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

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

Comité éditorial | Editorial Board

Table of Contents   Table des matières

Cover: First Nations University of Canada journalism students and their instructor. Photo by Shannon Avison.

Ring in the new(s): More voices, better journalism

Patricia W. Elliott, Editor-in-Chief

It's often said modern communication has made our world smaller. Yet it has also made it bigger, inviting myriad cultures, conflicts, joys, and stories to break down entrenched silos. Canadian journalism is one of those silos. For the past century, it has been occupied by colonial privilege and patriarchy. Meanwhile, outside the door, Canadian society has been changing and growing. New audiences, interview subjects, and storytellers are not just requesting entry to the silo, but are tearing down its walls by their very presence.

In this issue of *Facts & Frictions*, we hear from journalism scholars intent on opening their discipline to a more diverse world, through critique of 'what is' and ideas of 'what can be.' We begin, appropriately, with an exploration of what generation-next thinks should be done. In "Creating Welcoming spaces: Indigenous Journalism Students' Perspectives on Programming and Representation," authors Kristy Snell and Gwendolyn Roley note a profound lack of Indigenous representation in the news media and in journalism schools. This in itself creates a barrier, on top of the burdens of historical trauma, isolation, and racism that Indigenous students carry into the classroom. The interview participants provide real-life examples of how this plays out on a daily basis, from classmates' microaggressions to instructors' ignorance of Indigenous issues, as well as more overt examples of racism and exclusion. Indigenous students also bring considerable strengths to the table, including clearly-formed ideas for improvement. A recommendation frequently mentioned by students is to hire more Indigenous faculty members, augmented by cultural competency training for all faculty. Students also speak of the need for mandatory education in Indigenous issues, mirroring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's

(2015) Call to Action 86: "We call upon Canadian 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" (pp. 352-353). Engagement with Indigenous communities, Ceremonies, and Elders, and the creation of Indigenous spaces on campuses, are also among their recommendations. In addition to interviewing past and present students, Snell and Rowley combed through the websites of journalism schools to gauge institutional responses to Call 86. "Journalism programs in Canada have been working to increase Indigenous representation, with some doing outreach or adding programs targeting Indigenous learners," they write. "However, for Indigenous students to truly consider pursuing journalism, they need to know that they will not feel like outsiders in their own programs" (p. 18).

The next article provides an overview of how migrants and asylum seekers have been historically portrayed in Canadian media. Author Clément Lechat then dives into a detailed case study from Quebec. "Victims, Burdens, and Problems: A Thematic Analysis of *Le Journal de Montréal* News Coverage of Roxham Road" parses 55 articles published in 2022 by *Le Journal*. Lechat notes that during the period 2017-2019, when the number of asylum seekers using the crossing increased dramatically, media coverage was critiqued for its presentation of border-crossers as voiceless burdens on Canadian society. His case study seeks to discover if the tenor of coverage changed post-"crisis" and post-pandemic in 2022, the final year before the crossing was closed. Before embarking on

his analysis, Lechat cautions that *Le Journal* does not represent all Quebec media. It has a specific tabloid format and right-leaning editorial slant, and he takes care to separate journalistic news stories from the heavy dose of opinion writing in its pages. Overall, he finds little divergence from past news coverage that cast Roxham Road as a problem demanding a solution, with the exception of stories highlighting the potential of new arrivals to ease post-pandemic labour shortages. Lechat further observes that 2022 included a Quebec election that elevated political voices on questions of French language protection and provincial control over immigration. In addition to reinforcing the "problem" narrative, Lechat posits the election nudged the "solutions" lens from a focus on Canada-U.S. relations toward the question of federal-provincial relations, at a time when Ottawa's motives for keeping Roxham Road's migrant reception centre open were called into question. No matter the specific circumstances of 2022, the overarching problem-solution dichotomy of past coverage remains, Lechat observes. As a result, he writes, "the voices most concerned with Roxham Road–the asylum seekers–are relegated to the periphery of the coverage" (p. 33). However, Lechat also sagely reminds us that Quebec media is neither monolithic nor static: "It is in constant evolution, with media startups emerging and covering refugee stories using more diverse perspectives than those highlighted in this article, including a focus on human rights and the complex, global ramifications of migrations" (p. 33). This concluding note invites scholars to return to the topic in future, and to expand the inquiry to emerging news outlets.

In concert with Lechat's observation of overlooked voices, our third article focuses on who gets interviewed in a typical news day, this time with the spotlight on gender. Journalism professor Mike Wise wondered what would happen if he introduced the BBC's 50-50 source tracking method–created to promote gender equity in journalism interviews–to the classroom, where students produce news for their assignments. "A Case Study of the BBC 50:50 Equality Project: Can the Source Tracking System Work in Canadian Journalism Programs?" offers hope that the next generation of journalists is already ahead of their counterparts in the field. Surveys of student attitudes re-

vealed "overwhelming support of the goal that the media they consume and produce should reflect their audience's diversity and gender balance," Wise reports (p. 44). For his experiment, Wise introduced students to the BBC method, which tracks gender diversity in interviews and regularly shares the results with reporters, providing a means for journalists to monitor and improve on the goal of gender parity. Like the BBC, the classroom experiment involved weekly content analysis reports prepared by Wise and posted on a class website for students to review their progress. Over the course of 13 weeks, Wise examined 492 published student news stories, featuring 1,266 human sources. Throughout the course of the study, he found the overall gender representation did not exactly match the population, but came close (47.6% women, 51.6% male, 0.8% non-binary), and considerably exceeded the Canadian industry average of 31% female sources. In short, the students did better than professional journalists. Having said that, Wise noted students working on features with longer deadlines achieved gender balance more readily than students whose assignments mirrored a daily news cycle. He posits that this aligns with literature that points to the hectic, overworked pace of industry newsrooms as a contributor to gender imbalance. An intriguing twist is his discovery that less than half of students expressed awareness of the weekly analysis he shared. This draws into question how much of the observed improvements in gender balance can be directly attributed to the 50-50 tracking method. Wise posits that gender awareness through discussion and reduced deadline pressure were just as important to success. With this in mind, he concludes with a recommendation for educators and newsroom managers to employ mixed methods. He also provides ideas for adapting and improving the 50-50 method for use in journalism education, and suggests future research to track intersectional characteristics such as ethnicity and professional background, along with a deeper examination of how the stories are produced, including their length, subject matter, and deadlines.

Ultimately, no matter which perspectives inform news stories, facts are the ground upon which journalists stand. In their research note, "Getting it Right, Eh?: Best practices for Post Hoc Fact-checking in Canadian News," Brooks DeCil-

lia and Brad Clark describe fact-checking as an inherent tool of the profession that has, in recent years, been elevated to a journalistic genre worthy of study on its own. Accordingly, their current research analyzes the methods and presentation styles of several prominent fact-checking projects. From this inquiry, they outline some potential methods and processes for Canadian journalists to employ in their quest for facts we can trust.

The movement of fact-checking from background to foreground has been necessitated by the distrust and disruption of a post-truth world. This is not the only core journalistic foundation to face disruption, as Ivor Shapiro illuminates in his latest book, *The Disputed Freedoms of a Disrupted Press*, ably reviewed for *Facts & Frictions* by philosopher Shannon Dea. Dea, a notable contributor to academic freedom discourse and a former community journalist, examines Shapiro's provocations and propositions, and finds both heady ideas and concrete suggestions for journalism's future. "The history of the press has always been a history of disruption," Dea observes, and the never-ending work of defending press freedom has a useful new guidebook (p. 61).

In closing, we are also ringing in the new(s) at *Facts & Frictions*. This fall, *Facts & Frictions* was accepted as a member of the Directory of Open Access Journals, which will greatly increase the dissemination of our articles. Additionally, the editorial board of *Facts & Frictions* is delighted to introduce Trish Audette-Longo, who was appointed editor-designate in August. Some may recognize her name as a guiding force behind our Fall 2023 Special Issue, *Forced Change: Pandemic Pedagogy and Journalism Education*. The issue was highly successful, with more contributors and readers than any previous issue. As editor-designate, Dr. Audette-Longo will work alongside me through the coming academic year, in preparation for assuming the role of your new editor-in-chief in June 2025. The future is in excellent hands. ■

Patricia W. Elliott is professor emerita of investigative and community journalism at First Nations University of Canada and editor-in-chief of *Facts & Frictions*.

Email: editor@factsandfrictions.ca

REFERENCES

Dea, S. (2024). [Review of the book The Disputed Freedoms of a Disrupted Press, by Ivor Shapiro]. *Facts & Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies, and Practices in Contemporary Journalism, 4*(1), 58-61. http://doi.org/10.22215/ff/v4.i1.06

DeCillia, B., & Clark, B. (2024). Getting it right, eh? Best practices for post hoc fact-checking in Canadian news. F*acts and Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism, 4*(1), 48-57. http://doi.org/10.22215/ff/v4.i1.05

Lechat, C. (2024). Victims, burdens, and problems: A thematic analysis of Le Journal de Montréal news coverage of Roxham Road. *Facts and Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism, 4*(1), 21-35. http://doi.org/10.22215/ff/v4.i1.03

Snell, K., & Roley, G. (2024). Creating welcoming spaces: Indigenous journalism students' perspectives on programming and representation. *Facts and Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism, 4*(1), 8-20. http://doi.org/10.22215/ff/v4.i1.02

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.* https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf

Wise, M. (2024). A case study of the BBC 50:50 equality project: Can the source tracking system work in Canadian journalism programs? *Facts and Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism, 4*(1), 36-47. http://doi.org/10.22215/ff/v4.i1.04

À l'affût des nouvelles: Plus de voix, un meilleur journalisme

Patricia W. Elliott, Rédactrice en chef

On dit souvent que la communication moderne a rendu notre monde plus petit. Pourtant, elle l'a aussi rendu plus grand, invitant une myriade de cultures, de conflits, de joies et d'histoires à briser des silos bien établis. Le journalisme canadien est l'un de ces silos. Au cours du siècle dernier, les médias ont été occupés par le privilège colonial et le patriarcat. Pendant ce temps, à l'extérieur, la société canadienne a changé et s'est développée. De nouveaux publics, de nouveaux sujets d'entrevues et de nouveaux reporters ne se contentent pas de demander à entrer dans le silo, ils en abattent les murs par leur seule présence.

Dans ce numéro de *Faits & Frictions*, nous entendons des chercheurs en journalisme qui ont l'intention d'ouvrir leur discipline à un monde plus diversifié, en critiquant "ce qui est" et en proposant des idées sur "ce qui pourrait être". Nous commençons, comme il se doit, par une exploration de ce que la génération suivante pense qu'il faudrait faire. Dans "Creating Welcoming spaces: Indigenous Journalism Students' Perspectives on Programming and Representation" ("Créer des espaces accueillants : Le point de vue des étudiant.e.s autochtones en journalisme sur la programmation et la représentation"), les auteures Kristy Snell et Gwendolyn Roley notent un manque profond de représentation autochtone dans les médias d'information et dans les écoles de journalisme. Cela constitue en soi un obstacle, qui s'ajoute au poids des traumatismes historiques, de l'isolement et du racisme que les étudiants autochtones portent dans la salle de classe. Les participants aux entretiens donnent des exemples concrets de la façon

dont cela se passe au quotidien, qu'il s'agisse de microagressions de la part de camarades de classe ou de l'ignorance des professeurs sur les questions autochtones, ou encore d'exemples plus manifestes de racisme et d'exclusion. Les étudiants autochtones apportent également des atouts considérables, notamment des idées d'amélioration clairement formulées. Une recommandation fréquemment mentionnée par les étudiants est d'embaucher davantage de professeurs autochtones et d'offrir à tous les professeurs une formation sur les compétences culturelles. Les étudiants et étudiantes évoquent également la nécessité d'une formation obligatoire sur les questions autochtones, à l'image de l'appel à l'action 86 de la Commission de vérité et réconciliation (2015) : « Nous demandons aux programmes de journalisme et aux écoles de médias du Canada d'exiger que tous les étudiants reçoivent une formation sur l'histoire des peuples autochtones, y compris l'histoire et l'héritage des pensionnats, *la Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones*, les traités et les droits des Autochtones, le droit autochtone et les relations entre les Autochtones et la Couronne » (p. 352-353). L'engagement avec les communautés autochtones, les cérémonies et les aînés, ainsi que la création d'espaces autochtones sur les campus font également partie de leurs recommandations. En plus d'interroger d'anciens étudiants et des étudiants actuels, Snell et Rowley ont passé au peigne fin les sites Web des écoles de journalisme afin d'évaluer les réponses institutionnelles à l'appel 86. « Les programmes de journalisme au Canada se sont

efforcés d'accroître la représentation autochtone, certains d'entre eux menant des actions de sensibilisation ou ajoutant des programmes ciblant les apprenants autochtones », écrivent-ils. « Toutefois, pour que les étudiants autochtones envisagent vraiment de poursuivre des études en journalisme, ils doivent savoir qu'ils ne se sentiront pas comme des étrangers dans leurs propres programmes » (p. 18).

L'article suivant donne un aperçu de la manière dont les migrants et les demandeurs d'asile ont été historiquement représentés dans les médias canadiens. L'auteur Clément Lechat se penche ensuite sur une étude de cas détaillée du Québec. "Victims, burdens, and problems: A thematic analysis of Le Journal de Montréal news coverage of Roxham Road" ("Victimes, fardeaux et problèmes : Une analyse thématique de la couverture médiatique du chemin Roxham par Le Journal de Montréal") analyse 55 articles publiés en 2022 par *Le Journal*. Lechat note qu'au cours de la période 2017-2019, alors que le nombre de demandeurs d'asile empruntant le poste frontière a augmenté de façon spectaculaire, la couverture médiatique a été critiquée pour sa présentation des frontaliers comme des fardeaux sans voix pour la société canadienne. Son étude de cas cherche à découvrir si la teneur de la couverture a changé après la "crise" et après la pandémie en 2022, la dernière année avant la fermeture du point de passage. Avant d'entamer son analyse, Lechat rappelle que *Le Journal* n'est pas représentatif de l'ensemble des médias québécois. *Le Journal* a un format tabloïd spécifique et une orientation éditoriale de droite, et il prend soin de séparer les nouvelles journalistiques de la forte dose d'écriture d'opinion dans ses pages. Dans l'ensemble, il constate peu de divergences par rapport à la couverture médiatique passée, qui présentait Roxham Road comme un problème nécessitant une solution, à l'exception des articles soulignant le potentiel des nouveaux arrivants pour atténuer les pénuries de main-d'œuvre post-pandémiques. Lechat observe en outre que l'année 2022 a été marquée par des élections québécoises qui ont fait entendre des voix politiques sur les questions de la protection de la langue française et du contrôle de l'immigration par la province. En plus de renforcer le récit du "problème", Lechat estime que l'élection a poussé la lentille des "solutions" à se concentrer non plus sur les relations Canada-États-Unis, mais sur la question des relations fédérales-provinciales, à un moment où les motifs d'Ottawa pour maintenir ouvert le centre d'accueil des migrants de Roxham Road ont été remis en question. Quelles que soient les circonstances spécifiques de 2022, la dichotomie problème-solution de la couverture passée demeure, observe Lechat. En conséquence, écrit-il, « les voix les plus concernées par Roxham Road—les demandeurs d'asile—sont reléguées à la périphérie de la couverture » (p. 33). Cependant, Lechat nous rappelle aussi sagement que les médias québécois ne sont ni monolithiques ni statiques : « Ils sont en constante évolution, avec des startups médiatiques qui émergent et couvrent les histoires de réfugiés en utilisant des perspectives plus diverses que celles mises en évidence dans cet article, y compris un accent sur les droits de l'homme et les ramifications complexes et globales des migrations » (p. 33). Cette note de conclusion invite les chercheurs à revenir sur le sujet à l'avenir et à étendre l'enquête aux nouveaux organes de presse.

Dans la lignée de l'observation de Lechat sur les voix négligées, notre troisième article se concentre sur les personnes interviewées au cours d'une journée d'information typique, cette fois-ci en mettant l'accent sur le genre. Mike Wise, professeur de journalisme, s'est demandé ce qui se passerait s'il introduisait la méthode de suivi des sources 50-50 de la BBC, créée pour promouvoir l'égalité des sexes dans les interviews journalistiques, dans la salle de classe, où les étudiants produisent des nouvelles pour leurs travaux. "A case study of the BBC 50:50 Equality Project: Can the source tracking system work in Canadian journalism programs?" ("Une étude de cas du projet d'égalité 50:50 de la BBC : Le système de suivi des sources peut-il fonctionner dans les programmes de journalisme Canadiens?") offre l'espoir que la prochaine génération de journalistes est déjà en avance sur ses homologues sur le terrain. Les enquêtes sur les attitudes des étudiants ont révélé « un soutien massif à l'objectif selon lequel les médias qu'ils consomment et produisent devraient refléter la diversité de leur public et l'équilibre entre les sexes », rapporte Wise (p. 44). Pour son expérience, Wise a présenté aux élèves la méthode de la BBC, qui suit la diversité des genres dans les interviews et partage régulièrement les

résultats avec les journalistes, ce qui permet à ces derniers de surveiller et d'améliorer l'objectif de la parité des genres. À l'instar de la BBC, l'expérience en classe comportait des rapports hebdomadaires d'analyse de contenu préparés par Wise et publiés sur un site web de la classe afin que les étudiants puissent évaluer leurs progrès. Pendant 13 semaines, Wise a examiné 492 articles publiés par les élèves, qui comportaient 1 266 sources humaines. Tout au long de l'étude, il a constaté que la représentation globale des sexes ne correspondait pas exactement à la population, mais s'en approchait (47,6 % de femmes, 51,6 % d'hommes, 0,8 % de non-binaires), et dépassait considérablement la moyenne de l'industrie canadienne, qui est de 31 % de sources féminines. En bref, les étudiants ont fait mieux que les journalistes professionnels. Cela dit, Wise a noté que les étudiants travaillant sur des reportages avec des délais plus longs ont atteint l'équilibre entre les sexes plus facilement que les étudiants dont les missions reflétaient un cycle d'information quotidien. Il estime que cela correspond à la littérature qui indique que le rythme effréné et surchargé des salles de rédaction de l'industrie contribue au déséquilibre entre les hommes et les femmes. Il a également découvert que moins de la moitié des étudiants avaient pris connaissance de l'analyse hebdomadaire qu'il partageait. On peut donc se demander dans quelle mesure les améliorations observées en matière d'équilibre entre les sexes peuvent être directement attribuées à la méthode de suivi 50-50. Wise estime que la sensibilisation aux questions de genre par le biais de la discussion et la réduction de la pression exercée par les délais sont tout aussi importantes pour la réussite. Dans cette optique, il conclut en recommandant aux éducateurs et aux responsables de salles de rédaction d'utiliser des méthodes mixtes. Il propose également des idées pour adapter et améliorer la méthode 50-50 en vue de son utilisation dans la formation au journalisme, et suggère des recherches futures pour suivre les caractéristiques intersectionnelles telles que l'appartenance ethnique et le parcours professionnel, ainsi qu'un examen plus approfondi de la manière dont les articles sont produits, y compris leur longueur, leur sujet et leurs délais.

En fin de compte, quels que soient les points de vue sur lesquels s'appuient les reportages, les faits sont la base sur laquelle s'appuient les journalistes.

Dans leur note de recherche intitulée "Getting it Right, Eh ? Best practices for Post Hoc Fact-checking in Canadian News" ("Vous avez raison, n'est-ce pas ? Pratiques exemplaires en matière de vérification des faits a posteriori dans les actualités Canadiennes"), Brooks DeCillia et Brad Clark décrivent la vérification des faits comme un outil inhérent à la profession qui, ces dernières années, a été élevé au rang de genre journalistique digne d'être étudié en tant que tel. En conséquence, leur recherche actuelle analyse les méthodes et les styles de présentation de plusieurs projets de fact-checking de premier plan. À partir de cette enquête, ils esquissent quelques méthodes et processus potentiels que les journalistes canadiens pourraient utiliser dans leur quête de faits dignes de confiance.

Le passage de la vérification des faits de l'arrière-plan au premier plan a été rendu nécessaire par la méfiance et la perturbation d'un monde post-vérité. Ce n'est pas le seul fondement journalistique à être perturbé, comme l'explique Ivor Shapiro dans son dernier livre, *The Disputed Freedoms of a Disrupted Press* (*Les libertés contestées d'une presse perturbée*), dont la philosophe Shannon Dea a fait une excellente critique pour *Faits & Frictions*. Dea, contributrice notable au discours sur la liberté académique et ancienne journaliste communautaire, examine les provocations et les propositions de Shapiro et y trouve à la fois des idées captivantes et des suggestions concrètes pour l'avenir du journalisme. « L'histoire de la presse a toujours été une histoire de perturbation », observe Dea, et le travail sans fin de défense de la liberté de la presse dispose d'un nouveau guide utile (p. 61).

Pour conclure, nous inaugurons également les nouveaus chez Faits & Frictions. Cet automne, Facts and Frictions a été accepté comme membre du Répertoire des revues en libre accès, ce qui augmentera considérablement la diffusion de nos articles. De plus, le comité de rédaction de *Faits & Frictions* est ravi de vous présenter Trish Audette-Longo, qui a été nommée rédactrice en chef désignée en août. Certains reconnaîtront peut-être son nom en tant que force directrice de notre numéro spécial de l'automne 2023, *Changement forcé : La pédagogie de la pandémie et la formation au journalisme*. Ce numéro a connu un grand succès, avec plus de contributeurs et de lecteurs que les numéros précédents. En tant que rédactrice

en chef désignée, Dr. Audette-Longo travaillera à mes côtés tout au long de l'année universitaire à venir, en vue d'assumer le rôle de votre nouvelle rédactrice en chef en juin 2025. L'avenir est entre d'excellentes mains.

Patricia W. Elliott est professeure émérite de journalisme d'investigation et communautaire à First Nations University of Canada et rédactrice en chef de *Facts & Frictions*.
Adresse courriel : redactrice@faitsetfrictions.ca

REFERENCES

Dea, S. (2024). [Review of the book The Disputed Freedoms of a Disrupted Press, by Ivor Shapiro]. *Facts & Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies, and Practices in Contemporary Journalism, 4*(1), 58-61. http://doi.org/10.22215/ff/v4.i1.06

DeCillia, B., & Clark, B. (2024). Getting it right, eh? Best practices for post hoc fact-checking in Canadian news. F*acts and Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism, 4*(1), 48-57. http://doi.org/10.22215/ff/v4.i1.05

Lechat, C. (2024). Victims, burdens, and problems: A thematic analysis of Le Journal de Montréal news coverage of Roxham Road. *Facts and Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism, 4*(1), 21-35. http://doi.org/10.22215/ff/v4.i1.03

Snell, K., & Roley, G. (2024). Creating welcoming spaces: Indigenous journalism students' perspectives on programming and representation. *Facts and Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism, 4*(1), 8-20. http://doi.org/10.22215/ff/v4.i1.02

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.* https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf

Wise, M. (2024). A case study of the BBC 50:50 equality project: Can the source tracking system work in Canadian journalism programs? *Facts and Frictions: Emerging Debates, Pedagogies and Practices in Contemporary Journalism, 4*(1), 36-47. http://doi.org/10.22215/ff/v4.i1.04

Creating welcoming spaces: Indigenous journalism students' perspectives on programming and representation

Créer des espaces accueillants: Le point de vue des étudiant.e.s autochtones en journalisme sur la programmation et la représentation

Kristy Snell and Gwendolyn Roley

ABSTRACT

Our research explores the first-hand experiences of Indigenous journalism students in Canada, examining avenues through which journalism programs can improve their inclusivity and create a more welcoming environment. This analysis is based on 21 semi-structured qualitative interviews with Indigenous students and former students who attended journalism diploma and degree programs between 1990 and 2022. Participants were asked about representation, content, cultural sensitivity, and other factors which could influence the well-being of Indigenous students. In addition, this study incorporates a quantitative component which provides a recent and thorough snapshot of Indigenous representation in Canadian journalism programs. The findings provide insight into some of the challenges faced by Indigenous students studying journalism, including feelings of isolation and racism. Participants also provide suggestions for educators and institutions working to create more welcoming spaces.

