team comprised of driven, coachable and collaborative people with some expertise in the area of focus.	20%

(b) Each pitch will be given a score (the "Stage 2 Score") by the Stage 2 Judges. Shortlisted Applicants with the top five (5) Stage 2 Scores will be selected as the eligible participants for the Program ("Eligible Program Participants"). Judging is scheduled to be completed on or about March 27 and March 29, 2018 (the "Stage 2 Selection Date"). In the event of a tie between two or more Shortlisted Applicants based on the Stage 2 Score, the Application that receives the highest combined score in criterion (d) of the Stage 2 Criteria will be deemed to have the higher Stage 2 Score.

(c) The Sponsor, or its designated representative, will make a maximum of three (3) attempts to contact the representative for the five (5) Eligible Program Participants by telephone or email (using the information provided on the Application) within five (5) business days of the end of the Stage 2 Selection Date. If the representative cannot be contacted within five (5) business days of the end of the Stage 2 Selection Date, or if there is a return of any notification as undeliverable, then the applicable Applicant will be disqualified, and the Sponsor reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to select an alternate Applicant as an Eligible Program Participant in accordance with these Program Requirements. Eligible Shortlisted Applicants will be contacted on or about March 29, 2018.

8. DECLARATION OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

(a) Before an Eligible Program Participant is declared a participant of the Program (after such declaration a "Program Participant"), the Eligible Program Participant must: A) sign and return a declaration of compliance and release of liability (the "Release") for the Sponsor that requires the Eligible Program Participant to: i) to confirm compliance with these Program Requirements; ii) release the Sponsor Parties from any and all claims, damages, liabilities, costs, and expenses arising from any liability in connection with its participation in the Application process for the Program; iii) indemnify the Sponsor Parties against any and all claims, damages, liabilities, costs, and expenses arising from use of the Application including, without limitation, any claim that the Application or innovative business solution of the Applicant infringes a proprietary interest of any third party; (v) agree to the publication, reproduction and/or other use of the Applicant's name (and its employees, officers and directors) name, address (province and city), statements about the Program and/or photographs or other likeness without further notice or compensation, in any publicity or advertisement carried out by or on behalf of the Sponsor or Facebook in any manner whatsoever, including print, broadcast or the internet; and B) sign the standard Program membership agreement on behalf of the Applicant (the "Program Membership Agreement") which will include a requirement to establish key performance indicators that will be tied the availability of seed funding. If the Eligible Shortlisted Applicant fails to return the properly executed Program documents within 10 business days and/or cannot be a declared a Program Participant in accordance with these Program Requirements for any reason, then the applicable Applicant will be disqualified (and will forfeit all rights to be a Program Participant) and Sponsor reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to select the Applicant who received the next highest judged score to be an Eligible Program Participant (in which case the foregoing provisions of this section shall apply to such new eligible Applicant).

9. RIGHT TO SUSPEND/MODIFY/TERMINATE

(a) If for any reason the Program is not capable of running as planned, including but not limited to infection by computer virus, bugs, tampering, unauthorized intervention, fraud, technical failures, or any other causes which corrupt or affect the administration, security, fairness, integrity or proper conduct of the Program, the Sponsor reserves the right to cancel, suspend and/or modify the Program or the application period, or any part of it, and disqualify any individual or entity who is responsible for such action.

10. LIMITATIONS OF LIABILITY AND RELEASE

(a) No liability or responsibility is assumed by the Sponsor or the Sponsor Parties resulting from the any Applicant's or individual's participation in or attempt to participate in the application process for the Program or ability or inability to upload or download any information in connection with the Program. No responsibility or liability is assumed by the Sponsor or the Sponsor Parties for any of the following occurrences which may affect the operation of the Program or the application process: hardware or software errors; faulty computer, cable, satellite, network, electronic, Internet connectivity or other online or network communication problems; errors or limitations of any Internet service providers, servers, hosts or other providers; garbled, jumbled or faulty data transmissions; failure of any online transmissions to be sent or received; lost, late, delayed or intercepted transmissions; inaccessibility of the Sponsor website in whole or in part for any reason; traffic congestion on the Internet or the Sponsor website; unauthorized human or non-human intervention of the operation of the Program or Sponsor Website, including without limitation, unauthorized tampering, hacking, theft, virus, bugs, or worms; or destruction of any aspect of the Program, or loss, miscount, misdirection, inaccessibility or unavailability of an email account used in connection with the Program. The Sponsor and the Sponsor Parties are not responsible for any printing, typographical, technical, computer, network or human error which may occur in the administration of the Program, the uploading, the processing of Application, the judging of Applications, the announcement of the Program Participants or in any Program-related materials.