RÉSUMÉ

Notre recherche explore les expériences personnelles des étudiant.e.s autochtones en journalisme au Canada, en examinant les moyens par lesquels les départements de journalisme peuvent améliorer leur inclusivité et créer un environnement plus accueillant. Cette analyse est fondée sur 21 entrevues qualitatives avec des étudiant.e.s et ancien.ne.s étudiant.e.s autochtones qui ont étudié le journalisme entre 1990 et 2022. Les participant.e.s ont répondu à des questions sur la représentation, le contenu, la sensibilité culturelle et les autres éléments qui pourraient influencer le bien-être des étudiant.e.s autochtones. En outre, cette étude inclut un volet quantitatif qui permet d'établir un portrait contemporain de la représentation des étudiant.e.s autochtones dans les programmes de journalisme au Canada. Les résultats permettent de cerner certains des défis communs pour les autochtones qui étudient le journalisme, au nombre desquels le sentiment d'isolement et des expériences du racisme. Enfin, cette recherche intègre les propositions et suggestions des participant.e.s sur la manière pour les éducateurs et établissements d'enseignement, de créer des espaces plus accueillants.

INTRODUCTION

While it has been nearly 150 years since Canada's first journal for Indigenous Peoples, *The Indian*, was published (Queen's University Alumni, 2021), it is only in the past 20 years that newsrooms have begun actively increasing the number of Indigenous journalists on staff. A 2004 survey found that among 37 newspapers across the country, only one employed a full-time Indigenous journalist (Miller, 2005). Twenty years later, the Canadian Association of Journalists' annual Newsroom Diversity Survey[1] found that Indigenous journalists made up 5.2% of newsroom staff (Canadian Association of Journalists, 2023), compared to approximately 5% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2022). The association does note, however, that these numbers are driven by a handful of newsrooms: in 2022, APTN and CBC employed 63 per cent of all Indigenous journalists in Canada and, to date, many are still employed in part-time and intern-level roles (Canadian Association of Journalists, 2022). The CAJ survey also found that as recently as 2022, about 8 in 10 newsrooms across Canada did not have any Black or Indigenous journalists on staff.

This lack of representation has an impact on coverage. Anderson and Robertson (2011) wrote, "Colonialism has always thrived in Canada's press" (p. 3), and the lack of Indigenous journalists—particularly in leadership roles—is often apparent in the choice and narrative of stories involving Indigenous Peoples and issues. A study by Journalists for Human Rights found that between 2010 and 2016, less than half a percent of media stories in Ontario focused on Indigenous Peoples (Carpenter et al., 2019). Meanwhile, an examination of media coverage of two water pollution incidents in the early 2000s—one involving a First Nation, the other a non-Indigenous community—found a vast difference in the way the media portrayed the causes and handling of the incidents, with far more negative terms being used in the case of the Indigenous community (Burns & Schor, 2021). McCue (2023) discusses the use of warrior and victim narratives in his book *Decolonizing Journalism*, and quotes an Elder who once told him that "the only way an Indian would make it into the news is if they were one of the four Ds: Drumming, Dancing, Drunk, or Dead" (p. 7). The Indigenous Journalists' Association (formerly the Native American Journalists Association), which represents Indigenous journalists in the United States and Canada, even developed a tongue-in-cheek "Reporting in Indian Country" bingo card featuring stereotypes and tropes instead of numbers and letters, to analyze media stories for clichéd storytelling (Indigenous Journalist Association, 2018). And while certain media have engaged in self-reflection and recognized a general lack of nuance and context in coverage (David, 2018; CBC, 2019; Lisk, 2020), change has been slow.

It is also worth noting that while the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Call to Action 84 mentions the need for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to increase "equitable access for Aboriginal peoples to jobs, leadership positions, and professional development opportunities within the organization" (TRC, Calls to Action, p. 9), and Call to Action 86 is a direct call for journalism program curricula in Canada to better reflect Indigenous experiences and history (TRC, p. 10), the report does not include a specific directive for journalism programs to amplify efforts to increase enrolment of Indigenous students.

Meanwhile, locating statistics on Indigenous representation within Canadian journalism programs is difficult. While some journalism programs have been working to expand their Indigenous-related content and have initiated projects aimed at recruiting Indigenous students, there is still a dearth of available data reflecting Indigenous enrolment and graduation statistics. There is also a notable absence of comprehensive data detailing how Indigenous students feel about their experiences while studying journalism.

This research seeks to address these gaps in the current body of research by examining and providing insights into the challenges and perspectives of Indigenous students in Canadian journalism programs.

Researchers

Drawing from Kovach's (2021) concept of 'self-in-relation', this paper begins with the researchers situating themselves and their cultural identities within the research context.

[1.] Voluntary demographic survey conducted by the Canadian Association of Journalists.

Kristy Snell: I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Journalism at Concordia University in Montreal, where I teach Indigenous-related journalism, including a collaborative mentorship project aimed at introducing journalism to Kanien'kéha:ka high school students. I have worked as a journalist in Canada—primarily with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) — for more than 30 years. I am a member of Standing Buffalo Dakota Nation in Saskatchewan.

Gwendolyn Roley: I am an emerging journalist and researcher, the descendant of European settlers who grew up on the shores of Bellingham Bay in the Salish Sea, now based in Montreal/Tiohtià:ke. My interests lie in history, social science, and literature, which leads me to work in telling stories driven on data. However, while data is a jumping-off point for much of my research, my work and the work of others I admire have shown me time and again that no story is complete without the perspectives and words of the people who live it.

Methodology

We conducted the research with approval from the Research Ethics Unit of Concordia University. Our study's development was guided by four main research questions:

> **RQ1:** What are the enrolment and graduation rates of Indigenous students in Canadian journalism programs?

> **RQ2:** What are the experiences of Indigenous journalism students in Canada?

> **RQ3:** How can journalism programs improve their support of Indigenous students?

> **RQ4:** How can journalism programs better recruit Indigenous students?

Our research addressed these questions using a mixed-methodological approach. The qualitative component involved interviewing Indigenous journalism students (current and former) about their experiences within Canadian journalism programs and asking what they would suggest for improvement. The quantitative aspect looked at the enrolment and graduation rates of self-identifying Indigenous students in Canadian journalism programs over a period of five years ending in 2022.

Qualitative

Concordia University journalism students and the lead researcher conducted qualitative interviews with individuals who self-identified as Indigenous; that is, First Nations, Métis, or Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2021), and who were attending or had attended a Canadian college or university to study journalism. While self-identification is considered fraught in numerous contexts, including academia (Ministry of Innovation, Science and Industry of Canada, 2024), it is the most commonly-used method of Indigenous identity reporting by post-secondary institutions, and the method employed by Statistics Canada in its census. Therefore, it is the method we chose to employ for this study.

Participant interviews

Before contacting any participants for interviews, student research assistants took part in a five-week-long structured preparatory process in accordance with themes outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 86 (TRC, 2015), to provide a foundational knowledge and understanding of Indigenous history and experiences in Canada. This included about 10 hours of lectures, discussions, and readings, including excerpts from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report and works by Indigenous creators. Kovach (2021) writes, "Indigenous methodologies require reflection on the self," and, to this end, students completed several reflective writing assignments in which they considered their own positionality and responsibility in relation to the work. They also learned about trauma-informed interviewing practices (Thompson, 2021) in an effort to ensure sensitivity during interviews.

Participants were recruited through several methods. Most were contacted directly by Concordia journalism students through publicly available email addresses of self-identifying Indigenous journalists. Some volunteered by email after an open invitation was extended during an online meeting of a media network's employee resource

group. And, in a few instances, journalism program administrators agreed to collaborate and facilitated outreach to Indigenous students and former students, obtaining consent and subsequently providing contact information to the researchers. This multifaceted recruitment approach aimed to provide a varied and representative sample, although the majority of participants were found to have attended programs in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Quebec, and Nova Scotia.

Interviews were conducted via videoconferencing or telephone between February and May of 2023, involving 21 participants (18 former journalism students—nearly all program graduates — and three current students). Three had attended journalism programs in the 1990s, four in the early 2000s, seven in the period between 2010 and 2019, and the remaining seven participants have attended programs since 2020. Concordia student research assistants conducted two interviews each as part of their coursework, with an alternate essay option available. One study participant opted to respond to the list of questions in writing, rather than doing an interview. Some study participants agreed to be named, while others chose to have their identities remain confidential. The lead researcher interviewed three participants.

Research assistants used a list of 17 semi-structured questions centered around representation, program content, and Indigenous students' comfort and well-being within their respective programs. Participants were also asked whether they had any recommendations for change, and how journalism programs might improve recruiting. Student researchers were encouraged to ask follow-up questions for clarification but nearly all chose to closely follow the scripted questions during their two interviews, deviating very little from the script. Archibald (2008) writes about the use of story in Indigenous pedagogy and the importance of listening with three ears—the two on our heads and the one in our hearts—and student researchers were asked to simply listen carefully to the participants, as the interview was recorded. No other action was required of them, as part of an effort to encourage active listening and meaningful connection with what they were hearing.

After the interviews were completed, the researchers sent the transcripts to participants for review. The lead researcher then analyzed the transcripts, adhering to techniques outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), to identify and examine dominant themes and patterns which reflect the data. These were tallied for the number of times they appeared throughout the completed interviews. The lead researcher then analyzed these themes to draw insights from Indigenous students about their experiences and how they felt their educational programs could be improved.

Quantitative

Demographic representation

The quantitative section of this research involved collecting enrolment statistics from journalism programs across Canada to determine the percentage of Indigenous journalism students and graduates over a five-year period (2017-2022). We compiled a list of Canadian journalism programs using the Government of Canada's official list of designated education institutions on the government website, excluding Nunavut, as it did not have institutions on the list.

The resulting list was manually cleaned and each school's website examined to identify relevant programs. The guiding question for inclusion in the research was "Would CBC or an equivalent news organization hire someone who received this degree/diploma?" The reasoning was that networks such as CBC and CTV are well-known, and viewed as places where emerging journalists might potentially be hired.

The search included the terms "journalism," as well as "broadcasting," "television," "radio," "media," "mass media" and, in some cases, "creative writing" and "communications." Communications programs and writing degrees were included if their descriptions specifically mentioned a journalism specialization option. The final list of programs to contact did not include the Northwest Territories and Yukon, as they did not have any journalism programs, and, as previously noted, Nunavut.

A standard message requesting enrolment and graduation statistics between 2017 and 2022, including the number of self-identifying Indigenous students enrolling and graduating each year, was sent to each program. Messages were initially sent to program coordinators and, on occasion, institu-

tional research departments and registrar's offices, with some Access to Information requests filed.

Data gathering

Data was received in different formats from various institutions and reformatted to be combined with data from other programs. Some schools used a calendar year system (eg: 2018) to record demographic information, while others used an academic year format (eg: 2017-2018). To simplify and combine, data from the end year of the academic year was considered in the same category as that calendar year (eg:"2018" = "2017-2018").

Formatted data from individual schools was combined in a spreadsheet with data from other schools nationwide. We combined the yearly numbers of overall graduates and enrolments to determine five-year totals for both categories, and then did the same for self-identifying Indigenous graduates and enrolments. We then calculated the annual and five-year percentages of self-identifying Indigenous enrolments and graduates. Pivot tables were used to determine self-identified Indigenous graduation rates by province and by degree type (e. g. diploma, Bachelor's degree, etc.). While data was acquired for individual schools, the researchers chose to limit analysis to the provincial level to reduce the risk of invasion of privacy for students.

Limitations

Data precision is limited from the outset, as the study focuses on Indigenous students who are self-identifying. Some Indigenous students may choose not to self-identify or share details of their status to their institution, while others' Indigenous status might be uncertain.

Some schools recorded their enrolment data by using calendar years, while others used academic years. Certain programs only provided totals over a five-year period, while others provided only enrolment or graduation numbers. In addition, some schools did not collect the demographic information at all, while others declined to share it, citing privacy reasons. This meant that researchers were forced to work from a sample. According to Joel Best (2012) in *Damned Lies and Statistics*, work-

ing from samples is common when collecting data addressing social issues that affect large groups and geographic areas. Best goes on to say that it is not the size of the sample which matters, but rather the representativeness of the sample. In this study, we included statistics from all degrees and provinces with journalism programs, in an effort to provide a snapshot of Indigenous representation which is as thorough as possible.

Based on the data we collected from institutions, we were unable to track whether students graduated or how long they remained in their programs. However, we were able to determine the *proportions* of Indigenous enrolments and graduates at roughly half the journalism education programs in the country during that five-year period. It should be noted that the proportions of Indigenous students were consistently small, with the addition or subtraction of one or two students having the power to alter the percentages in the dataset.

We then used Statistics Canada 2021 census data to compare the Indigenous population nationally and provincially with our findings.

FINDINGS

RQ1: What are the enrolment and graduation rates of Indigenous students in Canadian journalism programs?

Ninety programs at 48 universities were found to fit our research criteria and selected to be observed. This included one Quebec junior college (CÉGEP), two associate certificate programs, 39 diploma programs, two joint diploma/bachelor's programs, 23 bachelor's programs, 13 certificate programs, three graduate diploma programs and nine master's programs. Of the 90 programs contacted for this research, 48 provided some form of data when requested, 22 programs did not provide data without a response or explanation, and 20 others did not provide data citing either a lack of collection or concerns for student privacy.

Of the 48 journalism programs which did provide data, 3.86% of enrolled students and 3.21% of graduates self-identified as Indigenous. This is lower than the 5.0% of Indigenous people counted in the 2021 census (Statistics Canada, 2021). There were only two provinces in the dataset where the

Indigenous enrolment percentages were higher: Manitoba and Saskatchewan, which also have the highest overall proportions of Indigenous residents. Notably, the three regions with the highest Indigenous population percentages out of all the provinces and territories —the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon— (Statistics Canada, 2022), were excluded from this research because they did not have any journalism education programs at the time of the survey.

Enrolment rates of self-identified Indigenous students were found to be slightly higher than graduation rates for all degree types and in every province. The percentage of students who self-identified as Indigenous in journalism programs was higher at junior colleges and technical-vocational schools with enrolment rates of 4.23% at junior colleges and 4.41% at technical-vocational schools, and graduation rates of 3.68% at junior colleges and 4.35% at technical-vocational schools. At universities with journalism programs, 3.22% of the students enrolled had self-identified as Indigenous and 2.09% of the graduates self-identified as Indigenous.

The trend continued with lower rates of self-identified Indigenous students as the duration of education extended. For journalism diplomas, which typically take two years, 5.77% of enrolled students and 5.14% of graduates self-identified as Indigenous (with both figures being higher than the Indigenous population percentage estimated from Statistics Canada data). However, for bachelor's degrees in journalism, which typically take around four years, 2.42% of students and 1.73% of graduates self-identified as Indigenous.

Overall, the percentage of enrolled students who self-identified as Indigenous stayed within a range of 3.41 and 4.03% between 2017 and 2022. The percentage of graduates who self-identified stayed within a range of 1.82 and 2.83%, with the exception of 2021 where 4.32% of graduates self-identified as Indigenous.

Manon Tremblay, Senior Director of Indigenous Directions at Concordia University, participated in an interview with the lead researcher on May 3, 2023, to provide context and perspective to the study results. When asked about the proportional increase in Indigenous graduations in 2021, she said it was difficult to pinpoint the exact reason and suggested the possibility of a slight bump in enrolments a few years prior: "Despite the pandemic I have seen years in the past where there's been surges of students. So I wonder if that's what it was." When asked whether the pandemic-related shift to online learning might have led to the increase, Tremblay said it's possible, although she said that in some cases Indigenous students who returned to their communities found that "the Wi-Fi was so bad that it was impossible to take the courses." Tremblay said she also knew of some students who chose to put their studies on hold during the pandemic because the online learning format "just wasn't for them."

RQ2: What are the experiences of Indigenous journalism students in Canada?

Henderson (2000) writes, "When most professors describe the 'world,' they describe artificial Eurocentric contexts and ignore Aboriginal world views, knowledge, and thought. For most Aboriginal students, the realization of their invisibility is similar to looking into a still lake and not seeing their image" (p. 76). Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) identified factors key to Indigenous student engagement and success in general post-secondary education, outlining the 4-R's: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility. "The university must be able to present itself in ways that have instrumental value to First Nations students; that is, the programs and services that are offered must connect with the students' own aspirations and cultural predispositions sufficiently to achieve a comfort level that will make the experience worth enduring" (Kirkness & Barnhardt, p. 6).

While more than two decades have passed since the publication of those two studies, the reflections of many participants in this research underscore the work that remains for journalism programs.

Representation within the program

The 21 research participants were asked the question, "How many Indigenous students were there in your classes?"76. 2% (n=16) said that they were the only Indigenous student in their cohort (n=12) or one of two students (n=4).

For some, this made for an isolating educational experience. Martha Troian said that while studying in her program in Ontario, she didn't know of any other Indigenous students. Troian said that if she'd had Indigenous classmates, it might have limited some of the pressure to explain certain things to non-Indigenous students. She also discussed some of the challenges faced by students studying journalism, saying that normal feelings of stress can be exacerbated by the isolation. "Being included should make you be more engaged with content...and almost make you feel safe," she said.

Faculty

Manon Tremblay says representation among faculty can be a major factor when it comes to the comfort of Indigenous students in post-secondary education because "they want to be able to have people they relate to, people that they can talk to, and that they don't feel like their guard is always up."

When asked how many Indigenous faculty members were teaching within their journalism programs, 90.5% (n=19) said none. One participant (hereafter referred to as Participant A) said there was one Indigenous professor as part of the faculty during the first year they were in their journalism program, but none the following year. Another participant, Brad Bellegarde, mentioned an elective course taught by an Indigenous CBC reporter in the final year of his program in Saskatchewan. He said there was also a Canada Research Chair within the faculty who was Indigenous, but from a country in South America.

Most participants simply responded, "none" or "zero."

Content within the program

Participants were asked how much content related to Indigenous Peoples was included in their programs. A total 47.6% (n=10) responded that there had been no Indigenous content (n=7), or very little Indigenous content (n=3), while 33.3% (n=7) said that *they* were the ones who initiated inclusion of Indigenous content, through their choice of stories or projects to work on. Ossie Michelin, who attended journalism school in Quebec, said of

Indigenous content in his program: "Not a thing. Anything that was Indigenous-related was because I brought it in and my professors were receptive to it. "

Cultural awareness

A total 38.1% of participants (n=8) voluntarily brought up an overall lack of cultural awareness in their programs, both among professors and other students. Creeson Agecoutay attended a journalism program in Saskatchewan, and said he was surprised by some students' reactions to the presence of an Indigenous classmate: "It's people not knowing much about the Indigenous people— so when they see someone in class, they stare...I don't know if it happens anywhere else, but you get stared at; you get looked at. "

About a quarter of the interviewees (n=5) said that they were pointed out as possible resources for other students, with some even asked to lead classes or workshops, or to share their knowledge when it came to Indigenous communities, culture, and reporting. "I feel like the teachers were not really prepared to talk about Indigenous-related issues," said Gabrielle Paul, who studied journalism at a college in Quebec. Paul said at one point she was even asked to educate other students in a class setting, which made her feel uncomfortable: "I wasn't prepared to answer questions like that— or to me (they) are not even worth questioning— stuff, like, from stereotypes really, like about taxes and alcoholism."

Brad Bellegarde said he liked helping classmates understand certain aspects of Indigenous cultures including the offering of tobacco as a symbol of gratitude, even going so far as to bring tobacco to the journalism school and make it available for classmates who were doing interviews with First Nations people. However, he spoke in a less positive way about the obligation he felt to explain to instructors different ways to approach issues, and having them occasionally defer questions about First Nations cultures to him. Bellegarde said, "I'm the student; I shouldn't have to educate the people who are educating us on certain things."

Racism

Asked whether they could describe any specific incidents of microaggressions or casual racism, 28.6% of participants (n=6) reported having experienced or noticed some form of racism during the time in their programs.

One participant (who will be referred to as Participant B) recalled a professor speaking about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in a joking manner. They also mentioned noticing a "tone of racism" throughout their time in the program: "I guess you'd call that systemic racism, you know, just like little words, like little things here and there, but constant." B said that they personally felt equipped to handle such incidents. However, they worried about the potential harm for other Indigenous students, particularly those who might be younger and arriving right out of high school.

Merelda Fiddler-Potter, who attended a journalism program in Saskatchewan in the late 1990s, said she'd overheard students making comments about being scalped if they ever went on a reserve. She says some claimed that Indigenous students were guaranteed seats without having to meet program entry standards "even though I had a 92 average and there were no such seats. And no professors ever corrected them. "

Maria-Louise Nanipou says that in 1990, to her knowledge, she was the first Indigenous woman ever to study journalism in Quebec. She told the story of a professor looking at her face and asking her whether she was Indigenous, then telling her she would have additional time to complete an exam even though she had not asked for it. She says, "and I said thank you, I am already finished... (and he said) 'no, no, no, take your time. Take your time.' And I never forgot that story."

A participant (referred to in this research as C) said there had been some discrimination based on race and names in the chat functions during some of their online classes.

Another, Gabrielle Paul, also mentioned online comments, saying she'd noticed an instructor had written on social media about Indigenous people getting things handed to them.

Raising Concerns

Research has found that building relationships with professors, including the ability to seek assistance and support, has a major impact on Indigenous persistence in post-secondary education (Walton et. al., 2020). However, several participants in this study said they struggled to build such connections.

Participants were asked how comfortable they felt when it came to raising concerns with faculty members, with 52.4% (n=11) saying they were comfortable. In addition to this, two participants stated that they'd had at least one faculty member within the department with whom they felt comfortable enough to raise concerns. But more than a quarter of participants – 28.6% (n=6) – said they were "not very" comfortable or "not at all" comfortable going to faculty with a concern.

Merelda Fiddler-Potter responded simply, "I would never raise a concern." Another interviewee who will be referred to as Participant D said that it just wasn't worth it: "I knew as the only Indigenous person that I would alienate myself from the rest of the class if I made complaints." Participant B said they would not raise concerns because they did not want to have to explain an issue to a professor who might not understand or be open to it. "Because it was such microaggressions that it would be, you know, a lot of people get defensive or they go like, 'what are you talking about'?" B said they also knew that they would eventually need to find a job in the industry, and did not want to risk upsetting anyone.

Distance

Participants were asked about the location of their journalism programs in relation to their home communities. While too few participants elaborated on this question to provide relevant data on actual distances, a third of participants (n=7) did say that they had found it difficult living away from their communities during their studies.

Robert Doane, who attended a journalism program in Alberta, said family and community are important for Indigenous students, and the isolation in urban centres can be damaging for some. "And they come in, they don't know anybody, and there's not a lot of trust. There's no cultural

supports available, or none that are obvious…it's almost like compounding isolation. So it's just a really big barrier." Gabrielle Paul believes some students might not even consider journalism as a career because they would have to move so far from home to study: "And I think it's one of the factors that really discourage people to apply."

RQ3: How can journalism programs improve their support of Indigenous students?

Participants were asked, "What do you think could be done differently to make Indigenous students feel more welcome in journalism schools?" and "What would a decolonized—or Indigenized—journalism program look like?" They were also asked if they had any recommendations for change, based on their own experiences. Suggestions about program content and hiring were the most common responses.

More Indigenous content

Two thirds of participants (n=14) said that journalism programs should have a mandatory core course for all students on Indigenous reporting and cultural awareness, not just an elective option. Further, 47.6% (n=10) said programs should also do more to embed Indigenous content throughout their course offerings.

Participant B suggested requiring Indigenous Studies classes for all students at any institution of higher education, across the board. Another participant, Shaun McLeod, who attended a journalism program in Ontario, echoed this, saying that greater inclusion of Indigenous content benefits everyone: "By including it in the curriculum it opens up their mind…I think it's win-win…because Indigenous (stories) get more representation in the media and fair representation as well."

Jamin Mike, who attended a program in Saskatchewan, said that Indigenous students doing assignments should be given the freedom to report on Indigenous topics if they choose "because you can pretty well write on anything within the Indigenous journalism umbrella."

Several participants suggested that programs should be putting a special focus on trauma-informed journalism education. Connie Walker,

who attended a program in Saskatchewan, said, "I think a big part of my education around trauma has been learning how if someone is treated with respect and given agency in the telling of their own story and are left with a feeling of support and empowerment, it can actually be a healing experience to share your story." Walker said that having an understanding of the science of trauma and the role of trauma in Indigenous communities is crucial for emerging journalists who will be reporting in Indigenous communities.

Ninah Hermiston, who was attending a journalism program in Ontario at the time of the interview, said programs should also be reviewing their pedagogical approaches and methods used to deliver content, saying they could include more oral and visual options to better reflect diverse ways of learning.

More Indigenous faculty

Nearly two thirds of participants (n=13) recommended hiring more Indigenous educators to make programs more welcoming, with several mentioning the significance of Indigenous students seeing their own identities and perspectives reflected. Greg Horn, who attended a program in Quebec, said, "I think the important thing is that our Indigenous students need to see the people from their communities that are successful doing good things and passing on their knowledge." Participant D went a step further, saying representation should reach beyond journalism departments and that there should be Indigenous presence at every single structural level within educational institutions – from staff members, to faculty, to the board of governors.

Greater cultural awareness

38.1% of participants (n=8) called for a commitment to greater cultural competence overall among faculty and students, saying there needs to be greater knowledge and teaching about colonialism and its negative impacts.

Participant C said that faculty members should work to understand the weight of trauma and intergenerational trauma that some Indigenous students may be carrying due to their personal histories (Bombay, 2009). Participant C went on to

say, "we have so many issues that white students don't, that the non-Indigenous students don't. And I think just the general understanding and support and softness from the teachers would be great."

Connie Walker said that Indigenous students' lived experiences are a gift to journalism, and programs should be "providing an education about the Indigenous side of this shared history and the media's role in silencing Indigenous journalists or Indigenous people and our stories." Robert Doane echoed this, saying journalism educators need to recognize that having different lived experiences and knowledge is a strength, not a deficit. "We all have strengths as storytellers that make us distinctly unique. And if you try to put us all in a box… a lot of us won't make it. But if you actually think about journalism or storytelling from the point of view that every one of us has a very distinct style and approach and worldview perspective and is different but also valued, I think that's the way to begin to think about how you're setting people up for success."

Greater collaboration with communities

When asked about ways to better equip all students to tell Indigenous stories, 38.1% of participants (n=8) mentioned connections and collaborations with Indigenous communities.

Participant A suggested having Chiefs, Elders, or Council members visit and speak with students, saying this would help teach them to be more respectful and understanding of local protocols—particularly when communicating with Elders. Participant D spoke about the value of cross-cultural exchange, saying it would mean bumping students out of their cultural comfort zones to work in communities that are not their own. D spoke of the care this would require, saying "it needs to be done on a face-to-face, human to human basis. And that effort needs to be supported by cultural competency training that is informed by Indigenous Peoples."

Greg Horn launched a local journalism website in his home community after graduating and suggested that journalism programs should be working to develop internships and other opportunities with Indigenous media outlets. He says that, too, would contribute to cultural awareness: "And you know, a trial by fire, and then you learn on the job

and you go through a lot of these different things, but you know it."

Meanwhile, Ossie Michelin said that programs working to build collaborations should approach them with a desire to create lasting change. "You need to make structural changes so it's not like little finite things. You need to figure out ways to make continual relationships with communities and organizations. Not just individuals." Michelin said that programs need to find a sustainable way forward, and give consideration to how they might build legacies.

More support for Indigenous students

Financial challenges can have a strong impact on Indigenous students, forcing some to abandon their studies due to intersecting factors. These may include "funding issues with their Indigenous community, child care, housing, and having family supports… especially for single parents, most of whom were female" (Walton et. al., 2020).

These concerns were echoed by about a quarter of participants in this research (n=5), who mentioned the need for greater access to support for Indigenous students, financial and otherwise, particularly for those forced to leave their communities.

Connie Walker said that programs need to closely examine the diverse experiences and needs of students, and spoke of the need for cultural awareness when it comes to properly supporting Indigenous students: "Look at the socioeconomic status of Indigenous people in Canada and then apply all of our understanding around those barriers of growing up in poverty, sometimes, with limited access to the same kinds of infrastructure and supports that regular journalism students have."

Even something as basic as finding an apartment can be doubly difficult for Indigenous students, said Maria-Louise Nanipou, who pointed out that they might be perfectly fluent in their own language but face challenges with English or French. She added that racism and stereotyping from landlords is also a very real concern. "And if you are Native and people, they ask you, they don't want to give you access to the apartment. They're afraid you're not paying." Nanipou said institutions that fail to provide support in finding housing might actually be deterring some Indigenous students

from attending their programs.

Manon Tremblay pointed out that the educational journeys of Indigenous students may not follow the same trajectory as those of their non-Indigenous counterparts. Tremblay said that typically in Canadian society, students are expected to finish their schooling and find a career before starting a family. She says universities must recognize that some Indigenous people—particularly those living in their home communities—may choose to live their lives in a different order, starting families soon after leaving high school. "So you know, there is very often a break between high school and the rest of your academic journey…you know, their kids are now not necessarily fully grown but they're done having babies, and so they start turning their attention to finishing their education," she said. Tremblay says supporting Indigenous students as they make this shift to academic life, creating bridging programs to help them meet prerequisites and offering financial assistance, would reduce some of the obstacles they face.

More Indigenous spaces on campus

Among participants, 19% (n=4) mentioned the need for dedicated culturally safe spaces on campus for Indigenous students to meet. They suggest more spaces that celebrate Indigeneity; more spaces where Indigenous students can see themselves—and be themselves.

The university where Ossie Michelin studied had two separate campuses. He discussed how one campus had the Indigenous student centre, while the other campus—where his journalism program was located—had only a statue of two local Indigenous historical figures outside in the middle of the yard. "Like, there's a statue. Are we supposed to go hang out at the statue?" Michelin said it wouldn't have taken much to create a welcoming Indigenous space at the second campus, and even a single room could be enough.

RQ4: How can journalism programs better recruit Indigenous students?

Participants provided an array of responses to this question, with many addressing points previously mentioned in RQ3, including more Indigenous

faculty and improving overall cultural awareness and knowledge.

However, the single most common response to this question referred to active engagement, with 38% of participants (n=8) saying that educational institutions should be working to establish real connections with Indigenous communities by regularly being part of open houses, visiting high schools, going to events, and working to build relationships. Robert Doane said institutions and journalism departments need to give Indigenous students a reason to believe they are interested in them, saying, "you plant seeds by being present."

Participant C said that programs also need to show Indigenous students that they are evolving, by shifting away from the media's traditional use of stereotypes and trauma narratives and working to foster positive change when it comes to the way journalism is taught and practised: "So we need to, in some ways, promote the fact that we can be the change, that we can change things. And that's not just for journalism; it's for everything."

CONCLUSION

Storytelling has been at the core of life for Indigenous people from the very beginning of time. (M'Lot, 2022).

Journalism programs in Canada have been working to increase Indigenous representation, with some doing outreach or adding programs targeting Indigenous learners. However, for Indigenous students to truly consider pursuing journalism, they need to know that they will not feel like outsiders in their own programs. Integration is not inclusion; all students—regardless of their backgrounds—should feel welcome and that their knowledge and experiences are reflected and valued.

In a one-year period ending in spring of 2024, three Canadian universities, Carleton University, Concordia University, and First Nations University of Canada hired Indigenous tenure track Associate and Assistant Professors specializing in Indigenous Journalism, a clear effort to improve Indigenous-related story-telling and to attract more Indigenous story-tellers to the field. But

change is a process, and it will not happen overnight.

The data and information provided within this study could provide some guidance. Indigenous students and former students provide concrete suggestions based on their lived experiences, to help journalism programs create a more respectful and inclusive environment for future students. Their insights show that representation and cultural awareness play a pivotal role in creating welcoming and empowering journalism programs, and that the way to better serve and draw Indigenous students is to create an environment where they can see themselves and their worldviews reflected.

In her interview, Maria-Louise Nanipou spoke of her experiences as the first Indigenous woman to study journalism in Quebec, in 1990. She mentioned how for generations under Canadian colonialism, Indigenous voices were silenced through assimilationist and genocidal government policies. Nanipou said that when she started her program, there were still very few Indigenous people working in journalism because for so many years, Indigenous people—particularly Indigenous women—simply did not have a voice in Canada. She says for her, choosing journalism was a conscious decision to break that silence.

When asked what journalism programs can do to make Indigenous students feel more welcome, Nanipou said:

> *They can remind them that they are courageous.*
>
> *They are not alone; they're part of something big.*
>
> *And being there, it's courageous.*
>
> *Because they broke the silence.*

Kristy Snell is an Associate Professor in the Journalism department at Concordia University. She holds a Master of Education in Indigenous Education from UBC, and her work includes a collaborative project introducing journalism to high school students in Kahnawà:ke. Email: kristy.snell@concordia.ca

Gwendolyn Roley is a journalist and researcher based in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. Her Master's degree studied data journalism and mapping, and she is currently working on a project fact-checking misinformation. Email: gweniroley@gmail.com

REFERENCES

Anderson, M. C. , & Robertson, C. L. (2011). *Seeing red: a history of Natives in Canadian newspapers*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press.

Best, J. (2012). *Damned Lies and Statistics: untangling numbers from the media, politicians, and activists*. University of California Press.

Bombay, A. , Matheson, K. , & Anisman, H. (2009). Intergenerational Trauma: Convergence of Multiple Processes among First Nations peoples in Canada. *International Journal of Indigenous Health, 5(3)*. https://jps. library. utoronto. ca/index. php/ijih/article/view/28987

Braun, V. , & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2)*, 77–101. https://doi. org/10. 1191/1478088706qp063oa

Burns, P. , & Shor, E. (2021). Racial stereotyping of indigenous people in the Canadian media: comparative analysis of two water pollution incidents. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie, 58(2)*, 207–228. https://doi. org/10. 1111/cars. 12335

The Canadian Association of Journalists. (2022). *Canadian newsroom diversity survey final report 2022*. https://caj. ca/wp-content/uploads/Canadian-Newsroom-Diversity-Survey-2022. pdf

The Canadian Association of Journalists. (2023). *Canadian newsroom diversity survey final report 2023*. https://caj. ca/wp-content/uploads/Diversity_Survey_Report_2023_EN. pdf

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (2019). Challenging media stereotypes of Indigenous People. *CBC Radio, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*. https://www. cbc. ca/radio/unreserved/challenging-media-stereotypes-of-indigenous-people-1. 5358798

Carpenter, L. , Kenyon, M. , Barrera, J. , Blackstock, C. , McCue, D. , Talaga, T. , & Walker, C. (2019). Buried voices, changing tones: An examination of media coverage of Indigenous issues in Ontario. *Journalists for Human Rights*. https://web. archive. org/web/20171021062526/http://www. jhr. ca/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/JHR-IRP-Report-v3online. pdf

David, D. (2018, October 21). Here's why media coverage of Indigenous issues is so terrible, both in the US and Canada. *Salon*. https://www. salon. com/2018/10/21/heres-why-media-coverage-of-indigenous-issues-is-so-terrible-both-in-the-u-s-and-canada/

Henderson, J. S. Y. (2000). Challenges of respecting Indigenous world views in Eurocentric education. In R. Neil (Ed.), *Voice of the drum: Indigenous education and culture*, 59-80. Brandon, Manitoba: Kingfisher Publication

Indigenous Journalists' Association. (2018). *NAJA bingo card*. https:// najanewsroom. com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/BINGO-card-rev180927. pdf

Kirkness, V. J. , & Barnhardt, R. (2001). First Nations and higher education: The four R's—Respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility. In R. Hayhoe & J. Pan (Eds.), *Knowledge across cultures: A contribution to dialogue among civilizations,* 1-21. Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong. https://www. uaf. edu/ankn/publications/collective-works-of-ray-b/Four-Rs-2nd-Ed. pdf

Kovach, M. (2021). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts* (2nd ed.). University of Toronto Press.

Lisk, S. (2020). Rewriting journalism: How Canadian Media reinforces Indigenous Stereotypes. *TVO Today*. https://www. tvo. org/article/rewriting-journalism-how-canadian-media-reinforces-indigenous-stereotypes

McCue, D. (2023). *Decolonizing journalism, a guide to reporting in Indigenous communities*. Oxford University Press.

M'Lot, C. & Ferguson, K. (2022). *Resurgence: Engaging with Indigenous narratives and culture expressions in and beyond the classroom*. Portage & Main Press.

Miller, John. (2005). Who's telling the news? Racial representation among news gatherers in Canada's daily newsrooms. *International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations, 5,* 1–10.

Ministry of Innovation, Science and Industry of Canada. (2024). *What we heard: A report from the Three Federal Research Funding Agencies' Ad Hoc Working Group on Indigenous Citizenship and Membership*. https://www.canada.ca/en/research-coordinating-committee/priorities/indigenous-research/2023/report-what-we-heard.html#toc1

Queen's University Alumni. (2021, June 18). *The legacy of North America's first Indigenous doctor*. https://www.queensu.ca/alumni/news/the-legacy-of-north-americas-first-indigenous-doctor

Statistics Canada. (2022). *Indigenous population continues to grow and is much younger than the non-Indigenous population, although the pace of growth has slowed*. https://www150. statcan. gc. ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng. htm?indid=32990-1&indgeo=0

Statistics Canada. (2021). *Indigenous identity of person*. https://www23. statcan. gc. ca/imdb/p3Var. pl?Function=DEC&Id=42927

Thompson, I. (2021). *Dart Center style guide for trauma-informed journalism*. Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. https://dartcenter. org/resources/dart-center-style-guide

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. https://ehprnh2mwo3. exactdn. com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2. pdf

Walton, P. , Hamilton, K. , Clark, N. , Pigeon, M. , & Arnouse, M. (2020). Indigenous university student persistence: Supports, obstacles, and recommendations. *Canadian Journal of Education*. https://files. eric. ed. gov/fulltext/EJ1262710. pdf

Victims, burdens, and problems: A thematic analysis of *Le Journal de Montréal* news coverage of Roxham Road

Victimes, fardeaux et problèmes : Une analyse thématique de la couverture médiatique du Chemin Roxham par Le Journal de Montréal

Clément Lechat

ABSTRACT

Roxham Road, a rural road in Quebec, was a longtime hotspot for migrants and asylum seekers entering Canada from the United States that the province's news media paid close attention to, until the entry point was closed in March 2023. Scholarly research has identified frames in the coverage of this controversial crossing point between 2017 and 2019, when the number of irregular arrivals was considered a "crisis." This article extends the research to the post-pandemic era, and during a new "crisis," by presenting an inductive thematic analysis of 55 online news articles published in Le Journal de Montréal, the province's most-read newspaper, throughout 2022. The results point to binary coverage that rarely speaks to migrants, and that portrays Roxham as a problem requiring policy-oriented solutions. Although aspects of the coverage remained stable in 2022, temporal and provincial specificities stand out, in particular the importance given to the French language, Quebec politics, and conflicts between the provincial and federal governments.

RÉSUMÉ

Roxham Road, un chemin de campagne au Québec, a longtemps été un point névralgique pour les migrants et les demandeurs d'asile entrant au Canada depuis les États-Unis, un sujet largement couvert par les médias québécois, jusqu'à la fermeture de ce point d'entrée en mars 2023. Des recherches académiques ont identifié des cadres dans la couverture de ce point de passage controversé entre 2017 et 2019, lorsque le nombre d'arrivées irrégulières était qualifié de « crise ». Cet article prolonge ces recherches dans l'ère post-pandémique et lors d'une nouvelle « crise », en présentant une analyse thématique inductive de 55 articles de presse en ligne publiés dans Le Journal de Montréal, le journal le plus lu de la province, tout au long de l'année 2022. Les résultats révèlent une couverture binaire qui donne rarement la parole aux migrants et qui dépeint Roxham comme un problème nécessitant des solutions politiques. Bien que certains aspects de la couverture soient restés stables en 2022, des spécificités temporelles et provinciales se distinguent, notamment l'importance accordée à la langue française, la politique québécoise et aux conflits entre le gouvernement provincial et fédéral.

INTRODUCTION

> On a des lois qui protègent notre frontière, qui nous protègent, qu'on a votées et qui sont en place. Mais le premier ministre, pour des raisons idéologiques, en raison de son multiculturalisme débridé, il dit : la loi sur l'immigration, moi je ne la respecte pas? Voyons donc! (Bellerose, JdM, January 12, 2023).[1]

This quote, from Frédéric Bastien, founder of the anti-federal group Justice pour le Québec, exemplifies an overarching trend in *Le Journal de Montréal*'s coverage of Roxham Road: characterizing the border, a geographical and legal demarcation line, as something that protects Quebecers against external disruptions. This nationalistic view of the border calls for increased state sovereignty as an answer to cultural insecurity and heightened migratory flows from the Global South.

From 2016 to 2023, Roxham Road, an eight-kilometre transborder path located in Southern Quebec, crystallized tensions around the irregular entry of asylum seekers into Canada that were ultimately reflected in the media. This unofficial entry point was a migration hotspot before Canadian authorities closed it on March 25, 2023, following a revision of the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) between Canada and the United States, which now applies to the entire land border. Fluidity has nonetheless long characterized the two sides of the border (MacDonald & Ayres, 2023). In the 19th century, the Underground Railroad had routes in New England allowing enslaved people to reach Canada (Bourgeon et al., 2017). Franco-Canadians later migrated southward to contribute to New England's industry in the early 20th century (Bourgeon et al., 2017). More recently, residents of the area, interviewed by a *Washington Post* journalist, recalled American resistors to the Vietnam War and Central American conflicts fleeing across the border (Craig, 2018). Following the 9/11 attacks in 2001, increased measures to secure the border were taken (MacDonald & Ayres, 2023). Similar to the first Roxham Road migratory "crisis" in 2017, the years 2022 and 2023 saw calls for the "modernization" of the STCA and fixing its so-called "loophole." The March 2023 decision to close Roxham was preceded by the August to October 2022 Quebec provincial election campaign, during which immigration was a much-debated issue (MacDonald & Ayres, 2023). François Legault's Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) was re-elected in a landslide, taking 90 of 125 seats, after a first term during which he advocated for more Quebec sovereignty within Canada, especially on matters of immigration, and stressed the importance of the French language and Quebec's distinctiveness as a francophone nation with its own identity in North America. During the election, *Le Journal de Montréal* offered a platform for politicians with more restrictive stances on immigration to express their views, namely François Legault (CAQ), Paul Saint-Pierre Plamondon (Parti Québécois, PQ), and Éric Duhaime (Parti Conservateur du Québec). The present research identified themes in articles about Roxham Road published on the website of *Le Journal de Montréal* in 2022. *Le Journal* is commonly considered to lean toward the right side of the political spectrum. The author considers Roxham Road under both its geographical and human aspects, focusing on how the place and the people crossing here are depicted during a moment of so-called "crisis." The findings are discussed within existing scholarship on Roxham Road and the media portrayal of asylum seekers in Canada, including those pertaining to critical border and migration studies, establishing comparisons that highlight the stability and ruptures in the 2022 coverage of Roxham Road. The discussion of the findings highlights Quebec-specific features, such as the salience of cultural threats, provincial politics, and the ongoing politicization of immigration in the province (Xhardez & Paquet, 2020). Exploratory in nature, the results of this thematic analysis do not intend to draw generalizations on Quebec's media landscape and practices but, rather, hope to identify further research avenues on the media portrayal of asylum seekers in the province, and to open discussions among journalism practitioners.

---

[1] All translations are from the author, who is a bilingual French speaker. "We have laws that protect our border, that protect us, that we voted for and that are in place. But the Prime Minister, for ideological reasons, because of his unrestrained multiculturalism, says: the immigration law, me, I don't respect it? Come on!"

LITERATURE REVIEW

The situation at Roxham Road has generated growing scholarly interest in the past years.[2] Yet, the size of this academic corpus focusing closely on Roxham Road remains modest. As of August 2024, my scan found just nine peer-reviewed articles specifically using the term "Roxham Road" in publicly available databases.[3] While more may exist, the specific term "Roxham Road" seems to have entered academic research more recently, evolving from a purely geographic feature to a conceptual place. The present review introduces this burgeoning literature—which includes media-oriented approaches—that reflects various scholarly perspectives on Roxham Road. Additional publications on the media portrayal of immigration in Canada and public attitudes toward Roxham Road add context to the analysis.

Roxham Road: An object in the making for journalism

Roxham Road has been scrutinized on different scales and through diverse media: individual immigration discourses on social media publications (French Bourgeois & Esses, 2024); analyses of an immersive virtual reality documentary photography exhibition (Cressman, 2019; Fan, 2022), and; the use of oral histories of refugees and advocacy groups to create a "counter-archive" (Reynolds et al., 2023). Most of the research on Roxham Road has been conducted by scholars in legal studies (Mercier & Rehaag, 2020; Mayrand & Smith-Grégoire, 2018; Plouffe- Malette & La Charité-Harbec, 2024; Arbel 2013; Arbel & Brenner, 2013) and political science (Côté-Boucher et al., 2023; Belkhodja & Xhardez, 2020; Leuprecht, 2019). Belkhodja and Gratton (2022), Perzyna and Bauder (2023), and Duncan and Caidi (2018) delved into the media portrayal of Roxham Road specifically. In their research on citizens mobilized to support asylum seekers, known as the BnotB collective, Belkhodja and Gratton (2022) conducted an inductive analysis of 689 articles (editorials, news, and opinion pieces) published between Jan-

uary 2017 and August 2018 in four Quebec dailies: *Le Devoir, La Presse, Le Journal de Montréal,* and *the Montreal Gazette*. Their analysis reveals that the collective's "lived border" contrasts sharply with the "imagined border" created by the mainstream media (p. 4). Their findings unveil three main media portrayals: (1) "the border's legitimacy is rarely questioned," while "the legitimacy of asylum seekers is rarely acknowledged" (p. 7); (2) the border as "an object of control and protection," and; (3) the negative consequences for Quebec society of hosting asylum seekers.