Use of the Sponsor website and on-line resources is at user's own risk. The Sponsor and the Sponsor Parties are not responsible for any personal injury or property damage or losses of any kind which may be sustained to user's or any other person's computer or video equipment resulting from application into or participation in the Program.

(b) By submitting an Application, the all Applicants (including all individuals associated with any Applicant) agrees: (i) to release the Sponsor and the Sponsor Parties from any and all claims, damages or liabilities arising from or relating to such Applicant's participation in the application process or Program; (ii) under no circumstances will the Applicant (or any individual associated with the Applicant) be permitted to obtain awards for, and Applicant hereby waives all rights to claim, punitive, incidental, consequential, or any other damages, other than for actual out-of-pocket expenses; (iii) all causes of action arising out of or connected with the application process for the Program, or any selection as a Program Participant will be resolved individually, without resort to any form of class action; and (iv) any and all claims, judgments, and award shall be limited to actual out-of-pocket costs incurred, excluding legal fees and court costs.

(c) By accepting selection as a Program Participant, recipient agrees that the Sponsor Parties will have no liability whatsoever for, and shall be held harmless by Program Participant against, any liability for injuries, losses or damages of any kind to persons or property resulting in whole or in part, directly or indirectly, from participation in the Program. The Sponsor and the Sponsor Parties are not liable in the event that any portion of the Program is canceled due to weather, fire, strike, acts of war or terrorism, or any other condition beyond their control.

11. PRIVACY AND PUBLICITY RELEASE

(a) The Sponsor and its authorized agents will collect, use, and disclose the personal information provided upon application for the Program for the purposes of judging the Applicants and selecting Program Participants, in accordance with the Sponsor's privacy policy, available at http://www.ryerson.ca/privacy.

(b) By accepting selection as a Program Participant, Program Participants (including the founder or any employee, officer or director of the Program Participant) consent to the publication and use of their name, address (city, province), voice, statements, photographs, image and/or likeness, logo, trademark in any form, manner or media whether now known or hereafter devised, including, without limitation, in print, radio, television and on the Internet for any purpose in connection with the Program including, without limitation, for the purposes of advertising and trade, and promoting the Sponsor, Facebook and /or Program, without further notice or compensation.

12. GENERAL

(a) The Program is governed in accordance with the domestic laws of the Province of Ontario and the federal laws of Canada applicable therein.
(b) The Sponsor reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, and without prior notice, to adjust any of the dates and/or timeframes stipulated in these Program Requirements, to the extent necessary, for purposes of verifying compliance with these Program Requirements or for any other reason.
(c) In the event of any discrepancy or inconsistency between the terms and conditions of these Program Requirements and disclosures or other statements contained in any Program-related materials (except the signed Release and the Program Membership Agreement) or the French version of these program requirements, the terms and conditions of the English version of these Program Requirements shall prevail, govern and control to the fullest extent permitted by law.

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APA citation

Guida, M. (2021). The future of Canadian journalism and digital media. *Facts & Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism*, *1*(1) 35-54.

NOTE DE RECHERCHE RESEARCH NOTE

JOURNALISM EDUCATION AND CALL TO ACTION 86

Exploring Conciliatory and Collaborative Methods of Research-Creation with Indigenous Communities

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Abstract

Alternative models of journalism like conciliatory, autonomous, and reconciliation journalism act to move the profession away from the traditional conflict models of storytelling. This is an important move concerning the coverage of Indigenous peoples and issues, which under the conflict model are typically depicted negatively and stereotypically. Given the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 86, which calls on journalists and journalism schools to better educate themselves on Indigenous peoples and issues, these alternative models present an opportunity to meet Call to Action 86. In this research note, implementation of these models by journalism schools is explored. This research note focuses on a particular initiative by Concordia University's journalism department in partnership with Indigenous Clean Energy Social Enterprise and several Indigenous communities that uses alternative models of journalism to report on clean energy initiatives by those same communities. It is hoped that this work will foster long-term, reciprocal relationships built on trust between Indigenous communities and journalists.