Drawing a parallel between the framing of Wet'suwet'en protesters in British Columbia and Roxham Road's irregular asylum seekers, Perzyna and Bauder (2023) used comparative critical discourse analysis, and two theoretical frameworks (settler colonialism and securitization theory) to identify three dominant frames in media coverage of the *Toronto Star* (31 articles) and the *National Post* (31 articles): (1) the rule of law; (2) the common good, and; (3) human rights. Newspaper articles and opinion pieces were considered. Overall, the political alignment of the newspapers was reflected in the tone of the articles, with *The Star* "more likely to express views that were empathetic [. . .] and more likely to critique government actions than *The Post*" (p. 77). Most significantly, they found that both newspapers lacked diverse sources. Voices of irregular asylum seekers tended to be "completely silenced" (p. 7). In the coverage of irregular asylum seekers, spanning over three years, between 2017 and 2019, the authors found that people crossing the border are depicted as defying the rule of law, and therefore criminalized, and noticed an overreliance on the word "illegal" linked to a strong emphasis on crossing statistics that reinforced the criminalization of asylum seekers, who tended to be othered and racialized. Moreover, asylum seekers were seen as threats to the integrity of the immigration system, and economic burdens on the welfare system, exploiting Canada's generosity with so-called "fraudulent," "fake," and "undeserving" claims (p. 86). The human rights frame is almost absent in the *Post*, which favours protectionist measures against irregular asylum seekers, while the *Star* heavily re-

---

[2] Roxham is also the object of master's theses, although these were not included in this literature review. See Mekerian, 2023; Rinfret, 2022; Senat, 2022; Abba, 2020.

[3] This includes articles published in either French or English that refer to Roxham in their title or summary.

lies on human rights discourse, stressing Canada's moral imperative to keep up with its "humanitarian reputation" (p. 86-87).

Duncan and Caidi (2018), focusing on the concepts of the governmentalities of mobility and truth, analyzed how mass media portrayed irregular migration at the border through a content analysis of 146 news articles published in 2017 by six Canadian outlets (*The Globe and Mail*, CBC News, the *Toronto Star*, the *Montreal Gazette*, the *National Post*, and the *Toronto Sun*). The main trend is that "immigration is generally framed . . . as a problem in need of a solution," alongside a "narrative of pressure," a "strong policy emphasis and a privileging of politicians' discourses in the crafting of the narrative," as well as "emphasis on law and order from government actors" (p. 334). The authors argue this coverage reinforces a narrative of humanitarian securitization, partly constructed in opposition to the Trump administration's treatment of migrants on its territory and at its borders (pp. 336-337).

Media portrayal and public attitudes toward asylum seekers in Canada

Previous research on media framing, public attitudes toward refugees, and immigration policy provides an important contextual bedrock for analyzing the coverage of Roxham Road and understanding its blind spots. Most significantly, Lawlor and Tolley (2017), in a 10-year automated content analysis of *The Globe and Mail*, the *National Post*, the *Toronto Star*, and the *Vancouver Sun*'s coverage of immigrants and refugees, found a discursive hierarchy between refugees and economic immigrants, arguing that refugees are "portrayed as less deserving and less beneficial to Canada and more threatening than immigrants" (p. 969). Previous Canadian research on irregular sea border crossings in British Columbia found that the media portrayed arrivals as a "crisis" and an "invasion" underlining the potential threats to the host society that included the spread of infectious diseases and the entry of potential terrorists into Canada (Mahtani & Mountz, 2002). This problematization of refugees by the media and subsequent dehumanization has been found to lead to more negative attitudes (Esses et al. 2013). More generally, the aforementioned findings on media framing align with research conducted in other contexts. In Europe, Gottlob and Boomgaarden's compilation (2020) includes migrants depicted as "'object[s] of control,' 'illegals' or 'victims'" (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Horsti, 2008), "'aliens' or 'intruders'" (Van Gorp, 2005; Wodak, 2008), and "'the cultural other'" (Khosravinik et al., 2012).

Lawlor and Tolley's research (2017), spanning from 2005 to 2014, did not encompass the 2017-2019 "crisis" at Roxham Road. Starting from 2017, Côté-Boucher and colleagues (2023) called into question the framing of Roxham as a "crisis" by recontextualizing the gradual erasure of asylum seekers from the Canadian public sphere since the 1990s. Describing the situation at the border as a crisis "betrays a short-sighted approach to migration policy where agentic asylum seeking is constructed as an extraordinary event that must be dealt with through emergency means, rather than a normal, albeit increasingly politicized, phenomenon for which institutions must be prepared," the authors state (p. 2-3).

Yet, public opinion surveys suggest Roxham Road is mainly considered a "crisis" by Canadians. One Angus Reid survey found that 67% of respondents called the situation a "crisis," and that 65% agreed that "Canada received too many irregular crossers for the country's authorities and service providers to handle" (Angus Reid, 2018).[4] An Ipsos survey found the belief that most refugee claimants are not "genuine" refugees is shared by 47% of Canadians (Ipsos, 2019, in Leuprecht, 2019, p. 26).[5] Contrary to the image of Canada as a generous country, Leuprecht (2019) underlines there is no Canadian "exceptionalism" regarding the acceptance of immigration in the country. Acceptance of the current status quo is based on other factors, including high-skilled and well-educated newcomers' rapid integration into society and

---

[4] Online survey conducted from July 25 to July 30, 2018. Representative randomized sample of 1,500 Canadian adults. The margin of error is +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20

[5] Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "Most foreigners who want to get into my country as a refugee really aren't refugees. They just want to come here for economic reasons, or to take advantage of our welfare services."

economic spinoffs (p. 19).

The abovementioned research suggests the media has disproportionately portrayed Roxham Road as a problem in various ways, depicted asylum seekers as a burden, questioned the legitimacy of their claims and sustained a narrative of control and protection, therefore paralleling findings that media portrayals of refugees in Canada contribute to their problematization and dehumanization.

METHOD

This article aims to extend the literature on Roxham Road in the post-pandemic era by examining themes in the coverage of the year 2022 in a Quebec-based outlet. Through an inductive thematic analysis of a corpus of 55 articles, my research provides an overview of the news coverage of Roxham Road in an emblematic Quebec newspaper. The corpus was collected from the Eureka database and *Le Journal de Montréal* website. I used the keyword "Roxham" to search for news articles published on the website of *Le Journal de Montréal* between January 1, 2022, and January 31, 2023. The articles retrieved from the database and the outlet's website were cross-checked on Google News to ensure as complete a dataset as possible.

This research exclusively focuses on news articles. Duplicates, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, and any other items that did not fit into the news article category were removed. In news articles, reporters are supposed to present facts neutrally, while columnists are more overt about their opinions. Excluding opinion pieces does not remove biases from the corpus, but rather focuses the analysis on coverage that is supposed to be more informative and trustworthy, according to journalism's standards (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021).

In total, 221 items were initially retrieved. Following the exclusion phase described above, 166 articles were removed, resulting in a final dataset of 55 articles manually analyzed following an inductive thematic analysis process, with myself, a French speaker from France, as principal coder. The second coder, a journalism professor, reviewed 10% of the corpus in early-stage coding development.

Thematic analysis emerged in psychology and has since been exported to various fields and types of data (Braun & Clarke, 2023). The six phases outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006, 2020) were followed in an iterative way to identify patterns of meaning within the data: familiarization: initial code generation; initial theme generation; theme review; theme definition; naming, and; report writing. The process of corpus collection allowed me to become familiar with the content of the selected articles. After reading each article multiple times, initial, descriptive codes were established in each article. Initial codes were compared to each other and then systematized across the corpus. From these initial codes, I extracted encompassing themes and sub-themes. Initial themes were then reviewed, refined, and then named and turned into final themes that were ultimately tested by re-reading the articles.

Selecting a publication

Le Journal de Montréal, a tabloid owned by the Québecor Group, commonly considered to lean toward more restrictive positions on immigration, had the highest readership among Quebec's main media outlets in 2021 (Centre d'dtudes sur les médias, 2022). *Le Journal de Montréal* and *Le Journal de Québec* often publish the same articles in both outlets, broadening their dissemination to over 40% of all weekly news readers of Quebec's main dailies in 2021 (Centre d'etudes sur les médias, 2022).

It must be emphasized that *Le Journal*'s coverage is not representative of the entirety of Quebec's media landscape and that generalizations cannot be drawn from this research. In addition to its readership and ownership structure, *Le Journal*'s unique characteristics, such as its tabloid format and distinct tone, may influence its coverage of immigration. As Montreal is located approximately 60 kilometres from Roxham Road, and is a transit and/or destination point for asylum seekers, the geographical proximity may also inform *Le Journal*'s coverage. It can be noted that *Le Journal* has a history of reporting on Roxham Road episodically during moments of "crisis." It extensively reported on heightened border crossings in August 2017. The number of articles published stands out

compared to other Quebec outlets (Belkhodja & Gratton, 2022).

The year 2022 set a new record in the history of border crossings in Canada: 92,175 asylum seekers crossed the border, regularly and irregularly, 42% of whom logged their claim at Roxham Road (Schué, Radio-Canada, January 21, 2023), and Quebec accounted for 98% of all irregular entries into Canada (Gagnon, JdM, November 20, 2022). This record of arrivals contrasts with lower figures in 2020-2021 due to COVID-19 border closures. The time frame includes the October Quebec provincial elections, which generated political commentaries on the situation at Roxham Road. January 31, 2023, corresponds to the end of a month of coverage on Fritznel Richard, a Haitian migrant who died of exposure in December 2022 while attempting to cross the border at Roxham Road into the United States.

FINDINGS

This section presents the three main themes that emerged from the thematic analysis and their respective sub-themes: (1) a perceived problem; (2) proposed solutions, and; (3) divergent narratives. The analyzed coverage of Roxham Road appeared to be unbalanced. Theme 1 (perceived problem) was the most prominent among the corpus, followed by Theme 2 (proposed solutions), while Theme 3 (divergent narratives) constituted a clear minority.

Main Theme 1: A perceived problem

The coverage we examined of Roxham Road is often binary. The articles focus either on the problems Roxham Road causes in Quebec, or on the challenges asylum seekers face and the solutions proposed to fix the situation. Roxham's impacts on the province belong to the notions of burden and danger. The line between these two concepts is thin. The burden encompasses the frustration expressed regarding the cost asylum seekers represent, while the danger implies a perceived threat to the integrity of Quebec society.

Sub-theme 1.1: Impacts on Quebec

Large parts of the coverage portray Roxham Road as a prominent burden because of the costs and resources associated with hosting asylum seekers, most prominently emergency housing, but also social services, education, health, and legal assistance. *Le Journal* reporting echoed the wider housing crisis the province faces. Journalists provided detailed information on refugees' housing conditions in emergency shelters, pointing out that the migrants were being "fed and housed on the province's dime" (Richer, JdM, December 19, 2022).

Concerns around the burden asylum seekers represent are voiced by different actors, including the Quebec government, the Parti Québécois (PQ), and community groups that help refugees. Quebec's Premier François Legault is quoted in *Le Journal* claiming that the province's *capacités d'accueil* has reached their maximum, and that further asylum seekers represents an insurmountable challenge. The coverage includes quotes from ministers in the CAQ cabinet, who maintain the same discourse. PQ parliamentary leader Joël Arseneau is quoted denouncing the fact that Quebec has failed to host asylum seekers with dignity. The articles include interviews and comments by community groups that claim to have reached their capacity. Régine Laurent, an influential former nurse and frequent analyst featured on TVA— which is owned by Quebecor—voices these concerns and urges the federal and provincial governments to act.

The idea that Quebec's capacities are at their maximum is reinforced by the source quotes in *Le Journal*'s coverage stating the province has already been generous enough toward asylum seekers. The tension is exacerbated by the fact that migrants who arrived at Roxham Road may not be considered genuine political asylum claimants, but rather economic migrants. This view that they are "bogus" refugees is expressed by François Legault (Gagnon, JdM, November 19, 2022).

The situation is also portrayed as unfair for Quebec, which is described as disproportionately impacted by the irregular migration phenomenon compared to other Canadian provinces. *Le Journal* reported on the views of PQ leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon and his predecessor Jean-

François Lisée, who both argued that Quebec is a victim of Ottawa's lack of will to alleviate the burden. Another article specifically mentioned the belief that Justin Trudeau's 2017 tweet, in which he welcomed to Canada "those fleeing persecution, terror and war," is the cause for the rising border crossing figures (Richer, *Réfugiés,* JdM, December 3, 2022).

The coverage indicates Roxham Road is perceived as a danger to Quebec in other ways, including security, crime, health, and the future of the French language. Articles repeatedly used the word "illegal" to refer to border crossings and asylum seekers, emphasized the rising crossing figures, used the image of Quebec being "submerged" (Richer, *Réfugiés,* JdM, December 3, 2022), or referred to Eric Duhaime asking to "close the tap" (Moalla, JDM, September 27, 2022), all of which implied feelings of danger and invasion. The coverage gives the overall impression that the situation is out of control. Crossing figures and statistics are also heavily emphasized, reinforced by descriptions of Roxham Road as a popular, easy-to-cross border that is advertised as such worldwide.

Among security matters, health is cited as a source of concern. Articles mention that Roxham Road was closed for a part of the COVID-19 pandemic. One article reports that migrants tested positive for the virus, including the omicron variant, and were quarantined. Another recalls Quebec's request to close Roxham Road due to rising COVID-19 cases. Feelings of danger were also present in two crime-related stories published in *Le Journal* that involved alleged U.S.-based criminals escaping the United States by entering Canada through Roxham Road. Another article, in which a journalist interviewed a local independent candidate in the 2022 provincial election, drew a parallel between Roxham Road and the perceived rise of criminality in Montreal:

> Dans ceux qui viennent par le chemin Roxham il y a des gens bien, mais il y en a qui viennent, ils montent les gants [sic; gangs],

on les voit à Montréal, ça tire maintenant dans les McDo, dans les parcs. (Lavoie, JdM, September 25, 2022).[6]

Another article features an interview with Frédéric Bastien, founder of Justice pour le Québec, an anti-federal group that brands itself as "defending Quebec's rights." Bastien criticizes the federal government, arguing that laws protect Canada's borders and, in turn, protect Canadians (Bellerose, JdM, January 12, 2023).

The situation at Roxham Road is also described as threatening the integrity of Quebec as a francophone nation. Articles reported concerns that the arrival of asylum seekers represents a challenge in terms of francization[7] and integration. The coverage indicates these concerns by quoting Legault, government members, and PQ politicians. In some cases, francization concerns expressed by Quebec political actors are directed at the federal government. The opposition between Quebec and Ottawa is pointed out in terms of values. Canadian multiculturalism is perceived as in opposition to Quebec's need to retain its specific francophone identity by a member of the PQ (Lajoie, May 10, 2022, JdM). One article explains these concerns are shared among the majority of Quebecers. Citing a survey,[8] it claims Quebecers think non-Francophone immigration is the main threat to the French language. Francization challenges were sometimes linked to more general debates on immigration targets, a major theme of the 2022 Quebec provincial elections.

Sub-theme 1.2: Impacts on asylum seekers

The coverage describes Roxham Road and its consequences as impacting asylum seekers negatively throughout their journey to Canada. Coverage of asylum seekers' lived experiences, whether inside or outside Canada, focuses on lack of agency, destitution and victimization.

Although most migrants' journeys start from

---

[6] "Some of the people who arrive from Roxham Road are good people, but there are some who arrive, and they establish gangs, you see them in Montreal, they're shooting now in McDonald's, in the parks."

[7] "The process of making or becoming French-speaking" (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.).

[8] Léger survey, May 2022. *Le Journal* did not provide other information or hyperlinks to identify the survey. A CTV News Montreal (2022) article mentioning the same survey provided more information on the source: 1003 Quebecers able to express themselves in French and English, data collected from May 4, 2022, to May 7, 2022.

their home countries outside of North America, most coverage of Roxham Road focuses narrowly on crossing conditions at the U.S.-Canada border and living conditions for asylum seekers in Canada. The situation asylum seekers face in their home country is only briefly described in some articles. The reasons cited for departure are violence, threats, discrimination, religious persecution, and economic destitution. The most present country of origin in the coverage is Haiti. One article noted that a third of people lodging a claim after entering Canada irregularly in 2022 were Haitian. There are also a few references to other countries of origin including Colombia, Mexico and Nigeria.

Le Journal's coverage uses themes of violence and danger to describe the asylum seekers' journey to Roxham. When covering the Darien Gap, a transborder jungle region located between Colombia and Panama, *Le Journal* included detailed first-person accounts of threats, including wild animals, organized crime, murder and sexual crimes, in a long-form report titled "La route des migrants" (Therriault & Dugas Bourdon, JdM, September 17, 2022).[9] In contrast to the migrants' dangerous journey, the article describes living in Canada as a dream that motivates them to endure these hardships. The next goal in the asylum seekers' journey is to cross the Canadian border at Roxham Road. *Le Journal* often describes this entry point as "safe" and "easy."

Articles report on human smuggling as a problem occurring at the border. Asylum seekers are depicted as victims of this lucrative business. Interestingly, while much of the coverage presents crossings from the United States to Canada as safe, the same cannot be said for articles that report on migrants crossing in the other direction, from Canada to the United States. These articles instead portray north-to-south border crossings as more dangerous due to weather conditions during the winter, including snow, snowstorms, freezing temperatures, hypothermia and other cold-related injuries. Detailed examples that encompass such dangers can be found in accounts of the death of Fritznel Richard, a Haitian asylum seeker who died in December 2022 when crossing into the United States. One article explains why being an asylum seeker in Canada contributed to Rich-

ard's choice to cross at an irregular point, since he could not leave Canada before obtaining refugee status. Using Roxham Road to cross from Canada to the United States is perceived as a rising trend by residents of the area. The articles mainly relate the phenomenon to personal choices and circumstances, such as people trying to reunite with their families in the United States.

Finally, *Le Journal* reports on the hardships asylum seekers face inside Canada. These accounts focus on the difficulties of finding suitable accommodation in the context of the housing crisis in Montreal, and gaining access to public services. They also mention refugees' vulnerability to scams. A main hardship is the waiting time to receive a work permit and get asylum claims processed. Asylum seekers are depicted as victims of Ottawa's slow bureaucracy and mismanagement of the situation. Many articles mention these waiting times, sometimes up to two years, and the consequences of being undocumented. The coverage also notes that asylum seekers suffer separation from their families, especially children, for multiple years. The death of Fritznel Richard in December 2022 shed light on this reality, as the man was trying to reunite with his wife and toddler living in Florida.

Main Theme 2: Proposed solutions

The solutions covered in *Le Journal* to "fix" Roxham Road can be divided into two categories: short-term crisis management and long-term diplomatic actions. Both solutions are portrayed as sources of tensions between Quebec and Ottawa.

Sub-theme 2.1: Crisis management

The coverage emphasizes the conflicts between the federal and provincial governments over the management of Roxham Road and asylum seekers. Politicians accuse the federal government of wanting to make the situation permanent and promote irregular crossings because of the federal immigration processing facilities installed at Roxham Road. Legault and St-Pierre Plamondon are quoted asking for Roxham Road to be closed,

---

[9] "La Route des Migrants" did not focus exclusively on stories related to Roxham Road. However, for the purposes of this study, only excerpts referring directly to Roxham Road were included in the analysis.

which Trudeau counters by stating that closing the entry point will only divert migratory flow to other parts of the border and make the situation more dangerous for asylum seekers. Trudeau, Liberal MPs and ministers stress Canada's obligations regarding asylum seekers' rights and the capacity to perform security screenings at Roxham as reasons for not shutting it down before reaching a diplomatic solution with the United States.

One element in the coverage crystallized this Quebec/Ottawa conflict: the $500 million the federal government invested at Roxham Road to host asylum seekers and organize services in the area. This topic and dollar amount, first reported on by Radio-Canada, was repeatedly included in *Le Journal*'s coverage, in addition to suspicion of corruption and conflict of interest. *Le Journal*'s coverage doubled down on these questions by focusing on how a local campsite owner, who donated money to the Liberal Party of Canada, was awarded a $28 million federal contract to host migrants, which raised questions of a potential conflict of interest. Articles also reported on the heated debates on Parliament Hill between the Liberals and opposition parties.

Criticism and tensions between Ottawa and Quebec contrast with moments of negotiation between Justin Trudeau and François Legault about federal money and resource transfers to Quebec. Paul St-Pierre Plamondon's January 2023 comments about the potential rise of extremist political movements in Quebec were the source of a controversy reported in *Le Journal*. The PQ leader said that closing Roxham Road would be a solution to avoid the rise of radical anti-migrant movements and, therefore, preserve social peace. St-Pierre Plamondon used the situation to play up the PQ's pro-Quebec independence agenda. He criticized Legault on the idea that the situation at Roxham Road is supposedly the consequence of federalism and the CAQ's failure to push Quebec's interests within Canada.

Another aspect of the strategy to manage the "crisis" is to monitor the border and control asylum seekers. References to the police, whether provincial or federal, and the border authorities' involvement, are a common trend in the coverage. The articles do not always describe these actors'

specific missions, but instead illustrate that police forces and authorities are playing a role in managing the situation. Examples show that the RCMP intercepts and rescues migrants. Depictions of deported migrants and alleged criminals sent back to the United States contrast with more "deserving" migrants, such as the case of a Haitian healthcare worker who faced deportation threats while he was a "guardian angel" during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the articles also scrutinize the police for failing to control crossings and smuggling.

Le Journal's coverage often invokes the federal government's failure to tackle irregular crossings. The article titled "Saint-Armand: un deuxième chemin Roxham chez lui" is particularly critical of the RCMP's inaction to prevent and stop asylum seekers from crossing the border:

> Malgré ses appels répétés à la Gendarmerie royale du Canada (GRC) et au Service des douanes et de la protection des frontières—les deux entités qui gèrent la frontière canado-américaine—personne ne semble vouloir prendre la situation en main. (Giguère, JdM, September 24, 2022)[10]

Another story also criticizes the federal government for allegedly letting unsuccessful asylum claimants vanish into thin air while they were supposed to be deported. Another measure to control the situation, according to Eric Duhmaine, would be to build a "wall", which is an option that resonates with Donald Trump's wall at the U.S.-Mexico border. The analysis found that Roxham Road is sometimes made part of wider discussions on the question of selecting immigrants, especially in the context of the 2022 provincial elections. Duhaime has branded himself as a defender of "legal" immigration, in opposition to "illegal" and "disorganized" immigration originating from Roxham Road.

Sub-theme 2.2: Diplomacy

The coverage presents renegotiating the STCA with the United States as a long-term solution to ending crossings at Roxham Road, as demonstrated in quotes from both Justin Trudeau and François

---

[10] Despite repeated calls to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Customs and Border Protection - the two entities that manage the Canada-U.S. border - no one seems willing to take the situation in hand."

Legault. As articles note, all political parties, federally and provincially, agree on the necessity to revise the STCA, stressing the importance of regular, legal, and orderly immigration. The federal NDP and Bloc Québécois criticize the federal government's perceived lack of willingness to revise the STCA. They ask for its immediate suspension as a perceived solution to a diplomatic dead-end.

Negotiations with the United States are seen as a slow quest toward a desirable outcome. *Le Journal* coverage places special emphasis on this slowness and the federal government's unwillingness to share information about the negotiations. "Modernizing" the agreement is presented as a necessity because it no longer fits the realities of migration at the border.

U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken's visit in October 2022, and President Joe Biden's planned visit to Canada in March 2023, sparked hopes an agreement had been reached. Again, federal and provincial politicians hoped that an agreement would be announced. Trudeau tempered these hopes, saying there would be no announcement during the visit.

Main Theme 3: Divergent Narratives

Sub-theme 3.1: Opportunity

Looking beyond the problem/solutions dichotomy, coverage of Roxham Road includes themes of migrants as an opportunity for the economy, provided they are able and allowed to join the workforce. This idea is present in *Le Journal* and is voiced by a wide range of actors, including the Liberal Party of Quebec, community groups, business owners, and asylum seekers themselves.

Le Journal reported on the specific case of the restaurant sector wishing to recruit more asylum seekers in non-specialized jobs. The following quote illustrates the clear link between asylum seekers and the labour shortage:

> Les restaurateurs se désolent du fait que des dizaines de milliers de demandeurs de statut réfugié n'aient pu être mis à contribution pour réduire leurs besoins criants en matière main-d'œuvre. (Richer, *Chemin, JdM,* December 3, 2022)[11]

References to Roxham Road were intertwined with the issues of labour shortages and immigration quotas. This can be linked with the debates on these questions that occurred in 2022 and culminated during the Quebec provincial election that same year. The opportunity theme is also associated with criticism of work permit processing delays by Ottawa. Community groups interviewed said they are concerned with these delays, as they force asylum seekers to remain in poverty or opt for the black market. The opportunity discourse in the articles is reinforced by instances of empathy towards certain hardworking and "deserving" asylum seekers who are unfairly treated by bureaucracy.

Sub-theme 3.2: Victims deserving sympathy

An underlying message of sympathy is sometimes expressed toward those facing hardships in *Le Journal* articles. Sympathetic coverage is more present in articles focusing on individual stories, rather than general accounts of migration. Narratives expressing sympathy tend to humanize asylum seekers, for instance, through references to their families living abroad and elements of their personal lives that could make their stories more unique or relatable. However, the line between sympathy, pity, and victimization is thin. Expressions of sympathy can reinforce the image of migrants as helpless. The coverage of the death of Fritznel Richard offered examples of more sympathetic coverage. *Le Journal* reported in detail on the course of events that led to his death in the wooded area around Roxham Road using the tone of a tragedy. It emphasized that Richard was the alleged victim of a smuggler who drove him to Roxham Road despite a snowstorm. *Le Journal* interviewed Richard's mourning widow, interviewed neighbours at Roxham Road, some of whom expressed incomprehension and pity, and obtained a reaction from Stéphanie Valois, president of the Quebec Immigration Lawyers Association, expressing her empathy:

> On peut comprendre [M. Richard de vouloir retrouver sa famille], exprime Me Valois. Quand on le rapporte à nous, d'être

---

[11] "Restaurant owners are disappointed that tens of thousands of refugee claimants could not be put to work to alleviate their pressing labour needs."

séparé de son enfant pendant 3 ou 4 ans, ça n'a pas de sens. On ne peut pas imaginer ça.

(Faucher, JdM, January 8, 2023)[12]

DISCUSSION

The inductive thematic analysis of 55 articles revealed that, overall, Roxham Road is discussed in a binary way. News articles overwhelmingly concentrate on defining Roxham Road as a problem (Theme 1) that requires policy-oriented solutions (Theme 2). Divergent narratives (Theme 3) that do not fit into these two categories only constitute a clear minority of the coverage. The following section contrasts these findings with previous works on the coverage of Roxham Road, focusing on shared trends as well as differences induced by the temporality and scope of the study.

Stability in coverage

Past literature on Roxham Road has identified prominent features of the coverage that were noted in this study, too. First, as this study concludes, previous studies have found *Le Journal de Montréal*'s Roxham Road coverage employs a problem/solution dichotomy that displays few alternative narratives. In their examination of the 2017 coverage, for example, Duncan and Caidi (2018) noticed this binary discussion, stating that "migration is generally framed (across the publications examined) as a problem in need of a solution" (p. 334). The construction of Roxham Road as a political problem therefore calls for policy-oriented solutions like heightened security and control at the border, and reforming the STCA through discussions with the United States.

Second, my study found little change in the mostly negative *Le Journal* coverage revolving around the idea that asylum seekers are a burden for Quebec society. This is reminiscent of what Duncan and Caidi (2018) call a "narrative of pressure," or Côté-Boucher and colleagues' (2023) criticism of the "crisis framing" of irregular border crossings. *Le Journal*'s choices may be linked to commercial interests. As Esses and colleagues (2013) under-

line, negative crisis coverage may be considered more newsworthy by journalists (Vos & Shoemaker, 2009) and favoured by the audience (Soroka & McAdams, 2010). The widespread use of the word "illegal" as well as the widespread emphasis on data about crossings and the focus on political clashes reinforce the impression of a "crisis" at the border. Perzyna and Bauder (2023) noticed how the word "illegal" and statistics can sometimes be combined and used in the coverage of Roxham Road to reinforce "the criminality of irregular asylum seekers by emphasizing the scope of the 'problem'" (p. 85). The authors underline that while these accounts portray irregular crossings as "illegal," crossing the border to ask for asylum cannot be considered illegal under the 1951 Geneva Convention, "so long as [refugees] present themselves without delay to the authorities" (p. 84).

The widespread reliance on politicians' statements constitutes another point of convergence with previous studies. The overrepresentation of Themes 1 and 2, which as "a perceived problem" and "proposed solutions" may be linked to this trend. Belkhodja and Gratton (2022) noticed that media discourse on Roxham Road simplistically portrays the border as a "tool for control and protection" in a way that is detached from the inherent physical limitations of such space. As Duncan and Caidi (2018) note, focusing on these statements and policy-oriented reporting allows political actors to shape the narrative on Roxham Road. In their study, this manifested through a focus on law and order and a message of control that leans towards humanitarian securitization: the maintenance of national sovereignty and domestic security while projecting a message of openness. Humanitarian securitization can be witnessed among political actors who argue that reforming the STCA will promote regular, orderly and safe migrations, and protect the integrity and fairness of the immigration system in Canada. In turn, such policy-oriented coverage leaves little space for the expression of migrants' (and their supporters) voices and perspectives.

My analysis found that the expression of sympathy towards asylum seekers is present in only a thin part of the corpus. The emphasis on figures may contribute to further dehumanizing the peo-

---

[12] "We can understand [Mr. Richard's wish to be reunited with his family], says Me Valois. When it's reported to us, being separated from your child for 3 or 4 years doesn't make sense. We can't imagine that."

ple behind the numbers and reinforces the impression of a heterogeneous group, while displacement is experienced in diverse ways. The articles that refer to individual cases tend to promote a miserable image of asylum seekers as victims impacted by violence and destitution, with a lack of agency. On the contrary, scholars insist on the necessity to go beyond the so-called "crisis" narrative and broaden the perspectives on Roxham Road. For instance, Duncan and Caidi (2018) argue that the border can be conceptualized as a space of migrant resistance to state power. Belkhodja and Gratton (2022) showcase the forms of solidarity at the border. Reynolds and colleagues (2023), drawing on interviews with asylum seekers who crossed the U.S.-Canada border, argue that counter-archiving the lived experiences of migrants "help[s] to contest state-directed narratives including of migration as a "crisis," of the need for borders to be further securitized, and of states' generous humanitarianism towards a select few" (Reynolds et al., 2013, p. 1199).

Temporal and provincial specificities

Although the present study shares similarities with previous research, the geographical and temporal scopes differ in part, which extends the analysis to the pandemic context and refocuses on Quebec. The corpus, focusing on a single Quebec outlet, differs from Perzyna and Bauder (2023), who analyzed Anglo-Canadian legacy media, and in part from Duncan and Caidi (2018), who included Quebec anglophone publications, the *Montreal Gazette* and some CBC Montreal articles, in their studies of Roxham Road.

"Crises" at the border have been the focus of previous studies. All included the year 2017, which witnessed unprecedented crossings following the election of American President Donald Trump. The present study extends the analysis to a new "crisis" after Roxham Road reopened in November 2021. The Quebec political context changed between 2017 and 2022. François Legault was elected Premier of Quebec in October 2018 with an agenda pushing for increased Quebec sovereignty within the Canadian federation, and asserting a more exclusionary definition of Quebec national identity. This analysis, like previous ones,

demonstrates that asylum seekers are portrayed as burdens on the host society's resources. However, cultural and linguistic threats are particularly salient features in comparison with previous studies focusing on Roxham Road. This particularity in *Le Journal* is not surprising, considering that the French language is one of its core topics. Le Bomin (2019) noticed that topics concerning similar issues around the integration and francization of Syrian refugees are significantly more present in *Le Journal de Montréal* than in *La Presse* and *Le Devoir*. Discussions around the French language are ongoing in Quebec. However, the 2022 provincial elections debate may have given a particular media platform for the expression of language threats in the political discourse. Further work is necessary to determine how *Le Journal*'s coverage may contribute to the othering of asylum seekers, a trend that Perzyna and Bauder (2023) have observed in their analysis of the *National Post* and the *Toronto Star* and that Esses and colleagues (2013) have firmly warned against the potential impacts on audiences.

Additionally, the emphasis on political disagreements over the management of asylum seekers and the situation at Roxham Road, as well as the construction of Roxham as a political problem in the analyzed coverage, can be interpreted as a broader symptom of the growing politicization of immigration in Quebec, a phenomenon that is reflected in and amplified by the media. Paquet and Xhardez (2020), drawing on Van der Brug and colleagues' definition of politicization as "the rising salience of immigration in political life" (2015), relate this trend to the advent of the CAQ in 2012, a party that imposed relatively more restrictive stances on immigration in the political debate, used immigration to make political gains and promote its agenda.

On another scale, previous studies of Roxham Road coverage have emphasized the prevalence of a strong discursive opposition between Trudeau's Canada and Trump's United States in regard to the treatment of irregular migrants (Perzyna & Bauder, 2023; Caidi & Duncan, 2018). The tense political climate between the two countries is reflected in Trump's "Muslim Ban" which contrasts with Trudeau's tweet welcoming to Canada "those fleeing persecution, terror & war" (Trudeau, 2017). Duncan and Caidi (2018) note the cover-

age strongly focuses on American politics during the first eight months of 2017. This is not the case in the analyzed corpus. This is at least in part because bilateral relations appear to be less conflictual since the election of Joe Biden. The coverage of the United States shifted from domestic politics to bilateral relations and discussions around the STCA's renegotiation. In addition, *Le Journal* is much more heavily focused on provincial politics, especially in the context of the 2022 Quebec elections, which likely contributes to the lessened emphasis on the United States in the coverage examined for this study. Conflict is presented as mainly a provincial-federal relations issue, inherent to the fact that border control and refugee selection and determination are federal jurisdictions over which Quebec has little control while the province manages the on-the-ground consequences of hosting asylum seekers.

Other elements specific to pandemic and post-pandemic times can be witnessed in the analyzed coverage. Labour shortages, accentuated by the pandemic economic disturbances and then recovery, are salient features of the "opportunity" sub-theme. This sub-theme may be explained by the context of the post-pandemic recovery, where the situation may have increased asylum seekers' desirability despite not being economic migrants per se (Lawlor & Tolley, 2017). Media coverage of the 2022 provincial elections gave a platform for politicians to voice this perspective. This coverage turns a "problem" into an opportunity and sharply contrasts with perceptions of asylum seekers as "economic threats" to the welfare system (Perzyna & Bauder, 2023, 88) that appeared in a much more systematic way in the rest of the analyzed corpus. Still, this vision is based on the conflation of refugees with economic immigrants.

CONCLUSION

As this study indicates, the voices most concerned with Roxham Road–the asylum seekers–are relegated to the periphery of the coverage. The debate is contained within a problem/solution dichotomy that displays very few alternatives. Negativity dominates much of the coverage that focuses on matters of politics and conflict. Asylum seekers are perceived as either burdens or threats to Quebec. When possible, solutions are discussed in the coverage, but they rarely include asylum seekers' viewpoints and, rather, voice the governments' necessity of strengthening the border and tackling rising numbers of border-crossers. Renegotiating the STCA is seen as a desirable diplomatic solution. Few divergent narratives exist to balance the coverage. They focus on the economic opportunity asylum seekers represent and few display sympathy toward them.

Due to the scope of the analyzed corpus, the results only constitute a part of the wider picture and may not be generalized to the Quebec media landscape. Extending the study to other outlets, varying in types, format and target audiences, could broaden media perspectives on the topic. The analyzed time frame excludes milestones that subsequently occurred, including the meeting between U.S. President Joe Biden and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the revision of the STCA, and Roxham's closure on March 25, 2023, that would likely have influenced the coverage's themes. However, the research contributes to mapping out the complex realities and dimensions of Roxham Road's coverage. The purpose of this research is to look for patterns in the analyzed corpus. Through them, ethical questions may emerge and stimulate scholars and practitioners to further reflect on the portrayal of asylum seekers in Quebec media. The province's media landscape is not monolithic. It is in constant evolution, with media startups emerging and covering refugee stories using more diverse perspectives than those highlighted in this article, including a focus on human rights and the complex, global ramifications of migrations. Among them, dialogue journalism, as exemplified in *La Converse* in Montreal, may constitute an innovative approach to explore due to its emphasis on local community-driven newsmaking.

REFERENCES

Abba, C. (2020). *Border as refuge: Inhabiting the liminal* [Master's thesis, Dalhousie University]. https://dalspace.library.dal.ca//handle/10222/79712

Angus Reid Institute. (2018, August 3). *Two-thirds call irregular border crossings a 'crisis,' more trust Scheer to handle issue than Trudeau.* https://web.archive.org/web/20241007181559/https://angusreid.org/safe-third-country-asylum-seekers/

Arbel, E. (2013). Shifting borders and the boundaries of rights: Examining the Safe Third Country Agreement between Canada and the United States. *International Journal of Refugee Law, 25*(1), 65-86.

Arbel, E. & Brenner, A. (2013). *Bordering on failure: Canada-U.S. border policy and the politics of refugee exclusion.* Harvard Law School. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard Immigration and Refugee Law Clinical Program.

Belkhodja, C., & Gratton, C. (2022). Un geste d'hospitalité aux demandeurs d'asile. Une analyse de la mobilisation du collectif « Bridges not Borders—Créons des ponts ». *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees / Refuge: Revue Canadienne Sur Les Réfugiés*, *38*(2), 1–19.

Belkhodja, C., & Xhardez, C. (2020). "Nous sommes de retour !": Justin Trudeau et la gestion de l'immigration. Études *canadiennes / Canadian Studies. Revue interdisciplinaire des* études *canadiennes en France*, *89*, Article 89. https://doi.org/10.4000/eccs.4123

Bellerose, P. (2023, January 12). 68% des Québécois veulent la fermeture du chemin Roxham, selon un sondage. *Le Journal de Montréal.* https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2023/01/12/68-des-quebecois-veulent-la-fermeture-du-chemin-roxham

Bourgeon, M., D'Aragon-Giguère, T., & Vallet, É. (2017). Les flux migratoires à la frontière québéco-américaine. *Quebec Studies*, *64*, 141–156. https://doi.org/10.3828/qs.2017.20

Braun, V. Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Braun, V. Clarke, V. (2020). Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 21*, 37-47. https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12360

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and be(com)ing a knowing researcher. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, *24*(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597

Brug, W. v. d., D'Amato, G., Berkhout, J., & Ruedin, D. (2015). *The politicisation of migration*. London: Routledge.

Centre d'etudes sur les médias, Université Laval (2022, March). *Presse quotidienne*. https://www.cem.ulaval.ca/publics/portraits_sectoriels/presse-quotidienne/

Collins English Dictionary (n.d.). Definition of francization. Harper Collins. https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/francization

Côté-Boucher, K., Vives, L., & Jannard, L.-P. (2023). Chronicle of a "crisis" foretold: Asylum seekers and the case of Roxham Road on the Canada-US border. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, *41*(2), 408–426. https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544221127614

Craig, T. (2018, August 3). Easing the Journey North. *The Washington Post*. https://web.archive.org/web/20241007181401/https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/national/wp/2018/08/03/feature/undocumented-immigrants-are-fleeing-trumps-america-and-these-americans-are-easing-their-journey-to-canada/

Cressman, G. (2019). Sensing the Border at Roxham Road. *Intermédialités*, *34*. https://doi.org/10.7202/1070874ar

CTV News (2022, May 19). Quebecers against an increase in immigration: new poll. https://web.archive.org/web/20241007181206/https://montreal.citynews.ca/2022/05/19/quebec-against-increase-immigration/

Duncan, J., & Caidi, N. (2018). Mobilities, media and governmentality: Asylum seekers in Lacolle, Quebec. *Migration Soziale Arbeit*, *4*, 331–340.

Esses, V. M., Medianu, S., & Lawson, A. S. (2013). Uncertainty, threat, and the role of the media in promoting the dehumanization of immigrants and refugees. *Journal of Social Issues*, *69*(3), 518–536. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12027

Fan, W. (2022). Interactive documentary as form of public narrative in digital age: Migration crises in Borderland and Roxham. *Interactive Film & Media Journal*, *2*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.32920/ifmj.v2i1.1506

Faucher, O. (2023, January 8). Passeurs de migrants: un nouveau phénomène, selon une avocate. *Le Journal de Montréal*. https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2023/01/08/un-nouveau-phenomene-selon-une-avocate

French Bourgeois, L. & Esses, V.M.. (2024). Using Twitter to investigate discourse on immigration: The role of values in expressing polarized attitudes toward asylum seekers during the closure of Roxham Road. *Frontiers in Social Psychology*, *2*, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.3389/frsps.2024.1376647

Gagnon, M-A. (2022, November 19). Legault vante sa loi 96 devant la Francophonie. *Le Journal de Montréal*. https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2022/11/19/legault-vante-sa-loi-96-devant-la-francophonie

Gagnon, M-A. (2022, November 20). Transferts en santé: Legault encouragé par l'ouverture de Justin Trudeau. *Le Journal de Montréal*. https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2022/12/20/transferts-en-sante-legault-encourage-par-louverture-de-justin-trudeau

Giguère, F. (2022, September 24). Saint-Armand: un deuxième chemin Roxham chez lui. *Le Journal de Montréal*. https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2022/09/24/un-deuxieme-chemin-roxham-chez-lui

Gottlob, A. Boomgaarden, H. (2020). The 2015 refugee crisis, uncertainty and the media: Representations of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in Austrian and French media. *Communications, 45*(s1), 841-863.

Greussing, E., & Boomgaarden, H. G. (2017). Shifting the refugee narrative? An automated frame analysis of Europe's 2015 refugee crisis. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 43*(11), 1749–1774. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1282813

Horsti, K. (2008). Hope and despair: Representation of Europe and Africa in news coverage of 'migration crisis'. *Communication Studies, 3*, 125-156.

Kovach, B. Rosenstiel, T. (2021). *The elements of journalism* (revised 4th ed.). New York: Three Rivers Press.

KhosraviNik, M., Krzyżanowski, M., & Wodak, R. (2012). Dynamics

of representation in discourse: Immigrants in the British press. In M. Messer, R. Schroeder & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Migrations: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 283-295). Springer: Vienna.

Lawlor, A., & Tolley, E. (2017). Deciding who's legitimate: News media framing of immigrants and refugees. *International Journal of Communication*, *11*, Article 0.

Le Bomin, G. (2019). *Le cadrage médiatique de l'arrivée des réfugiés syriens au Canada dans trois quotidiens québécois: Le Devoir, La Presse, Le Journal de Montréal (novembre 2015- février 2016)* [Master's Thesis, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières]. https://depot-e.uqtr.ca/id/eprint/8758/

Lajoie, G. (2022, May 10). Fermeture du chemin Roxham réclamée: le PQ accuse le fédéral de nuire «intentionnellement» au Québec. *Le Journal de Montréal.* https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2022/05/10/fermeture-du-chemin-roxham-reclame-le-pq-accuse-le-federal-de-nuire-intentionnellement-au-quebec

Lavoie, M. (2022, September 25). Un ex-candidat du Front national dans Portneuf. *Le Journal de Montréal.* https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2022/09/25/un-ex-candidat-du-front-national-dans-portneuf

Leuprecht, C. (2019). *The end of the (Roxham) Road: Seeking coherence on Canada's border-migration compact*. McDonald-Laurier Institute, 37.

MacDonald, L., & Ayres, J. (2023). Shifting boundaries of control: The Quebec and Vermont-New York border in the Trump Era and beyond. *Norteamérica*, *18*(1), 435–469.

Mahtani, M., & Mountz, A. (2002). Immigration to British Columbia: Media representation and public opinion. *Metropolis Working Paper*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237325034_Immigration_to_British_Columbia_Media_Representation_and_Public_Opinion1

Mayrand, H., & Smith-Grégoire, A. (2018). À la croisée du chemin Roxham et de la rhétorique politique: Démystifier l'Entente sur les tiers pays sûrs. *Revue de Droit de l'Université de Sherbrooke*, *48*(3), 321. https://doi.org/10.7202/1076188ar

Mekerian, A. (2023). *Production de l'illégalité au Canada: Les cas des demandeur·euse·s d'asile du chemin Roxham de 2017 à 2021* [Master's thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal].

Mercier, E., & Rehaag, S. (2020). The right to seek asylum in Canada (during a global pandemic). *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, *57*(3), 705–738.

Moalla, T. (2022, September 27). Immigration illégale: Éric Duhaime n'exclut pas l'option d'un mur entre le Canada et les États-Unis. *Le Journal de Montréal*. https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2022/09/27/eric-duhaime-nexclut-pas-loption-dun-mur-entre-le-canada-et-les-etats-unis-1

Perzyna, M., & Bauder, H. (2023). Threats from within and threats from without: Wet'suwet'en protesters, irregular asylum seekers and on-going settler colonialism in Canada. *Settler Colonial Studies*, *13*(1), 71–95. https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2022.2030083

Plouffe-Malette, K., & La Charité-Harbec, F. (2024). Analyse préliminaire du Protocole additionnel à l'Entente sur les tiers pays sûrs: Une redéfinition de la migration irrégulière à la frontière canado-américaine. *Revue de droit de l'Université de Sherbrooke*, *53*(1),

191–214. https://doi.org/10.7202/1111660ar

Reynolds, J., Wu, G., & Young, J. (2023). Counter-archive as methodology: Activating oral histories of the contested Canada-US Border. *ACME*, *22*(4), 1197–1214. https://doi.org/10.7202/1106681ar

Richer, J. (2022, December 19). Voici le futur centre de 700 lits pour les réfugiés à Montréal. *Le Journal de Montréal.* https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2022/12/19/voici-le-futur-centre-de-700-lits-pour-les-refugies

Richer, J. (2022, December 3). Réfugiés: Le Québec submergé depuis le tweet de Trudeau. *Le Journal de Montréal.* https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2022/12/03/refugies-le-quebec-submerge-depuis-le-tweet-de-trudeau

Richer, J. (2022, December 3). Chemin Roxham: Hôtel, repas et aide sociale pour les migrants. *Le Journal de Montréal.* https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2022/12/03/chemin-roxham-hotel-repas-et-aide-sociale-pour-les-migrants

Rinfret, O. (2022). *Le chemin Roxham, choix rationnel pour* éviter *l'application de l'entente sur les tiers pays sûrs ?* [Master's thesis, École Nationale d'Administration Publique].