Keywords: journalism education, reconciliation, clean energy, social enterprises

Résumé

Éducation journalistique et appel à l'Action 86: Exploration des méthodes conciliantes et collaboratives de recherche-création avec les communautés autochtones

Les modèles alternatifs de journalisme, comme le journalisme de conciliation, d'autonomie et de réconciliation, permettent à la profession de s'éloigner des modèles traditionnels de narration de conflits. Il s'agit d'un changement important en ce qui concernela couverture médiatique et des questions autochtones, qui, dans le cadre du modèle conflictuel, sont généralement décrits de manière négative et stéréotypée. Compte tenu de l'appel à l'action 86 de la Commission Vérité et Réconciliation, qui invite les journalisteset les écoles de journalisme à mieux se former sur les peuples et les questions autochtones, ces modèles alternatifs offrent l'occasion de répondre à l'appel à l'action 86. Dans cette note de recherche, la mise en œuvre de ces modèles par les écoles de journalismeest explorée. Cette note se concentre sur une initiative particulière du département de journalisme de l'Université Concordia, en partenariat avec des communautés autochtones, qui utilise le journalisme de conciliation pour exposer le racisme environnementalet les inégalités en matière d'hydroélectricité, et pour rapporter les initiatives en matière d'énergie propre de ces mêmes communautés. On espère que ce travail favorisera des relations réciproques à long terme fondées sur la confiance entre les communautésautochtones et les journalistes.

Mots-clés : éducation au journalisme, réconciliation, énergie propre, entreprises sociales

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Councillor Kevin King of Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek-Gull Bay First Nation (KZA), speaking with Concordia students. *Photo by Katelyn Thomas*

It has been six years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its final reports, filled with disturbing accounts of systemic racism, abuse, and marginalization of Indigenous peoples (TRC, Final Report, 2015). The Commissioners issued a total of 94 Calls to Action, including a section on media and reconciliation. In this section, the Commissioners noted that coverage of Indigenous peoples and issues often perpetuates negative depictions and stereotypes (TRC, Calls to Action, 2015). This failure of mainstream non-Indigenous Canadian journalism organizations to consistently produce in-depth, contextual stories on Indigenous issues has created considerable damage to people and communities. Furthermore, such a lack of conscientious journalism has contributed to the ongoing racial profiling of Indigenous peoples and systemic oppression (Anderson & Robertson, 2011; Harding, 2006; Fleras, 2014; Fast and Drouin-Gagné, 2019).

The Commissioners wrote that the process of change in the media involves hiring more Indigenous reporters and news managers and increasing news coverage on Indigenous issues. However, this point was only directed at the CBC/Radio-Canada and not to Indigenous media or to privately owned news networks. Instead, the full report focuses mainly on the role of state-owned media (TRC, 2015c) and only indirectly refers to Article 16.2 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which contends:

> States shall take effective measures to ensure that State-owned media duly reflect Indigenous cultural diversity. States, without prejudice to ensuring full freedom of expression, should encourage privately owned media to adequately reflect Indigenous cultural diversity. (UN, 2008, p. 8)

Additionally, the Commissioners called for greater education of current and future journalists, notably on the searing impact of colonial narratives in journalism, about the diverse cultures of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities, and on the specific, individualized issues that Indigenous communities face (TRC, 2015a; TRC, 2015b).

This forms part of the reasoning behind the TRC's Call to Action 86 for journalism programs and media schools to "require education for all students on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law and Aboriginal-Crown relations" (TRC, 2015a, p.10). When the report was written in 2015, very few journalism schools included any level of in-depth instruction on Indigenous issues. Notably, the University of British Columbia was first to offer an entire course on reporting in Indigenous communities in 2011 (University of British Columbia, 2011). Implementation of similar courses in other schools has proven challenging for a variety of reasons including scheduling, funding, and employing suitable faculty (Elliott, 2016; Rodrigues and Raby, 2018). Still, there has been progress as programs across the country take steps to create comparable courses and to include Indigenous pedagogy, knowledge, collaboration, and involvement in their curriculum (Baker, 2016; Todorova, 2016).

Conciliatory journalism...can only operate after acknowledgement and atonement have been reached and deemed satisfactory by the Indigenous people affected.

With this goal in mind, researchers at Concordia University have developed a project to explore methods of slow, collaborative journalism as a response to Call to Action 86, with the final aim of creating coursing and curriculum around its findings. Researchers will investigate and evaluate how using elements of conciliatory journalism may improve journalism education and challenge the problematic representations of Indigenous peoples in Canadian mass media (Fleras, 2014; Fast and Drouin-Gagné, 2019; Harding, 2006). The first phase of the project involved extensive consultation and relationship building between researchers and key members of Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek-Gull Bay First Nation (KZA), a community located about 200 kilometres north of Thunder Bay, on the western shores of Lake Nipigon.

In this context, the word "reconciliation" is used as it was during the TRC hearings and refers to a process of coming together in a spirit of healing. Notably, the TRC rejected notions of "reconciliation" based on the return to a conciliatory relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, because they argue that one never existed in the first place (TRC, 2015c). Instead, according to the Commission:

> [...] reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been indicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behavior. (TRC, 2015c, p. 6-7)

It is within this movement towards action to change behavior that conciliatory journalism exists, but it can only operate after acknowledgement and atonement have been reached and deemed satisfactory by the Indigenous people affected. As such, the research project endeavoured by Concordia University is timely in its efforts to further reconciliation.

The project with KZA was launched after permission was requested and granted by Chief and council to share their story of climate leadership, and a corresponding research plan was developed. This process was undertaken with three objectives in mind, all of equal relevance. The first objective was to collaborate to produce strong journalism with members of KZA and a group of non-Indigenous students who were hired as research assistants (by a non-Indigenous principal investigator). Three trips involving six students and a production period of approximately seven months resulted in the publication of an award-winning multimedia project called "from shore to sky: a reconciliation story" (Salas et al., 2019), created in collaboration with the people of KZA, students, and CTV Montreal as a media partner. The second objective was to examine the learning experience of each student research assistant, especially as it pertained to working in the context of a remote, Indigenous community with added social, practical, and technological challenges. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, student journalists were asked about their motivation to take part in the project, their overall experience and if they had a better understanding of Indigenous issues in Canada because of their participation. The third objective was to explore how KZA community members felt about their experience with the Concordia team, including their impressions on working with the student journalists, their opinion of the final journalistic project and their perception of how it addressed TRC Call to Action 86 through a series of semi-structured interviews during a follow-up visit to the community. In order to conduct the research involved in the second and third objectives, the principal investigator submitted an application to the Concordia University Human Research Ethics Committee, outlining a series of minimal risk protocols. The application was subsequently approved, and the research deemed acceptable on ethical grounds.

At the start, the multimedia project was meant to focus solely on sharing a positive story of Indigenous-led climate action. The people of KZA were building a unique solar-powered microgrid which would integrate battery storage and solar panels to create a steady supply of solar energy to reduce their reliance on diesel. It was the first construction of its kind in Canada, and the community was eager to share with researchers and an even broader audience. However, over the course of two visits in the autumn of 2018, it became clear that the story was rooted in environmental racism.

Not only did the shoreline erode by approximately 60 metres, but burial grounds close to the shore were flooded.

From 1918 to the 1950s, the Ontario power authority built a series of hydroelectric dams along the Nipigon River, but officials did not inform the community that the work would be ongoing and would drastically affect water levels. Not only did the shoreline erode by approximately 60 metres, but burial grounds close to the shore were flooded. Members of the community spent months re-burying loved ones, all the while not understanding why water levels were rising so rapidly. Elders shared devastating stories of loss and destruction. The dams would eventually help power up to 290,000 homes on the provincial power grid, but KZA was never connected and was forced to use diesel energy for decades. The new solar project was part of an apology and effort towards reconciliation by the current provincial power authority, Ontario Power Generation (OPG) (Salas et al., 2019). The formal apology from OPG followed a settlement agreement in 2014 for grievances related to the construction of the dams along the Nipigon River. In its official apology, OPG noted:

> We recognize that the people of Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek were disregarded by our company's predecessors. We neglected to provide your community with the opportunity to participate in meaningful project discussions. We are truly sorry for our failure to directly hear the concerns of your ancestors and for not resolving these past grievances sooner. (Ontario Power Generation, 2014, par. 3)

The solar grid was constructed in partnership with OPG, and full ownership was transferred to the community upon completion. (Salas, et al., 2019). Conducting the project within this context led researchers to investigate alternative, more constructive methods of journalism aimed at decolonization and reconciliation.