Schué, R. (2023, January 21). Près de 100 000 demandeurs d'asile au Canada l'an passé. *Radio-Canada.*https://web.archive.org/web/20241007181937/https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1949965/asile-roxham-canada-record

Senat, S. (2020). *Carrière migratoire et reconstruction personnelle: Le cas des demandeurs d'asile d'origine haïtienne entrés au Québec par le Chemin Roxham entre l'été 2017 et l'automne 2018* [Master's thesis, Université d'Ottawa].

Shoemaker, P. J., & Vos, T. P. (2009). *Gatekeeping theory*. New York: Routledge.

Soroka, S., & McAdams, S. (2010). *An experimental study of the differential effects of positive versus negative news content*. Paper presented at the Elections, Public Opinion and Parties Annual Conference, Colchester, UK.

Therriault, D., & Dugas Bourdon, P. (2022, September 17). La dangereuse traversée des migrants. *Le Journal de Montréal.* https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2022/09/17/la-dangereuse-traversee-des-migrants

Trudeau, J. (2017, January 28). To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada [Tweet]. https://twitter.com/JustinTrudeau/status/825438460265762816

Van Gorp, B. (2005). Where is the frame? Victims and intruders in the Belgian press coverage of the asylum issue. *European Journal of Communication, 20*(4), 484-507.

Wodak, R. (2008). 'Us' and 'them': Inclusion and exclusion—Discrimination via discourse. In G. Delanty, R. Wodak & P. Jones (Eds.), *Identity, belonging and migration* (pp. 54-77). Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Xhardez, C., Paquet, M. (2020). Beyond the usual suspects and towards politicisation: Immigration in Quebec's party manifestos, 1991–2018. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 22*(2), 673-690. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-020-00764-3

A Case Study of the BBC 50:50 Equality Project: Can the source tracking system work in Canadian journalism programs?

Une étude de cas du projet d'égalité 50:50 de la BBC : Le système de suivi des sources peut-il fonctionner dans les programmes de journalisme Canadiens?

Mike Wise

ABSTRACT

A 13-week study into a newsroom source diversity initiative promoted by the BBC looked at whether it was effective in getting student journalists to reach a goal of 50:50 male-to-female sources in their reporting. Findings show widespread support among student journalists to improve source diversity in their reporting, but mixed results into the effectiveness of the BBC approach in tackling the issue of balanced gender representation in interview sources.

RÉSUMÉ

Une étude de 13 semaines portant sur une initiative de diversité des sources en salle de rédaction promue par la BBC a évalué son efficacité à aider les étudiants journalistes à atteindre un objectif de 50:50 de sources masculines et féminines dans leurs reportages. Les conclusions montrent un large soutien des étudiants journalistes à l'amélioration de la diversité des sources dans leurs reportages, mais des résultats mitigés quant à l'efficacité de l'approche de la BBC pour aborder la question de l'équilibre des genres dans les sources d'interviews.

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the BBC's Ros Atkins heard something that bothered him while driving home listening to a news program on BBC Radio 1. In almost an hour, not a single woman had been interviewed about the day's news (Chilazi et al., 2020). The next day, he set out to make sure his own TV news program wasn't committing that kind of oversight. As the host of *Outside Sources*, a daily news analysis program that aired on several BBC TV News channels, he worked with his senior producers to develop a system to track the gender balance of the interviews they booked, in hopes of increasing the representation of female voices. After each broadcast, his show's producer would count the gender of the guests they'd just put on the air and tabulate the numbers in a spreadsheet. At the next editorial meeting, the team would discuss the results. There were no quotas set and no judgements made about the results. Instead, chase producers were always told to seek out the most appropriate and qualified guests regardless of gender. Within four months of simply sharing the ongoing performance results, the show went from featuring 39% women to reaching a target of 50%. The accomplishment and its underlying methodology quickly spread to other programs with similar results. BBC management eventually embraced the 50:50 system, promoting it from an employee-led grassroots effort to a corporate-wide initiative for the BBC's TV, radio, online and digital services (Wittenberg-Cox, 2020). By April 2019, 500 content units were part of what was known as the BBC 50:50 Equality Project, with 74% of them hitting that gender-balanced target (Rattan et al., 2019). The BBC then shared its methodology with other broadcasters, publishers and journalism schools worldwide.

This article presents a case study of the BBC 50:50 Equality Project and describes an experiment to evaluate whether the BBC's methodology can be effectively applied in a Canadian journalism classroom setting. The study aims to see if regularly measuring and sharing source-diversity rates can change journalism students' source selection practices. The study employed a 13-week content analysis of stories filed to a Canadian journalism school website, measuring male, female, and non-binary sources using the BBC's methodology

(BBC, 2021). Student reporters were also surveyed about their attitudes towards gender diversity in journalism, their efforts to seek interview subjects, and their response to the source-tracking measurements.

While many studies have conducted source audits of published stories, few have looked at how reporting staff react to learning about the results on an ongoing basis. This article will explore whether the BBC approach encouraged students to balance their interview subjects or change how they sought their sources. It will look at how student performance is affected by how a course replicates deadline pressure faced by professional journalists. It also looks at whether there's a benefit for journalism schools to use the BBC methodology over other methods of measuring source diversity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While the BBC uses a 50:50 ratio to describe the general breakdown of men to women in the population at large, statistically, women make up a slightly larger proportion of the population than men in Canada (50.9%), the United Kingdom (51%) and the United States (50.5%) (Office for National Statistics, 2023; Statistics Canada, 2022; U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Whatever the exact number, surveys of media content worldwide repeatedly show a tendency for reporters to over-represent male voices at the expense of females. Since 1995, the Global Media Monitoring Project has conducted international content analysis studies of women's overall presence in the news media every five years. Its first study revealed that only 17% of news subjects were women. Subsequent studies saw that number rise to 23% in 2005 and 24% in 2015 (Macharia, 2015). The project's most recent study found that in 2020, women still made up just 24% of news subjects and newspaper sources, although the numbers in Canada rose by 4% since the 2015 study to 31% (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2021).

Other international studies show a consistent under-representation of women. In Europe, the share of women as news sources cited in online stories ranged from 28% in the U.K., 32.9% in Norway, 33% in Ireland, and 36% in Switzerland

(Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015; O'Brien & Suiter, 2017; Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2019; Vogler & Schwaiger, 2021). Belgian TV reports cited women as sources in just 20% of stories (Swert & Hooghe, 2008).

An ongoing study of Canadian media outlets shows similar results, with men quoted three times more frequently than women on the national newscasts on CBC, CTV and Global (Asr et al., 2021). That research comes from an ongoing monitoring project run by researchers at Simon Fraser University and the Ottawa-based advocacy group Informed Opinions. The group is trying to increase the representation of female experts in Canadian media by examining barriers preventing women from speaking freely when contacted by reporters, such as childcare responsibilities or women not wanting to seek the spotlight (McKeon, 2011). The joint study further suggests some women may fear abuse or harassment when discussing controversial topics (Asr et al., 2021).

The same study cited journalists' deadline pressures as a possible reason they do not quote women as often as men. When it comes to choosing whom to interview, reporters may rely on resumes, credentials, and subject matter expertise (Newsome, 2021) as well as a source's willingness to speak, timeliness in returning phone calls, and their relationship with the journalist (Meer et al., 2016). Faced with tight deadlines, "journalists tend to use sources they are comfortable with—that is, sources they get along well with and sources they have used in the past" (Martindale, 2006), and this can privilege male voices (Cukier et al., 2019; Everbach et al., 2010).

Robert Entman suspects that since many journalists strive to hold those in power accountable, a "watchdog bias" may be responsible (Entman, 2010). This may result in media outlets focusing on events and people within "legitimate institutions" such as education, finance, police, and the courts (Tuchman, 1980). Carolyn Byerly argues those leaders may still be predominantly male (Byerly, 2021). A content analysis of Canada's 2011 Federal election found that men made up more than 80% of the clips on TV newscasts, which the authors argued was due to men being in positions of power where they would be considered experts (Barber & Levitan, 2013).

The literature suggests that many newsrooms as-sociate traditional female gender roles with issues they consider 'feminine' and thus more likely to appeal to their female audience (Swert & Hooghe, 2008). Several content analysis studies find that when many women *do* appear in the news, they are depicted in so-called "soft" stories, dealing with traditional female topics like arts and entertainment, health and lifestyle, and family and education (Rao et al., 2021; Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2019; Swert & Hooghe, 2008; Vogler & Schwaiger, 2021). Men, by comparison, are more likely to appear in so-called "hard" stories about politics, business and sports (Macharia, 2015; Rao et al., 2021).

There also is debate in the literature about whether the percentage of women working in a newsroom can address gender stereotyping and the under-representation of female voices. The Canadian Association of Journalists' 2023 Newsroom Diversity survey of 273 Canadian newsrooms found 51.4% of staff identify as female, 48.3% identify as male, and just 0.3% identify as non-binary (Canadian Association of Journalists, 2023). Some studies suggest women are more inclined than their male colleagues to include female sources in their stories (Zoch & Turk, 1998) and may have more access to female voices than men (Zeldes et al., 2012). Other studies have found that due to similar organizational routines and policies in their newsrooms, there are no significant differences between female and male reporters when interviewing female sources (Liebler & Smith, 1997; Swert & Hooghe, 2008). In addition, at least two studies found little difference between male and female reporters presenting so-called "hard" or "soft" news (Craig, 2017; D'Heer et al., 2019), suggesting the gender of the journalist may have limited influence on the type of news they present.

The BBC admits its methodology is about setting benchmarks and measuring performance (BBC, 2020), which differs from approaches used in academic studies. The Global Media Monitoring Project collects data as a snapshot in time, conducting worldwide content surveys on the same day. Others collect their data sets over months or even years (Swert & Hooghe, 2008). Many studies identify expert and non-expert voices and categorize stories by type and genre (Cann & Mohr, 2001; Vogler & Schwaiger, 2021), while others code for differences in format and market demographics (Humprecht

& Esser, 2017). Some studies count the number of sources and their weight or importance in an article by measuring the number of lines attributed to the source (Voakes et al., 1996). Other papers performed audits of newsroom content management systems to examine how stories and information were passed through the gatekeeping process (Lyons, 2002). Natural language processing is used in some studies (including Informed Opinion's project) to automate the real-time identification of sources (Asr et al., 2021; Fu, 2021; Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2019) by comparing them to a database of names or previously identified interviewees. Most academic content studies are done retroactively, with researchers pouring through data and then presenting their findings (Everbach et al., 2010).

The BBC is not the only media organization that tracks source diversity. Both TVOntario (Graydon, 2017) and the CBC have staff measuring content diversity rates and how sources are used (Fenlon, 2020). The *Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail* participated in pilot projects in 2019 to increase the gender diversity of their sources (Cabrera et al., 2020). The Canadian Press and the *Chicago Sun-Times* both rely on local journalism students to perform content audits of their published material (Carleton University, 2022; Lu, 2021). These approaches share a common weakness: they rely on researchers, producers, or designated staff to identify and classify interview subjects. This may introduce inaccuracies or misidentifications as those recording the data may not be directly involved in the reporting. To mitigate this, NPR encourages its journalists to directly inquire about the gender and demographic identities of their interviewees, which is then fed into an automated system for tabulation (Fu, 2021). Other outlets ask subjects to enter this information directly into Google Forms after being interviewed (Davenport & Grimm, 2021). Both strategies are aimed at ensuring the accuracy of demographic data.

The BBC's methodology also differs from other measurement systems because it does not count every interview subject. It excludes sources deemed essential to a story's narrative, referring to them as "players" or "newsmakers." It instructs journalists to not count a politician making a policy announcement if that politician is an essential part of the story and the story can't be told without them. Instead, the focus should be on counting the sources the reporter has more editorial discretion over, such as people who react to the politician's announcement. Likewise, a significant eyewitness to an accident would not be counted if their voice is essential for telling the story (BBC, 2021). The goal is to correct journalists' reliance on routine newsgathering channels, which can predispose them to news from official sources like government proceedings, news releases, press conferences, and non-spontaneous events like ceremonies and speeches (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 54). However, this can also erase those voices from the overall analysis and potentially offset "the gender imbalance effects of journalism's attraction to power" where, generally, men hold power in society (Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2019). It is also to guard against producers trying to influence the measurement data by assigning stories featuring more male or female voices. This additional layer of subjective judgement may also result in intercoder reliability issues, as producers may have differing opinions on whether a particular subject should be included or not.

Finally, when assessing how well this can work in a journalism school setting, there is limited research comparing the differences in decision-making between professional newsrooms and journalism classrooms (Farquhar & Carey, 2019). Professional journalists have the advantage of well-connected networks of official sources (Zoch & Turk, 1998), something student journalists have not had the time to develop. Students' openness to seeking more diverse sources may result from being unable to rely on the same established names repeatedly (Haney & Paskey, 2020). While student publications can try to replicate the dynamic of a working newspaper, few can match the same deadline pressures (Josephi, 1999, p. 79). Larger papers have more resources and may foster competition among reporters to publish the best-sourced articles: smaller papers rarely discard news stories (Lyons, 2002). Classrooms must balance theoretical and ethical instruction with practical skills demanded by industry, such as the ability to write and work under pressure and tight deadlines (Skinner et al., 2001; Wenger et al., 2018). However, source diversity tracking reported at the University of Minnesota, Concordia University, and Michigan State University suggests students may be closer than their profession-

al colleagues in reaching a 50:50 gender balance (Cabrera et al., 2020; Content Diversity Board, 2020; Davenport & Grimm, 2021).

METHODS

During the 2021-22 school year, I set out to study the effectiveness of using the BBC 50:50 methodology in my journalism program. With this study, I wanted to explore the following questions:

RQ1: Did creating awareness of ongoing source diversity measurements change the ratio of male to female and non-binary sources in student articles?

RQ2: Do students change their methods for finding interview sources when they're aware of ongoing source-diversity tracking measurements?

RQ3: To what degree do the results differ when simply counting all sources versus using the BBC methodology?

The classroom experiment included both a quantitative content analysis and a qualitative survey of student responses to evaluate the effectiveness of using the BBC methodology. The content analysis looked at 13 weeks' worth of student journalism articles published on my college news site from January to April 2022. These stories were written as part of class assignments by students in the second and third year of a journalism diploma program and by post-graduate students in a graduate certificate program. Of the three grade levels, the third-year course most closely replicated traditional reporting deadlines: students were expected to pitch a story or receive an assignment in the morning and file their story in the afternoon. As one of three professors attached to that course, it was the only one where I directly interacted with students.

The content analysis used a coding scheme based on the BBC 50:50 methodology, which meant I excluded sources that I defined as "players" or "newsmakers" (although I did count those sources separately). As the sole person responsible for recording the gender identity of sources, I used social media accounts and professional biographies to inform my decisions when someone's gender identity wasn't apparent in the story's context. This followed the BBC's advice to its producers to use publicly available data whenever possible to help classify sources. Measurements were done every Saturday morning and shared with students at the start of each week. This approach allowed me to analyze whether any change in the ratio of male/female/non-binary sources correlated to a feedback loop caused by students being made aware of the measurements. While I did not track the performance of individual students, I did track the reporter's gender to see if it played a role in the results.

I also conducted two qualitative surveys of student reporters using SurveyMonkey. They consisted of Likert-scale questions with sections devoted to their awareness of gender balance in the media they consumed, as well as questions about their reporting routines. An initial survey of 63 students was done during the fall semester, before they were aware I would be tracking the gender identity of their sources, and before they were informed how the BBC methodology worked. It was also before all the students were reporting on a regular basis. A second survey of 63 students was administered in the winter term, and after all three grade levels had been reporting for a few weeks and were being made aware of the ongoing measurements. This second survey included additional questions about the effectiveness of the source tracking system. Students were not required to participate in the surveys. Since no personally identifiable information was collected, I could not establish a direct correlation between individual student results nor determine whether the same students participated in both surveys. Additionally, at least two students left the program between the two surveys, which may have resulted in a slight difference in the composition of the respondent groups. This limitation should be considered when interpreting the survey results. The research received ethics and institutional research approvals.

RESULTS

After analyzing 492 published stories and counting 1,266 sources, 603 were identified as female, 653 were identified as male, and 10 were identified as non-binary. This works out to 47.6% female, 51.6% male and .08% non-binary. I also broke down the content analysis by grade level (Table 1). Regarding the gender of reporters, there were more female reporters than male reporters in this sample and none identified as non-binary. Female reporters filed 56.91% of the stories in my content analysis, while male reporters filed 43.09%. As Table 2 shows, female reporters were considerably more likely to include female sources in their stories than their male counterparts.

The analysis did not track story type or article length.

The qualitative student surveys found overwhelming support for the idea that a media outlet's reporting should strive to achieve gender balance and diversity of sources. 82.4% of respondents felt it was "important" or "extremely important" for media outlets to reflect an overall 50:50 balance in their reporting. However, when it came to seeing that reflected in the media they consume, just 38.2% thought general news stories they read were gender balanced. Students thought arts or entertainment stories (53.3%) did the best job at providing an equal balance of male-to-female voices, while business stories (13.3%) did the worst.

As for the effectiveness of the BBC's 50:50 methodology, the results were mixed. 73.5% of respondents said they understood how the content measurement system worked (this question was only asked in the second survey); 91.2% understood they were to pursue the best interviews they could, regardless of gender or background, and a majority thought the overall website was achieving gender balance. However, despite the results being publicized every week on our learning management system, just 41.2% said they were aware of the weekly measurements (awareness was highest among third-year students).

Students were also asked about their techniques for finding interview sources. Only a slight change was found between the first and second surveys. Table 3 shows the percentage of students answering "likely," or "very likely" in response to the options for researching potential interview subjects.

While my initial findings were calculated using the BBC's methodology, which excludes "players" or "newsmakers," I also tabulated those categories separately to see how the results would shift if they were counted. Including all sources added 21 female and 62 male sources and changed the ratio (see Table 4).

This had a statistically significant altering of the results, with a decrease in the percentage of female sources and a corresponding increase in male voices.

Table 1

Content Analysis by Grade Level

Grade	Female sources	Male Sources	Non-binary sources
2nd year	45.1%	53.3%	1.59%
3rd year	46.7%	52.6%	0.66%
Post Grad	51.6%	48.1%	0.29%

Table 2

Content Analysis by Student Gender

Reporter Gender	Story percentage	Female Sources	Male Sources	Non-Binary sources
Female (n=39)	56.91%	51.9%	47.2%	.09%
Male (n=27)	43.09%	39.1%	60.3%	0.6%

Table 3

Selected Survey Questions Related to Finding Sources

Question	First survey	Second survey
Check existing stories by other media outlets for potential interviews	82.4%	88.2%
Google names for potential interviews	91.2%	94.1%
Check Twitter for potential interviews	67.6%	75.3%
Check Facebook/Instagram for potential interviews	58.8%	61.8%
Check LinkedIn for potential names	52.9%	61.8%
Call someone and ask for help in identifying potential interviews	52.9%	61.8%
Check with a professor for advice in identifying potential interviews	64.7%	73.5%
Check with a classmate for advice in identifying potential interviews	79.4%	64.7%
Consult an online expert guide to identify potential interviews	52.9%	70.6%

Table 4

Comparison of BBC Results With All Sources Counted.

	Total sources	Female percent	Male Percent	Non-binary percent
BBC Methodology	1,266	47.6%	51.6%	0.8%
All sources (including "players" or "newsmakers")	1,349	46.3%	53%	0.74%

DISCUSSION

This paper evaluates the experimental use of the BBC's source diversity measurement system in a journalism school setting. It aimed to see if the process of regularly measuring and sharing source-diversity rates could influence student behaviour. Over the course of the study's analysis, the sample of students came close but did not reach the BBC's goal of 50:50 gender representation. The percentage of women quoted surpassed the 50% mark in just four of the 13 weeks analyzed here. However, the overall results produced by this study (47.6% women, 51.6% male, 0.8% non-binary) were still considerably higher than the 31% Canadian industry average for women recorded by

the Global Media Monitoring Project (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2021).

RQ1 sought to determine whether creating awareness of ongoing measurements changed this ratio of source genders. Answering this required analyzing the quantitative results over time as students learned about the results and potentially changed their behaviour. Overall, there was a statistically significant change in the number of male sources quoted at the start of the term versus the end of the term. Analyzing the results by grade level saw no statistically significant change for 2nd-year students, while the results for post-graduate and 3rd-year students produced opposite results. The post-grads, which featured a class with only four male reporters, started the term with a gender balance ratio of 73% female and 26.7% male

and gradually reached a more balanced representation by the end of the term (although this change was not statistically significant). Third-year students started with a gender balance of 38.6% female, 61.4% male, and 0% non-binary, finishing the term with a statistically significant change in representation: 47.5% female, 50.8% male, and 1.64% non-binary. This provides quantitative evidence that measurements could be effective in some classes.

RQ2 asked whether students might change their reporting strategies as they learned about the source-diversity measurements. This was addressed through two qualitative surveys. In questions only administered in the second survey, 73.5% of students said they were aware of ongoing efforts to track gender balance; when asked directly, just 41.2% said they changed how they searched for sources based on the latest measurement results. While the two surveys showed modest changes in students adopting new measures for finding interview sources over the year, this is inconclusive evidence that the desire to seek more balanced sources drove them to try new methods for finding voices. It may just be a sign that, as students gain more experience and more instructor feedback, they learn new reporting techniques as they are socialized into newsroom norms (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014, p. 154). The only possible exception is when the answers from third-year students are analyzed. These students were more likely than other grades to indicate they relied more on social media, expert guides, or assistance from faculty or colleagues in finding potential interview subjects. This could be attributed to their attempt to broaden their avenues for finding sources, or it could reflect the additional reporting opportunities they had by filing daily news reports.

Third-year students were the only students who faced daily deadline pressures. Their initial lower rates of female representation may have resulted from the deadline pressures they faced in this class. Trying to replicate real-world reporting pressures is one of the most significant challenges journalism faculty face (Josephi, 1999, p. 79). Deadlines force journalists to stop seeking new information and file their reports (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 196). The pressure of meeting a deadline means journalists privilege experts who return emails or phone calls and are willing to speak on short no-

tice (Meer et al., 2016).

As one of the instructors for this group, my presence and regular reporting of data might have influenced their behaviour. To minimize this effect, I followed a consistent protocol for all grade levels, ensuring the results were posted to our program's learning management system without engaging in additional discussions or interventions with the students about the data. The surveys showed that third-year students were more engaged in the source-tracking system and more aware of the weekly results. Furthermore, the content analysis of third-year stories showed a clear improvement over the 13 weeks. This suggests that as third-year students learned about their initially poor gender balance ratios, enough individuals changed their reporting routines to affect the overall results for their grade level.

By comparison, students in the second year or post-graduate courses had higher percentages of female voices in their stories, but they also had several days or even weeks to file their stories. This may have given them extra time to find sources they wanted and time to wait for a response before arranging for an interview. That is a luxury few journalists working to deadline enjoy. The literature suggests student journalists are more likely to include diverse sources in their stories than professional journalists (Cabrera et al., 2020; Content Diversity Board, 2020; Davenport & Grimm, 2021; Smith, 2008), but the research doesn't explore whether that is a due to more generous deadlines, student perspectives on inclusion, or the demographic makeup of their campuses.

RQ3 asked to what degree the results differed when using the BBC's methodology instead of just counting all sources. In analyzing the research data, this study found the BBC methodology under-represented male voices. The BBC methodology excludes "players" or "newsmakers:" interview subjects deemed editorially vital to a particular story. This differs from other approaches to content analysis where anyone who speaks is noted (Macharia, 2015), or sources are categorized by expert or non-expert status (Cann & Mohr, 2001). While the BBC approach does not penalize students for covering stories featuring official sources, it can end up underplaying the gender imbalance that comes from covering those who hold power in society (Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2019) or in insti-

tutional stories about politics, policing, or business (Byerly, 2021). While I did not officially track story types, I did make note of a notable shift in the percentage of male "players" or "newsmakers" during weeks when major news events dominated the headlines. When the trucker convoy protest arrived in Ottawa (Week 3), much of the student coverage included quotes from newsmakers such as Prime Minister Trudeau, Ottawa's police chief, and several provincial premiers. Likewise, the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Week 5) saw the inclusion of quotes by President Joe Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The BBC encourages partners to collect data over time and to expect numbers to fluctuate as news agendas can change week-to-week and affect measurement results. This was apparent in my data.

When the BBC methodology is used for academic purposes, excluding "players" or "newsmakers" poses significant limitations due to its inherent subjectivity, forcing researchers to judge what sources are considered essential to a story. This also raises pedagogical issues if students use this approach to measure their own work: it requires all participants to understand and agree upon the definitions of players and newsmakers. This can raise questions of stability (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 72) and whether coders' "later judgements match their earlier judgements" (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 271).

CONCLUSION

Journalism has a gender representation problem. Although women slightly outnumber men in Canada, the United Kingdon and the United States, it is rare for the average consumer of mainstream media to see or hear female experts quoted at that rate. The BBC's 50:50 initiative successfully shifted the culture at the public broadcaster by regularly measuring source diversity rates and sharing them with staff, creating a real-time feedback loop. This study conducted an experiment to evaluate the BBC methodology within an educational context, and it produced mixed results.

An analysis of 13 weeks' worth of student journalism content found students came close to meeting a 50:50 gender balance goal. The experiment successfully raised awareness about gender balance, but the evidence attributing that achievement to using the BBC 50:50 methodology is mixed. Research supports the idea that in courses where students must file stories under daily deadline pressures, routine reminders of the progress towards a newsroom goal might encourage them to adapt their reporting techniques to diversify their sources. Students who did not face this deadline pressure and thus had more time to file their stories did not appear to be as influenced by the regular feedback.

This study suggests the combination of realistic deadlines and weekly feedback generated from source diversity measurements might offer a robust pedagogical combination for journalism schools. Educators should also consider students' overwhelming support of the goal that the media they consume and produce should reflect their audience's diversity and gender balance. Journalism schools are already finding ways to integrate discussions of diversity across the curriculum using analysis/critical thinking assignments and community-orientated projects (Biswas et al., 2017). Source diversity tracking initiatives could provide a practical vehicle to encourage students to think about their interview choices, especially if instructors recreate the time pressures contributing to the under-representation of female sources in the broader news industry (Martindale, 2006).

Journalism schools looking to introduce a source-diversity tracking system may want to consider what effect the BBC methodologies may have on their results. Excluding "players" or "newsmakers" introduces subjective decision-making and may affect intercoder reliability. In an early attempt to use this methodology with just one class, I asked a student editor to conduct his own analysis to compare against mine for accuracy. While he successfully tallied male, female and non-binary sources, we had consistent disagreements about who to exclude as a "player" or "newsmaker." This was only reconciled through a detailed review of our application of the BBC's rules. I conducted the content analysis for this study independently, as the student editor was unavailable, and the workload of analyzing three grade levels was substantial. To check the reliability of my sample and the reproducibility of my findings, I conducted a test-retest reliability exercise by randomly choosing 20 stories from my dataset to re-analyze.

In subsequent years, I experimented with a self-reporting tracking system, where student reporters were required to count their use of male, female and non-binary sources and record that data using a Microsoft Form that automatically populated an Excel spreadsheet. While this helped address workload issues involved in conducting a content analysis, it raised further problems of reliability, accuracy, and consistency problems. Given my previous concerns about the subjective elements of the BBC methodology, I decided to eliminate the "players" and "newsmakers" distinctions. Instead, I focused on tracking overall sources quoted through interviews, press conferences, social media embeds, and media statements. I am still reviewing that data. While the initial results were promising, this self-reporting system revealed new challenges with students' accuracy and timeliness in recording data. This underscores the importance of assessing students' understanding of whatever methodology is chosen and evaluating their accurate use before it is deployed. It also highlights the necessity of creating a system to verify the results once the source-tracking system is in place. Ensuring both comprehension and reliability is crucial for the effectiveness of any student or journalist-led source-diversity tracking initiative.

Finally, this study's focus on gender diversity precluded a deeper look at ethnic or other intersectional diversities. Content analysis coding schemes can be expanded to allow for an intersectional analysis by comparing a source's gender, ethnicity, or professional background, and the subject matter or length of the story in which they're cited. Future research might consider focus groups or student interviews to measure attitudinal changes. While this project measured source diversity in online content, future research could measure and compare other student media, such as audio, video or social media. More effort could also be made to address a potential predisposition bias by seeking out views from students or reporters who are critical of source diversity efforts. ■

Mike Wise is a professor and program coordinator with the journalism program at Humber Polytechnic in Toronto. Email: mike.wise@humber.ca

REFERENCES

Asr, F. T., Mazraeh, M., Lopes, A., Gautam, V., Gonzales, J., Rao, P., & Taboada, M. (2021). The gender gap tracker: Using natural language processing to measure gender bias in media. *PLos ONE*, *16*(1), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0245533

Barber, M., & Levitan, J. (2013). Not seen, not heard: Gender representation on canadian television news during the 2011 federal election campaign. *The International Journal of Diverse Identities*, *12*(2). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287047611_Not_seen_not_heard_Gender_representation_on_canadian_television_news_during_the_2011_federal_election_campaign

BBC. (2020). *How to measure your content*. BBC. http://bbc.com/5050

BBC. (2021). *How it works*. BBC. https://www.bbc.co.uk/5050/methodology

Biswas, M., Izard, R., & Roshan, S. (2017). What is taught about diversity and how is it taught? A 2015 update of diversity teaching at us journalism and mass communication programs. *Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication*, *7*(1), 1–13. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/what-is-taught-about-diversity-how-2015-update/docview/1877372575/se-2

Byerly, C. (2021, October 8). *Why white male dominance of news media is so persistent*. Women's Media Centre. https://womensmediacenter.com/news-features/why-white-male-dominance-of-news-media-is-so-persistent

Cabrera, H., Chiadmi, M., Laumonier, L., Payette, M., & Daoust-Boisvert, A. (2020, October 30). *How tracking can improve gender representation in sourcing from j-school to the newsroom*. J-Source. https://j-source.ca/how-tracking-can-improve-gender-representation-in-sourcing-from-j-school-to-the-newsroom/

Canadian Association of Journalists. (2023). *Canadian newsroom diversity survey 2023*. https://caj.ca/wp-content/uploads/Diversity_Survey_Report_2023_EN.pdf

Cann, D. J., & Mohr, P. B. (2001). Journalist and source gender in Australian television news. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *45*(1), 162–174. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4501_10

Carleton University. (2022, January 5). *CP, Carleton journalism school awarded grant to study diversity in news sources | School of Journalism and Communication*. https://carleton.ca/sjc/2022/cp-carleton-journalism-school-awarded-grant-to-study-diversity-in-news-sources/

Chilazi, S., Rattan, A., & Georgeac, O. (2020). *Ros Atkins and the 50:50 project at the BBC*. London Business School. https://publishing.london.edu/cases/ros-atkins-and-the-5050-project-at-the-bbc-a/

Content Diversity Board. (2020). *Minnesota daily content diversity board*. https://mndaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Minnesota-Daily-Content-Diversity-Board-End-Of-Year-Report-2019-2020-9.pdf

Craig, K. (2017). *Gender in local television news presentation: An analysis of TV news markets in the US Northwest* [Masters Thesis].

Cukier, W., Elmi, M., & Gagnon, S. (2019). Content analysis: Examining representation in broadcast news. *SAGE Research Methods Cases in Business and Management*. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526492425

Davenport, L. D., & Grimm, J. (2021). Diversity sourcing tool: Intentions, self-observation and learning. *Annual Meeting of the AEMJC*, 27. http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p1870578_index.html

D'Heer, J., Vergotte, J., Vuyst, S. D., & Leuven, S. V. (2019). The bits and

bytes of gender bias in online news: A quantitative content analysis of the representation of women in Vice.com. *Feminist Media Studies*, *20*(2), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2019.1574858

Entman, R. M. (2010). Media framing biases and political power: explaining slant in news of campaign 2008.*Journalism*, *11*(4), 389–408. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884910367587

Everbac h, T., Batsell, J., Champlin, S., & Nisbett, G. S. (2010). Does a more diverse newspaper staff reflect its community? A print and digital content analysis of the *Dallas Morning News*. *Southwestern Mass Communication Journal*, *35*(1), 1–17. https://journals.tdl.org/swec-jmc/index.php/swecjmc/article/view/41

Farquhar, L. K., & Carey, M. C. (2019). Self-censorship among student journalists based on perceived threats and risks. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, *74*(3), 318–335. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077695818815276

Fenlon, B. (2020, November 20). *What CBC's newsrooms are doing to deliver on pledge to improve diversity, inclusivity | CBC News*. Editor's Blog. https://www.cbc.ca/news/editorsblog/editors-blog-inclusivity-update-1.5796872

Fu, A. (2021, August 12). *New tool allows NPR to track source diversity in real time*. Poynter. https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2021/new-tool-allows-npr-to-track-source-diversity-in-real-time/

Global Media Monitoring Project. (2015). *Who makes the news? England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland global media monitoring project 2015 four-nation report*. Global Media Monitoring Project. https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/national/UK.pdf

Global Media Monitoring Project. (2021). *Who makes the news? Canada national report*. World Association for Christian Communication. https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CANADA-GMMP-Country-Report-FINAL.pdf

Graydon, S. (2017, October 18). *What gets measured gets done - #WGMGD*. InformedOpinions.Org. https://informedopinions.org/what-gets-measured-gets-done/

Haney, S. K., & Paskey, J. (2020). Canadian journalism programs respond to local news poverty: The challenge of doing more. *Canadian Journal of Communications* *45*(4). https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2020v45n4a3769

Humprecht, E., & Esser, F. (2017). A glass ceiling in the online age? Explaining the underrepresentation of women in online political news. *European Journal of Communication*, *32*(5), 439–456. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323117720343

Josephi, B. (1999). From journalism school to newsroom: What rite of passage? *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, *7*, 74–85. https://ro.uow.edu.au/apme/vol1/iss7/5

Krippendorff, K. (1980). Validity in content analysis. In *Computerstrategien für die Kommunikationsanalyse* (pp. 69–112). Campus. https://repository.upenn.edu/entities/publication/67c47fe1-87b9-417a-b1e4-018c011a770a

Liebler, C. M., & Smith, S. J. (1997). Tracking gender differences: A comparative analysis of network correspondents and their sources. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *41*(1), 58. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838159709364390

Lu, K. (2021, December 7). *What inclusion work looks like in 4 Chicago newsrooms*. Poynter. https://www.poynter.org/from-the-institute/2021/what-inclusion-work-looks-like-in-4-chicago-newsrooms/

Lyons, J. H. (2002). *Audit trails: A new tool in gatekeeping research* (University Of Florida) [Masters Thesis]. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228895313_Audit_Trails_A_New_Tool_in_Gatekeeping_Research

Macharia, S. (2015). *Global media monitoring project 2015* (Global Media Monitoring Project). World Association for Christian Communication. https://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp-2015-reports/

Martindale, S. (2006). *Source diversity in journalism*. University of Southern California.

McKeon, L. (2011). Five questions for Shari Graydon. *JSource*. https://j-source.ca/article/five-questions-for-shari-graydon/

Meer, T. G. L. A. van der, Verhoeven, P., Beentjes, J. W. J., & Vliegenthart,(2016). Disrupting gatekeeping practices: Journalists' source selection in times of crisis. *Journalism*, *18*(9), 1107–1124. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916648095

Newsome, M. (2021, April 1). Diverse sources, inclusive reporting. *Neiman Reports*, *75*(2), 32–33.

O'Brien, A., & Suiter, J. (2017). Best and worst practice: A case study of qualitative gender balance in Irish broadcasting. *Media, Culture & Society*, *39*(2), 259–269. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443716686942

Office for National Statistics. (2023, August 2). *Male and female populations*. GOV. UK Ethnicity Facts and Figures. https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/male-and-female-populations/latest/

Potter, W. J., & Levine-Donnerstein, D. (1999). Rethinking validity and reliability in content analysis. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *27*(3), 258–284. https://doi.org/10.1080/00909889909365539

Rao, P., Taboada, M., & Graydon, S. (2021, October 28). *What we can learn from three years of data on the gender gap in news reporting*. Poynter. https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2021/what-we-can-learn-from-three-years-of-data-on-the-gender-gap-in-news-reporting/

Rattan, A., Chilazi, S., Georgeac, O., & Bohnet, I. (2019, June 6). *Tackling the underrepresentation of women in media*. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2019/06/tackling-the-underrepresentation-of-women-in-media

Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (2014). *Mediating the message in the 21st century. A media sociology perspective. 3rd edition*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203930434

Shoemaker, P. J., & Vos, T. P. (2009). *Gatekeeping theory*. Routledge. Sjøvaag, H., & Pedersen, T. A. (2019). Female Voices in the News:

Structural conditions of gender representations in Norwegian newspapers. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *96*(1), 215–238. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018789885

Skinner, D., Gasher, M. J., & Compton, J. (2001). Putting theory to practice. *Journalism*, *2*(3), 341–360. https://doi.org/10.1177/146488490100200304

Smith, L. K. (2008). Race, ethnicity, and student sources: Minority newsmakers in student-produced versus professional TV news stories. *Howard Journal of Communications*, *19*(2), 182–199. https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170801990995

Statistics Canada. (2022, November 23). *Women - Canada at a glance*. Government of Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/12-581-x/2022001/sec7-eng.htm

Swert, K. D., & Hooghe, M. (2008). When do women get a voice? Explaining the presence of female news sources in Belgian TV

news. *International Communication Association*, 1–29. https://doi. org/10.1177/0267323109354229

Tuchman, G. (1980). *Making news*. Free Press.

US Census Bureau. (n.d.). *Quickfacts: United States*. Retrieved June 28, 2024, from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/SEX255223#SEX255223

Voakes, P. S., Kapfer, J., Kurpius, D., & Chen, D. S.-Y. (1996). Diversity in the news: A conceptual and methodological framework. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *73*(3), 582–593. https://doi. org/10.1177/107769909607300306

Vogler, D., & Schwaiger, L. (2021). Situational effects of journalistic resources on gender imbalances in the coverage of Swiss news media: A longitudinal analysis from 2011 to 2019. *Journalism*, 146488492110363. https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211036309

Wenger, D. H., Owens, L. C., & Cain, J. (2018). Help wanted: Realigning journalism education to meet the needs of top US news companies. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, *73*(1), 18–36. https:// doi.org/10.1177/1077695817745464

Wittenberg-Cox, A. (2020, July 10). *How the BBC gender balanced… everything, everywhere, fast*. https:// www.forbes.com/sites/avivahwittenbergcox/2020/07/10/how-the-bbc-gender-balanced-everything-everywhere-fast

Zeldes, G. A., Fico, F., & Diddi, A. (2012). Differences in the way broadcast, cable and public TV reporters used women and non-white sources to cover the 2008 presidential race. *Mass Communication and Society*, *15*(6), 831–851. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2011.634084

Zoch, L. M., & Turk, J. V. (1998). Women making news: Gender as a variable in source selection and use. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *75*(4), 762–775. https://doi. org/10.1177/107769909807500410

Getting it right, eh? Best practices for post hoc fact-checking in Canadian news

Vous avez raison, n'est-ce pas ? Pratiques exemplaires en matière de vérification des faits a posteriori dans les actualités Canadiennes

Brooks DeCillia and Brad Clark

ABSTRACT

Building on previous research mapping the terrain of the post hoc fact-checking practice in Canadian journalism, this research note evaluates the best methodology for verifying the accuracy of political and other claims and texts. Reviewing fact-checking projects—The Canadian Press Fact Checks, PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, Full Fact, Snopes, and *The Washington Post*'s Fact Checker—offers several best-checking practices. These include additional research, how fact-checkers should choose the topics they scrutinize (facts, not opinions, often surrounding political campaigns, government, public policy, and health information), and the public interest and balance tests used to select suspicious claims usually made in parliamentary debates, media interviews, campaign speeches, and official records.

Frederick Burr Opper 1894 (Public Domain)

RÉSUMÉ

S'appuyant sur des recherches antérieures qui cartographient le terrain de la pratique de vérification des faits post hoc dans le journalisme canadien, cette note de recherche évalue le meilleur processus ou la meilleure méthodologie pour vérifier l'exactitude des affirmations et des textes politiques et autres.L'examen de projets de vérification des faits tels que The Canadian Press Fact Checks, PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, Full Fact, Snopes et le Fact Checker du *Washington Post* révèle plusieurs pratiques exemplaires. Celles-ci incluent des recherches supplémentaires, la manière dont les vérificateurs de faits doivent choisir les sujets qu'ils examinent (des faits, et non des opinions, souvent liés aux campagnes politiques, au gouvernement, aux politiques publiques et aux informations sur la santé), ainsi que les tests d'intérêt public et d'équilibre utilisés pour sélectionner les affirmations suspectes, généralement émises dans les débats parlementaires, les interviews médiatiques, les discours de campagne ou les documents officiels.

INTRODUCTION

"If your mother says she loves you," holds the old journalism axiom, "check it out!" However, origin stories about this iconic call to verify everything—supposedly uttered by a hard-bitten Chicago news editor—often get the exact phrase and its attribution wrong, requiring some post hoc fact-checking here. The actual dictum was even saltier when first barked out by its author, an even crustier *Chicago Daily News* veteran, Edward H. Eulenberg, who directed journalists: "If your mother tells you she loves you, kick her smartly in the shins and make her prove it" (Schultz, 2018). The backstory of this oft-repeated aphorism highlights the importance of verification[1] and fact-checking in journalism. Familiar sayings used frequently by journalists and journalism educators can be misquoted and misattributed even by reporters whose professional ethos focuses on accuracy.

While it has always been a part of newsgathering practice (Graves, 2016), fact-checking emerged in recent decades as a distinct genre, with organizations such as FactCheck.org, Snopes, PolitiFact, Full Fact, The Canadian Press, and Chequeado challenging inaccuracies in our public discourse. Growing concerns about political spin, misinformation, and disinformation[2] in our "post-truth era" (Pérez-Escolar et al., 2023, p. 77) triggered newsrooms worldwide to step up their systematic post hoc fact-checking, whereby reporters scrutinize the truthfulness of statements and claims made by sources or organizations *after* those assertions have been disseminated publicly (Amazeen et al., 2018; Dobbs, 2012; Graves, 2016). Graves and Amazeen (2019) helpfully define post hoc or external fact-checking as an "evidence-based analysis of the accuracy of a political claim, news report, or other public text." This type of journalism combats or confronts misinformation and disinformation by attempting to correct misconceptions (Graves & Amazeen, 2019). Moreover, this type of work is published by both news organizations and public interest organizations (universities and civil soci-ety) to help "people become better informed" in a "fact-based public discourse" (Graves & Amazeen, 2019). Ante hoc/internal or editorial fact-checking, in contrast, attempts to independently verify "every factual statement included in the story and flags any necessary corrections" *before* publication (Baker & Fairbank, 2022). For example, a 2024 Canadian Press fact-checking story sets the record straight about several "misleading or inaccurate claims" made by former Fox News host Tucker Carlson about medically assisted dying, Canada's immigration policy, and the country's opioid crisis during speeches he made in Alberta (Dubey, 2024). Donald Trump's ascendancy to the White House in the United States in 2017 triggered an explosion in fact-checking in U.S. political journalism.[3] The *Toronto Star*'s Daniel Dale (2019) gained a national profile by documenting more than 5,000 false statements by the U.S. president only two years into Trump's term. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified concerns among journalists and others about the spread of misinformation and disinformation, culminating with the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring an "infodemic"—"the rapid spread of misleading or fabricated news" (World Health Organization, 2020, p. 1). Undoubtedly, from the pandemic and divisive elections around the world to the volatile conflict in Gaza and Israel, false information remains a persistent worldwide problem (Cunliffe-Jones & Graves, 2024).

Our exploratory study about fact-checking in Canadian journalism as it related to the COVID-19 pandemic, published in this journal, mapped a preliminary understanding of how and why Canadian journalists deploy fact-checking to combat misinformation and disinformation (DeCillia & Clark, 2023). Moreover, the initial research explored the essential work of Canadian journalists in combating misinformation and disinformation. Our work offered tentative findings, including: (1) a strong desire from Canadian newsroom leaders that journalism graduates possess solid fact-checking and verification skills; and (2) the

---

[1] Verification involves the journalism practice of establishing the truth, accuracy, or validity of information.

[2.] This research note defines misinformation as inaccurate or false information—rumours, pranks—that "contradicts or distorts common understandings of verifiable facts" (Guess & Lyons, 2020, p. 11). Disinformation is false information deliberately or maliciously spread by bad actors and includes conspiracy theories, hoaxes, and propaganda.

[3.] It is also notable that there is a scholarly research deficit examining fact-checking in Canadian journalism. See DeCillia (2018) for an example of fact-checking surrounding Canada's military operation in Afghanistan.

need for a more rigorous understanding of the process or methodology for both post hoc and ante hoc fact-checking. Our research also highlighted a desire amongst working journalists and newsroom leaders for journalism students to possess "a robust understanding of the process or methodology for post hoc fact-checking used by organizations such as PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, Snopes, and *The Washington Post*'s Fact Checker" (DeCillia & Clark, 2023, p. 99). This research note rejoins the needs identified by that preliminary study, which we hope offers a rigorous methodology or process for fact-checking in the Canadian context.

A BRIEF CONTEXTUAL, THEORETICAL, AND METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

While early newspapers tended to favour opinions and polemics over facts, the invention of wire services put a premium on 'just the facts' because reporters could no longer "afford to expend wasted verbiage on opinion or local idiom" (Dickey, 2019, para. 4). For clarity, editorial, internal, or ante hoc fact-checking (usually done by in-house fact-checking departments in magazines) involves fact-checkers verifying facts in stories before publication (Baker & Fairbank, 2022). Fact-checking is also the basic and instrumental practice of verification that reporters do in

the field or from the newsroom to authenticate, confirm, and double-check details, such as the official number of people killed in a plane crash, to produce an accurate report. Post hoc or external fact-checking—the more recent and emerging practice—investigates dubious or troubling claims in the public sphere to establish their truthfulness. This emerging genre is primarily "dedicated to debunking falsehoods circulating online or repeated by politicians and other public figures" (Graves & Amazeen, 2019). Post hoc fact-checking can also happen in the moment, during interviews or live broadcasts, when reporters or hosts challenge curious or dubious claims made by sources. Building on a preliminary study published earlier in this journal, this research note offers several recommendations for best practices for post hoc fact-checking in Canadian journalism.[4]

In Canada, fact-checking operations—The Canadian Press Fact Checks and Radio-Canada's *Décrypteurs,* for instance—work to counter mis- and disinformation, similarly to U.S.-based organizations such as FactCheck.org. Fact-checking in Canadian journalism does not have the deep roots or support that exist in the United States, where the work often enjoys solid institutional and financial backing, as evidenced by the Poynter Institute's PolitiFact and the Annenberg Public Policy Center's FactCheck.org. Nevertheless, our previous research identified a desire to embed and institutionalize fact-checking in Canadian journalism (DeCillia and Clark, 2023).