Such conciliatory and collaborative movements will provide the framework for the second phase of the Concordia project which will involve co-creation with three more communities, alongside the help and guidance of experts at Indigenous Clean Energy Social Enterprise. The new projects will be developed in partnership with Heiltsuk First Nation in British Columbia, the Métis community of Île-à-la-Crosse in Saskatchewan, and the northern Quebec Inuit community of Inukjuak. Each of these initiatives will work towards fostering mutually beneficial Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships built on reciprocity

Photo by Katelyn Thomas

and documenting the efforts of each community to establish a clean energy future.

The projects will be conducted in two phases. First, researchers will seek to build trust and a sense of true collaboration with community members, using elements of conciliatory journalism during the creative process of producing and sharing stories of climate leadership with a wider audience. Second, researchers will investigate the impact of the project by conducting semi-structured interviews with those involved in the creation of the journalism, including community members and students. A grounded theory-based analysis of transcripts of qualitative interviews will identify prominent themes of the process of reconciliation and the media, how deep that concern is for community members/student journalists and how conciliatory journalism might contribute to the improvement of journalism education and the process of reconciliation.

As to the theory informing the initial journalistic approach and resulting research project, some direction was found in scholarship on conciliatory journalism, which has been described as a new method of "socially responsible" journalism (Hautakangas & Ahva, 2018). Conciliatory journalism calls into question the tendency for journalists to negate values and worldviews from a variety of groups, and the propensity to influence the polarization of specific issues when they do so (Hautakangas & Ahva, 2018). The main elements of conciliatory journalism include:

1. *Critically examine and clarify tensions* that are causing conflicts, instead of just reporting them as disputes;
2. *Encourage listening and dialogue* in journalistic endeavours and public discussions;
3. *Create and support a trusting environment* in which all relevant actors could feel safe enough to address issues that may be delicate or conflict-prone, and rely on the role of journalism as a facilitative moderator of such discussions. (Hautakangas and Ahva, 2018, p.742)

It must be noted that journalists using conciliatory reporting methods are not trying to solve problems, rather they are facilitating the "co-presence of different voices and people's 'right to be understood'" (Husband, 1996, as cited in Hautakangas and Ahva, 2018, p. 753). Research into the relationship between Finnish journalists and the Indigenous Sámi peoples in Finland further suggests that journalists can use this method to develop alternative ways of framing stories that avoid a narrative of conflict or negative portrayals of Indigenous peoples (Leukumaavaara, 2017). For instance, Finnish researcher and journalist Jenni Leukumaavaara (2017) found that while some Indigenous Sámi peoples reported good experiences with Finnish journalists, they were still often portrayed negatively in the news media. Of those people interviewed, many felt that journalists simply didn't understand or care to understand the perspectives and realities of the Sámi peoples related to issues of conventions, agreements, and land rights (Leukumaavaara, 2017). While Leukumaavaara (2017) doesn't explicitly mention conciliatory journalism, she advises journalists that engaging in small talk, avoiding "parachute journalism" (p. 93), and fostering long-term relationships built on trust with the Sámi peoples will develop a sense of mutual understanding and respect. According to Leukumaavaara (2017), such an approach will work towards undermining power imbalances and negative stereotypes within the news media.

Conciliatory journalism follows on the trend of other alternative approaches to journalism that have emerged in the last ten years in light of social justice struggles and societal divisions. For example, research on autonomous journalism has found that reporting on events and people outside of a journalist's direct experience acts to increase feelings of solidarity in social justice efforts (Jeppesen & Media Action Research Group, 2018). Another approach, constructive journalism, operates within the core functions of journalism while calling on a shift for greater focus on productive and positive storytelling, a reliance on positive psychology interview techniques, and an inclination towards a solutions-oriented, not problem-based approach (McIntyre and Gyldensted, 2018).

In the scope of Indigenous issues, Taylor Blewett (2017) proposes a type of "reconciliation journalism." This approach requires journalists to attend specialized courses focused on covering Indigenous issues. Blewett also advocates for inclusion of greater context in Indigenous coverage, the inclusion of Indigenous voices, and verification with sources before a journalistic piece is produced (Blewett, 2017). Indeed, Blewett's approach echoes elements of the seminal guide Reporting in Indigenous Communities, created by Anishinaabe CBC journalist and scholar Duncan McCue (McCue, 2011) as well as toolkits and advice created by Indigenous groups for journalists (Journalist's Toolkit, 2016; Swiftwolfe, 2019). As an example, *The Discourse*, a Canadian publication that emerged in Vancouver in 2014, has been praised for strong, successful collaboration with communities that have been traditionally underrepresented or misrepresented using such models of inclusion, collaboration, and verification (Habib, 2019).

According to a survey completed by Environics Institute for Survey Research (2019), Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth in Canada between the ages of 16 to 29 want to work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable future, including a profound consideration for the continued steps towards the creation of suitable university courses. As such, education philosophies have been in flux to reflect this demand and there are teaching approaches in line with the aims of conciliatory and reconciliation journalism, including cultural competency (Abdi, 2012; Allen, Craft, Waddell, & Young, 2014; Champagne & Stauss, 2002; Steel, Carmichael, Holmes, Kinse and Sanders, 2007; Stewart et al., 2012). Such approaches have proven successful, as evidenced by the reportage of two University of British Columbia (UBC) journalism students Rachel Bergen and Stephanie Kelly (2013) who were invited to a sacred Stó:lō spiritual tradition by being patient, building trust, and ensuring transparency in their work.

One area where journalism educators can apply the same principles to work towards creating deeper partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is through the documentation of Indigenous-led clean energy initiatives. Candis Callison has written extensively on the need for Indigenous perspectives, expertise, and journalism particularly in environmental reporting and climate change (Callison, 2014; Callison & Young, 2020). According to Callison, focusing on this space, where Indigenous people are showing leadership and resilience in the context of colonialism and its devastating legacy, can produce widespread societal benefits (Callison, 2019).

Space is made for new partnerships, and the amplification of Indigenous voices.

For example, given Canada's movement towards a role as an "energy 'superpower'" and the complexity governing energy policy (Doern, Auld, and Stoney, 2015, p. 3), Indigenous-led initiatives, and effective reporting on such initiatives, will become crucial in maintaining amicable relationships that benefit all involved. Such moves towards clean energy can aid in autonomy and self-determination of remote Indigenous communities throughout Canada (Henderson, 2013; Lowan-Trudeau, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Stefanelli et al., 2018). However, future media coverage will have to ensure movement away from problematic Indigenous frames in the coverage of Indigenous people, as some researchers have found that even concerning clean energy initiatives familiar stereotypes, tropes, and narratives negating Indigenous perspectives persist (Walker et al., 2019).

By using collaborative approaches such as those outlined above, within the context of journalism education and research-creation, space is made for new partnerships and the amplification of Indigenous voices concerning the implementation and impact of clean energy within their own communities. When these projects are absorbed into the curriculum of Canada's journalism schools, such works can improve the education of new journalists in a holistic land-based, community-based informed pedagogy. Thus, in a concerted effort, journalism schools can work more effectively towards addressing TRC's Call to Action 86 by using alternative forms of journalism, like conciliatory journalism, to challenge the problematic norm of damaging negative and inaccurate representations of Indigenous peoples.

Photo by Aphrodite Salas

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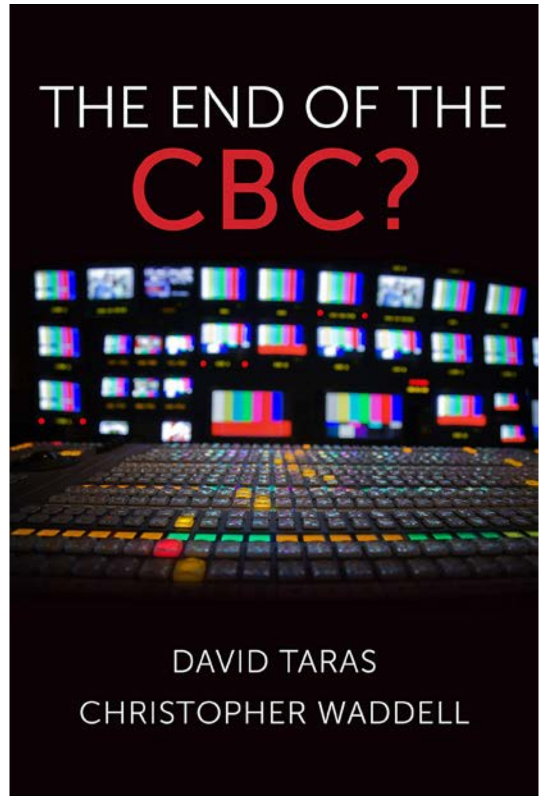
APA citation

Salas, A., & Stevens, S. (2021). Journalism education and Call to Action 86: Exploring conciliatory and collaborative methods of research-creation with Indigenous communities. *Facts & Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism*, *1*(1) 55-63

REVIEW CRITIQUE

THE END OF CBC?

David Taras and Christopher Waddell.
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020.



Review by Daniel Bernhard

There's an old joke that every Canadian has two jobs: their actual job, and running the CBC. The complaints are legion. Too much public funding. Too much private advertising. Too highbrow programming. Not highbrow enough. Bloated management. Insufficient oversight. Too Liberal. Too Conservative. Too Anglo. Too separatist. Woke. Colonial. I could go on.

Yet public opinion polls consistently find that the CBC is Canada's most trusted cultural institution, especially when it comes to news.

Canadians love their CBC. CBC radio is No.1 or No. 2 in every major market. In Quebec, *Tout le monde en parle* attracts a live audience of over 1.1 million people on any given Sunday evening—a staggering 15% of the province's francophone population.

Still, it's hard to shake the feeling that something is deeply wrong with the CBC. Its flagship television newscasts are no longer essential viewing. CBC commands a measly 3% of English TV audience share. As David Taras and Christopher Waddell remind us in *The End of the CBC?*, the CBC's foreign reporting capabilities are withering. That the CBC could not get a reporter or even a freelancer to Kabul to cover the recent Taliban takeover and the botched evacuation that ensued shows just how badly its once-mighty journalistic operation has atrophied. For all its efforts to build valuable digital services—something Taras and Waddell explore in detail—the CBC's free (and excellent) on-demand audio services attract a fraction of the audience of paid services like Spotify or Apple Music. And though the CBC's $34 per-capita annual budget is already among the lowest in the developed world, the threat of major funding cuts seems omnipresent. Both Liberal and Conservative governments have taken the axe to the CBC budget since 1985, and since 2020, the Conservative Party's official policy is to privatize and/or dismantle most of the CBC if elected.

It is in this context of fragility and uncertainty that Taras and Waddell launched *The End of The CBC?,* a timely, constructive book that boasts a preciously rare combination of impeccable research and straightforward, jargon-free writing.

This volume is of major national importance. Taras and Waddell clearly understand Canadians' intimate, personal relationship to the CBC and they address their argument accordingly.

As the title lets on, Taras and Waddell are not bullish about the CBC's future. They don't even wait to get through the preface before declaring that the CBC must "be reimagined and reinvented or die a slow death on the outskirts of the media world." Given their extensive journalistic and scholarly expertise and the CBC's vital role in Canadian life, this prediction alone is cause for widespread concern.

The authors view the CBC as a storied institution that tries and fails to be all things to all people. Their basic prescription is to pare back the CBC to information only, jettisoning most everything else. They don't take this suggestion lightly, but they argue with firm conviction that the only alternative to cutting is across the board mediocrity, begetting irrelevance and then death.

Taras and Waddell wisely situate their analysis within the greater context of the global audiovisual industry. They understand that the two main forces reshaping digital media— streaming services like Netflix on one hand and microtargeted 'information' services like Facebook on the other—have very different impacts on the media ecosystem and on society. Netflix displacing TV will not eliminate drama production, for example. Quite the contrary: the number of titles at our fingertips has never been greater. What's more, Netflix can outspend the CBC (or any other player with non-global scale) on scripted programming by at least an order of magnitude, making it difficult to compete on quality. A top-flight CBC scripted program costs about $US 2 million per hour. Netflix is now closing in on $20 million per episode for top productions.

The news situation is exactly opposite. Whereas Netflix converts subscription revenues into an infinite stream of content, Facebook and Google steal advertising share away from TV and newspapers without converting a penny into journalism, unless regulation compels them to do so, as in Australia and France. The market for digital advertising recently eclipsed ads in traditional media, and this dastardly duopoly controls about 80% of it. This shift in the ad market has cratered the journalism industry. Since Facebook became available to the general public in 2006, Canada has lost an estimated 20,000 journalism jobs. Hundreds of print and broadcast outlets have closed and the smart money says that the situation will only get worse.

So when Taras and Waddell argue that the CBC should pour all its efforts into news, their concern is for democracy itself. If the market cannot direct sufficient capital to the production of the vital democratic product that is journalism, the public must step in.

In this respect, Taras and Waddell may be more right than they realize. The devastating social and political impacts of turning over the information system to a company like Facebook—#StopTheSteal, Plandemic, QAnon, etc.—are not contingent symptoms of poor corporate behaviour, but inevitable consequences of how information is monetized on the internet today. If the business model is the problem, non-commercial sources of information have never been more necessary.

But to argue that the CBC must choose between offering several mediocre genres or an excellent newsroom is to be resigned to the inevitability of CBC's meagre funding. The authors' position makes sense only if scarcity is a given. But, in reality, it is a contingent political choice. In response to the authors' apparent acceptance of a diminished pie, I say, let's find the money for the CBC to do more than one thing well.

Entertainment programming, a.k.a. Canadian content, remains a vital national service that has clear impacts on Canada's culture of decency, democracy, and mutual respect. And just as the authors plead for a CBC that can provide the quality journalism nobody else can or will, we can also say that Canadian culture cannot survive without high-quality Canadian content that only the CBC can produce.

Call me naive if you must. *The End of the CBC?* contains a lengthy analysis of the CBC's stagnant Parliamentary appropriation and the complex politics that reproduce it no matter the colour of government. If the myriad reports and campaigns and committee resolutions floated in the last 30 years haven't moved the dial, why should we expect a different result now?

Because the current situation is historically unprecedented. Netflix, Google and Facebook are qualitatively different from the private Canadian or American outlets against which the CBC has historically been juxtaposed. CTV News may be less thorough than CBC News but it's still Canadian news. *The New York Times* may not be Canadian news but it's still credible, professional journalism. Facebook, by contrast, has no saving graces as a substitute for the credible media it displaced.

Canada's private broadcasters were always compelled to spend a certain amount of their revenue on original Canadian programming, while foreign broadcasters made indirect contributions to Cancon through cable companies. Netflix and co. are free of such encumbrances. *Ceteris paribus*, the current technological switch will not merely affect the level of Cancon available or the mechanism by which it is financed but obliterate the very idea of Cancon as an immutable pillar of cultural life.

Canadians see the general direction things are heading and don't approve, blowing open the Overton window for Canadian media policy. When *The End of the CBC? w*as published in early 2020, the idea of forcing Google and Facebook to pay for journalism was not on the radar. Today, it is the official policy of all five parties in Parliament. Likewise Prime Minister Trudeau decried the so-called "Netflix Tax" and promised as recently as 2018 never to apply sales taxes to foreign digital services. Today, that tax has been enacted and enjoys all-party support, as does legislation to compel foreign internet broadcasters like Netflix to invest in original Canadian content.

If ever there was a moment to propose a new vision for a new CBC that is both modernized and expanded, surely this is it. In Australia, the public broadcaster is included in the News Media Bargaining Code. Canada could supplement the CBC's funding in the same way. Likewise, we could enact a levy on microtargeted, surveillance-based advertising and send the funds to the CBC. Think of it like a carbon tax for democracy: companies that pollute it must pay to clean it up.

We could also have Netflix *et al.* devote some of their (soon to be) obligatory Cancon spending to co-productions with the CBC. Perhaps each dollar spent this way could count for double towards the overall requirement, rewarding foreign streamers for funding public broadcasting. This measure alone could direct hundreds of millions of new dollars into the CBC's entertainment efforts each year.

The main reason why this book should be shared with all Canadians, not just media scholars, is because citizens understand what specialists may not: that we don't have to settle for making do in the present circumstances. We have the power to change those circumstances if we so choose.

Daniel Bernhard is a past Executive Director of FRIENDS of Canadian Broadcasting, a citizens' group that champions Canadian culture and democracy on air and online. FRIENDS is neither affiliated with or funded by any corporation, including the CBC.

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