---

[4] This research note also focuses on post hoc fact-checking because the *Truth in Journalism Fact-Checking Guide* offers a detailed methodology for editorial or ante hoc fact-checking (Baker & Fairbank, 2022).

In the early 2000s, FactCheck.org, a non-partisan and nonprofit website, began to challenge political spin to cut "the level of deception and confusion in U.S. politics" (2024, para. 1). Kickstarted in the United States in the early 2000s, "an explosion of international fact-checkers" emerged over the coming decade (Mantzarlis, 2016). A pessimistic 2023 account in *The New York Times* reported that, after growing from a mere eight organizations in 2008, "the momentum behind organizations that aim to combat online falsehoods has started to taper off," noting that the momentum or addition of fact-checking sites has been "idling" in recent years (Hsu & Thompson, 2023). Yet, as Cunliffe-Jones and Graves (2024) warn, the picture is more complex, highlighting the growth of fact-checking in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) to combat false claims, and Google's The Claim-Review Project that publishers use to flag fact-checked stories as evidence of the prominence of fact-checking.

Our previous research (DeCillia & Clark, 2023) suggests that Canadian journalists and journalism educators question the efficacy of post hoc fact-checking to correct misinformation. Yet, both reporters and teachers remain committed to the practice for normative and democratic reasons. Promising new research, however, suggests Canadian journalists should persist with their fact-checking efforts. While fact-checks will not change long-held worldviews, fact-checking has a "significantly positive overall influence" on factual understanding (Walter et al., 2019, p. 350) and can even "reduce belief in misinformation" (Porter & Wood, 2021). Additionally, recent research highlights the efficacy of attaching "warning labels" to content to reduce the spread of misinformation (Martel & Rand, 2023, p. 3).

Post hoc fact-checking attempts to establish the truthfulness of statements, claims, rumours, and conspiracy theories. The process often involves checking the accuracy of statements and claims of politicians, celebrities, influencers, and other people with a public profile whose words are timely, relevant, and intersect with the welfare or well-being of the public. This after-the-fact fact-checking process can come with visualizations—"Pinocchios" from *The Washington Post* or PolitiFact's TRUTH-O-METER—that measure the truthfulness of the claims. PolitiFact's TRUTH-O-METER, for example, uses a nuanced six-scale rating system: true; mostly true; half true; mostly false; false; and pants on fire—to visualize decreasing truthfulness (Drobnic Holan, 2024). The measurements are represented visually with the image of a meter, an arrow, or needle against a dial, as well as a green light if a claim is true, and red if it is false. True statements under this rating system are accurate, whereas a "pants on fire" label means a statement is not accurate and "makes a ridiculous claim" (Drobnic Holan, 2024).

Several fact-checking sites, including Snopes, FactCheck.org, PolitiFact, Full Fact (in the United Kingdom), The Canadian Press Fact Checks, and Radio-Canada's *Décrypteurs*, regularly work to expose the truth and correct false or dubious statements present in the public domain. Post hoc fact-checking focuses on topics in the public interest, underpinned by the idea that citizens in democracies need factual information to make informed decisions. The co-founder of FactCheck. org wanted the fact-checking site to be "a resource for those citizens who honestly are bewildered and confused and looking for help in sorting out fact from fiction" (Graves, 2013, p. 137).

For theoretical clarity, we adhere to the definition of post hoc fact-checking as "a watchdog endeavour that checks information after it has already [been] published" (Borel et al., 2018, p. 4). As part of the accountability phenomenon in journalism (Pittner, 2014), Uscinski and Butler (2013) describe fact-checking as the process of "comparing" the statements of elites "to 'the facts' to determine whether a statement about these topics is a lie" (p. 163). In keeping with our previous study's methodology, we used a thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) in the fact-checking process/methodology of six major fact-checking organizations: The Canadian Press Fact Checks, PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, Full Fact, Snopes, and *The Washington Post's* Fact Checker. These fact-checkers were chosen for several reasons. In addition to their high profile and large audiences, FactCheck.org, PolitiFact and *The Washington Post's* Fact Checker established the new genre of journalism as a legitimate practice in recent decades. Also, considerable scholarship (see, for example, Lee et al., 2023; Graves, 2016;

2018) focuses on these prominent fact-checking organizations. Snopes, previously known as Urban Legends Reference Pages, attracts millions of visitors to its site each month (White et al., 2024). As well as checking the veracity of claims made by U.K. politicians, public institutions, journalists, and online content, Full Fact (2024a) also "campaign[s] for change that will make bad information rarer and less harmful." The Canadian Press Fact Checks has an extensive reach as part of the news organization's wire service.

Our analysis identified several themes (or nodes) that inform our recommendations about best practices for Canadian fact-checking. These themes or nodes include:

1. Topics or information fact checkers select to scrutinize
2. Sources to fact-check
3. Research
4. Ratings
5. Editing
6. Corrections

We confined our analysis to fact-checking organizations based in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the U.S., given their similar North Atlantic or liberal journalism models, as described by Hallin and Mancini (2004). The following section will first outline the process used by these organizations before synthesizing our recommendations for Canadian journalists.

POST HOC FACT-CHECKING

Proponents of journalistic fact-checking liken their efforts to science's rigorous methods and procedures, "constantly inventing, discarding, and refining theories to explain the confusion of the contemporary world" (Dobbs, 2012, p. 3). Consistent with best practices in journalism, most prominent fact-checking organizations follow dependable and logical practices in scrutinizing questionable claims. FactCheck.org notably stresses its commitment to the "best practices of both journalism and scholarship" (FactCheck.org, 2024). The

section below unpacks what these practices entail and the practical ways Canadian journalists can adopt these methods in their fact-checking.

The topics or information journalists select to fact-check

This study's thematic analysis identified that all fact-checking organizations examined in this research focus on verifiable facts, not opinions.[5] The Canadian Press Fact Checks (2024) stresses it only investigates claims "presented as fact, not opinion, and should have significance to the welfare or well-being of the communities we serve." Political communication complicates fact-checking. For its part, PolitiFact concedes there is a nuance, noting that within "political rhetoric, there is license for hyperbole" (Drobnic Holan, 2024). Helpful for Canadian journalists, PolitiFact offers a checklist of questions when determining what curious or questionable statements to check:

1. "Is the statement rooted in a fact that is verifiable? We don't check opinions, and we recognize that in the world of speechmaking and political rhetoric, there is license for hyperbole."
2. "Does the statement seem misleading or sound wrong?"
3. "Is the statement significant? We avoid minor 'gotchas' on claims that are obviously a slip of the tongue."
4. "Is the statement likely to be passed on and repeated by others?"
5. "Would a typical person hear or read the statement and wonder: Is that true?" (Drobnic Holan, 2024)

Full Fact (2024b) stresses it evaluates "claims in public debate which are of public interest" prioritizing "claims that have the most potential to cause harm to people's lives." Fact-checking organizations scrutinize politicians and celebrities, noting little utility in evaluating ludicrous statements made by a person with no public platform. Snopes (2024), for its part, stresses it selects topics "without any partisan considerations," select-

---

[5] Mettler and Mondak (2024) helpfully distinguish between the two, emphasizing that "facts can be proved or disproved with objective evidence, whereas statements of opinion depend on personal values and preferences." Simply put, facts are objective, while opinions are subjective.

ing "items readers are asking about, or searching for, as well as vital rumours that could lead to misunderstandings and purported trivia facts."

As a paradigm that Canadian journalists can follow, this study's thematic analysis identified a public interest test used by all fact checkers when selecting what to scrutinize. The topic and the person being fact-checked need to have the potential to influence public health, security, governance, or livelihoods. As a touchstone for all Canadian journalists, The Canadian Press Fact Checks (2024) helpfully applies this test by considering three factors:

1. "The editorial value": "Is the claim timely," newsworthy and "relevant to the general public?" If The Canadian Press pursues a dated claim, it considers the motives for sharing the questionable information again.
2. "The potential harm": Does the inaccurate claim actually present a "real-world harm" to the public?
3. "Reach": How far has the claim spread on digital platforms? Has the claim triggered interest amongst other platform users?

Sources to fact-check

With the public interest in mind, fact-checking organizations scrutinize people—politicians, officials, celebrities, and influencers—in the public eye. Our thematic analysis found that fact-checkers look for claims to check by watching and examining the news, public affairs shows, political ads, campaign material, politicians' remarks and speeches, transcripts of interviews, social media, and cable news shows. The Canadian Press "actively monitors social media for misinformation" to scrutinize. Fact Checker at *The Washington Post* uses the words of politicians as a springboard of sorts to begin its investigations, stressing it does not want to "elevate false claims that have received relatively little attention on social media" (Kessler, 2017). In the spring of 2024, The Canadian Press, for instance, labelled a social media post by Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe that stated removing the carbon charge from home heating bills would lower the cost of living in the province as misleading (Saba, 2024). FactCheck.org and PolitiFact attempt to dedicate equal time to checking claims made by Republicans and Democrats.

Similarly, *The Washington Post* highlights its effort to "be dispassionate and non-partisan, drawing attention to inaccurate statements on both left and right" (Kessler, 2017). With caveats discussed below, Canadian journalists would be prudent to adopt this non-partisan and balanced approach to inure themselves against allegations of bias. Yet, media critic Dan Froomkin (2022) warns that fact-checking organizations "go to extreme lengths to apportion their negative verdicts to both sides" in their political reporting. Expanding his argument, Froomkin (2024) criticizes the "hairsplitting" fact-checking in U.S. political coverage for hiding the "vast gulf in truth-telling between" the Republicans and Democrats. Fact-checkers in the United States, he argues, "want to mete out their dings if not equally, at least comparably. And that's impossible to do, ethically, given that one party [Republicans] is constantly lying and the other [Democrats] is not."

Research

Fact-checking is grounded in good journalism. As noted above, reporters fact-check, verify, confirm, and double-check details daily to produce accurate stories. Post hoc fact-checking goes beyond verification to confrontation. It aims to combat misinformation and disinformation to correct misconceptions. To do this effectively, fact-checking "publicly endorses or challenges the truthfulness of another individual or organization" (Graves & Amazeen, 2019). PolitiFact, FactCheck.org and *The Washington Post's* Fact Checker predicate their fact-checking in common sense or logic, applying a "reasonable person standard" (Kessler, 2017) for determining the truth of claims. To be sure, fact-checking demands rigorous research methods, including poring over transcripts of statements that can be truth-checked. The journalists doing this work rely on primary, authoritative sources of information—non-partisan government reports; original data, including peer-reviewed scholarship; official documents and statistics—to check the truth of claims (see, for example, FactCheck.org, 2024).

Fact-checking also requires independent corroboration and transparency about the sources of information used to check the accuracy of information. FactCheck.org, for example, always

discloses biographical information of its expert sources, including previous government or campaign work (2024). To highlight its rigorous and transparent research methodology, Snopes (2024) highlights its efforts to interview experts and to "search for printed information (news articles, scientific and medical journal articles, books, interview transcripts, statistical sources)" that can help determine the accuracy of the claim or statement under scrutiny. Full Fact (2024b) notes that its fact-checking draws from "a wide range of sources of evidence relating to a claim." The Canadian Press Fact Checks include a list of sources used in its fact-checking stories, along with a link to its methodology. The wire service's process offers some useful guidance that Canadian journalists would be wise to deploy regarding research and presentation:

1. Provide links to original, primary and archived sources as hyperlinks.
2. Include archived links if supporting documentation might be altered or taken down.
3. Back up facts with evidence, including information that supports the claim being scrutinized.
4. Use experts to add context to fact-checking.
5. Contact claimants to seek further information, evidence or clarification.

Additionally, while not explicitly outlined in the methodology of fact-checking organizations, there is solid empirical evidence that Canadian journalists should include data visualization (graphs, charts, tables, photos, video) in their storytelling, as it provides straightforward utility in decreasing misperceptions and correcting misunderstandings in the minds of news consumers (Hardy & Hall Jamieson, 2017; Mena, 2023).

Ratings

Fact-checks frequently use ratings systems to illustrate truthfulness. This may include graphics that visually represent the truthfulness of the claims, for example the Pinocchios from *The Washington Post* or PolitiFact's TRUTH-O-METER. FactCheck.org, for its part, often labels claims misleading or false. PolitiFact's TRUTH-O-METER ranges from "truth" to "pants on fire" to pass judgment on the accuracy of statements. The Canadian Press Fact Checks wisely, we contend, does not use ratings similar to the TRUTH-O-METER. Fact-checking ratings are controversial, imperfect (Adair, 2018), and non-scientific instruments (Graves, 2016). Froomkin (2022) argues that current ratings, such as PolitiFact's TRUTH-O-METER, do not work because they don't hold serial liars accountable. Froomkin (2022; 2024) suggests fact-checking organizations adopt a regularly updated "credibility meter" for politicians. If serial lying becomes a persistent problem in Canada, journalists might consider adopting a similar approach.

Editing

Before any fact-checking gets published, editors scrutinize or fact-check it. A misleading or inaccurate fact-check is, well, pretty embarrassing. The Canadian Press Fact Checks is overseen by the news wire service's editor-in-chief. Snopes, for instance, passes its final product through at least one editor for vetting. FactCheck.org rigorously copy edits and fact-checks its stories "line by line, word by word, to make sure that every fact is correct and every statement…is accurate and based on the evidence" (FactCheck.org, 2024). The director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center also reads every story before FactCheck.org publishes it. We urge Canadian journalists to incorporate such editorial oversight into their process.

Corrections

Mistakes happen occasionally. This study's thematic analysis determined that all fact-checking organizations stress the need to correct erroneous reporting quickly. Canadian journalists pursuing fact-checking work should mirror these organizations' correction policies. All the fact-checking services encourage readers to submit potential corrections for review, emphasizing the need to be transparent and keep their revisions public-facing. For significant errors, PolitiFact updates its reporting with new information and an archived copy of the previous story. On top of that, the new text is marked as updated: corrected fact checks receive a "Corrections and Updates" tag. The Canadian Press similarly adds notes to the bottom of its fact-checking stories when corrections—minor

errors, typos or grammatical mistakes—occur. If The Canadian Press kills a fact-check for legal or other reasons, it removes the article and explains its decision publicly.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from our thematic analysis of major fact-checking organizations, we summarize in Table 1 some recommendations for Canadian journalists as they approach the topic/selection,

sources, research, ratings, editing and corrections associated with fact-checking.

CONCLUSION

Fact-checking requires a thorough and systematic common-sense approach. Building on our preliminary research mapping fact-checking in Canadian journalism, we respond to the needs identified by that study. That work found a clear

Table 1
A Suggested Methodology/Process for Fact-Checking in Canadian News

Topics or things journalists select for fact-checking	• Only fact-check statements of fact, not opinions. • Only check statements or information in the public interest. • Focus mostly on timely, suspicious claims. • Carefully pursue dated claims if the questionable information meets the public interest test. • Prioritize claims that can cause harm.
Sources to fact-check	• Monitor news, current affairs, political ads, social media, campaign material, politicians' remarks, speeches and transcripts. • Politicians. • Government officials. • Celebrities, influencers. • Remember to remain balanced and non-partisan. • Try to provide equal treatment of political parties.
Research	• Apply rigorous, logical—in other words, journalistically sound—methods. • Use mostly primary authoritative sources, not secondary sources. • Use non-partisan government reports, original data, including peer-reviewed scholarship, official documents and statistics. • Be transparent about sources.
Ratings / Presentation	• Include visualizations (graphs, charts, tables, photos, videos) in fact-checking, given their persuasiveness in correcting misunderstandings (Mena, 2023). • Use rating visualizations cautiously to represent the truthfulness of claims or statements.
Editing	• Ensure that fact-checking reporting gets "fact-checked" or edited rigorously before publication.
Corrections	• Be transparent about corrections. • Make corrections quickly. • Encourage public feedback about fact-checking.

desire amongst working journalists and newsroom leaders for journalism students to possess post hoc fact-checking skills (DeCillia & Clark, 2023). This research note offers a suggested methodology for Canadian journalists. Moreover, it highlights several suggestions about what methods and processes Canadian journalists should adopt from other fact-checking organizations to combat misinformation and disinformation. We hope these recommendations provide a foundation for building a robust fact-checking culture in Canadian journalism. ∎

Brooks DeCillia spent 20 years reporting and producing news at CBC, and is currently an assistant professor at Mount Royal University's School of Communications Studies. Email: bdecillia@mtroyal.ca

Brad Clark is an associate professor in the School of Communication Studies at Mount Royal University, where he has taught since 2006 after working as a journalist for 20 years, mostly at CBC.

REFERENCES

Adair, B. (2018, July 24). *Beyond the Truth-O-Meter*. Columbia Journalism Review. https://www.cjr.org/first_person/beyond-the-truth-o-meter.php

Amazeen, M. A., Thorson, E., Muddiman, A., & Graves, L. (2018). Correcting political and consumer misperceptions: The effectiveness and effects of rating scale versus contextual correction formats. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *95*(1), 28-48. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699016678186

Baker, A., & Fairbank, V. (2022). *The Truth in Journalism Fact-Checking Guide*. https://thetijproject.ca/guide/introduction/

Borel, B., Sheikh, K., Husain, F., Junger, A., Biba, E., Blum, D., & Urcuioli, B. (2018). *The state of fact-checking in science journalism*. Knight Science Journalism MIT. https://www.moore.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/fact-checking-in-science-journalism_mit-ksj.pdf?sfvrsn=a6346e0c_2

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Cunliffe-Jones, P., & Graves, L. (2024, January 8). Misinformation: How fact-checking journalism is evolving–and having a real impact on the world. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/misinformation-how-fact-checking-journalism-is-evolving-and-having-a-real-impact-on-the-world-218379

Dale, D. (2019, June 5). Donald Trump has now said more than 5,000 false things as president. *Toronto Star*. https://www.thestar.com/news/world/donald-trump-has-now-said-more-than-5-000-false-things-as-president/article_c237cda2-d73d-542d-aa53-33f5c56d0bc1.html

DeCillia, B. (2018). "But it is not getting any safer!": The contested dynamic of framing Canada's military mission in Afghanistan. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *51*(1), 155–177. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423917000634

DeCillia, B., & Clark, B. (2023). Fake news and fact-checking: Combating misinformation and disinformation in Canadian newsrooms and journalism schools. *Facts & Friction: Emerging Debates and Pedagogies in Contemporary Journalism*, *3*(1), 86-105. https://doi.org/10.22215/ff/v3.i1.10

Dickey, C. (2019, December 6). The rise and fall of facts. *Columbia Journalism Review*. https://www.cjr.org/special_report/rise-and-fall-of-fact-checking.php

Dobbs, M. (2012). *The rise of political fact-checking: How Reagan inspired a journalistic movement: A reporter's eye view*. Washington, D.C.: New America Foundation. https://www.issuelab.org/resources/15318/15318.pdf

Drobnic Holan, A. (2024, January 12 [2018, February 12]). The principles of the Truth-O-Meter: PolitiFact's methodology for independent fact-checking. *PolitiFact*. https://www.politifact.com/article/2018/feb/12/principles-truth-o-meter-politifacts-methodology-i/

Dubey, R. (2024, February 14). Tucker Carlson misleads on MAID, immigration and fentanyl during Alberta speeches. The Canadian Press. https://www.thecanadianpressnews.ca/fact_checking/tucker-carlson-misleads-on-maid-immigration-and-fentanyl-during-alberta-speeches/article_61adfba1-398a-5d03-8507-1966bf3daf91.html

FactCheck.org. (2024). *Our Mission*. The Annenberg Public Policy Center. https://www.factcheck.org/about/our-mission/

Froomkin, D. (2022, October 14). Replace "fact checking" with credibility meters. *Press Watch*. https://presswatchers.org/2022/10/replace-fact-checking-with-credibility-meters/

Froomkin, D. (2024, August 21) 'Fact-checking' does a (hopefully fatal) face plant. *Press Watch*. https://presswatchers.org/2024/08/fact-checking-does-a-hopefully-fatal-face-plant/

Full Fact. (2024a). *Who we are*. Full Fact. https://fullfact.org/about/

Full Fact. (2024b). *How we fact check*. Full Fact. https://fullfact.org/about/how-we-fact-check/

Graves, L. (2013). *Deciding what's true: Fact-checking journalism and the new ecology of news*. [Doctoral Dissertation Columbia University]. Core. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/161442732.pdf

Graves, L. (2016). *Deciding what's true: The rise of political fact-checking in American journalism*. Columbia University Press.

Graves, L. (2018). Boundaries not drawn: Mapping the institutional roots of the global fact-checking movement. *Journalism Studies,* 19(5), 613-631. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1196602

Graves, L., & Amazeen, M. A. (2019). Fact-checking as idea and practice in journalism. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Oxford University Press.

Guess, A. M., & Lyons, B. A. (2020). Misinformation, disinformation, and online propaganda. In N. Persily & J. A. Tucker (Eds.), *Social media and democracy* (pp. 10–33). Cambridge University Press.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. Sage.

Hallin, D.C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Hardy, B. W., & Hall Jamieson, K. (2017). Overcoming endpoint bias in climate change communication: The case of Arctic Sea ice trends. *Environmental Communication*, *11*(2), 205–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2016.1241814

Hsu, T., & Thompson, S. A. (2023, September 29). Fact checkers take stock of their efforts: 'It's not getting better'. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/29/business/media/fact-checkers-misinformation.html

Kessler, G. (2017, January 1). About the Fact Checker. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/01/07/about-fact-checker/

Lee, S., Xiong, A., Haeseung, S., & Lee, D. (2023). "Fact-checking" fact checkers: A data-driven approach. *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review,* *4*(5). https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-126

Mantzarlis, A. (2016, June 7). There's been an explosion of international fact-checkers, but they face big challenges. *Poynter*. https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2016/theres-been-an-explosion-of-international-fact-checkers-but-they-face-big-challenges/

Martel, C., & Rand, D. G. (2023). Misinformation warning labels are widely effective: A review of warning effects and their moderating features. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *54*(December, 101710), 1-5. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101710

Mena, P. (2023). Reducing misperceptions through news stories with data visualization: The role of readers' prior knowledge and prior beliefs. *Journalism*, *24*(4), 729–748. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211028762

Mettler, M., & Mondak, J. J. (2024). Fact-opinion differentiation. *Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review*, 5(2), 1-19. https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/wp-c

Pérez-Escolar, M., Lilleker, D., & Tapia-Frad, A. (2023). A systematic literature review of the phenomenon of disinformation and misinformation. *Media and Communication*, *11*(2), 76-87. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i2.6453

Pittner, N. (2014, February 27). Why fact-checking is the root of journalism: 8 good questions with PolitiFact's Angie Drobnic Holan. *American Press Institute*. https://americanpressinstitute.org/why-fact-checking-the-roots-of-journalism-8-good-questions-with-politifacts-angie-drobnic-holan/

Porter, E., & Wood, T., J. (2021). The global effectiveness of fact-checking: Evidence from simultaneous experiments in Argentina, Nigeria, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. *PNAS*, *118*(37), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2104235118

Rubin, H., & Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing*. Sage.

Saba, R. (2024, March 1). Removal of carbon charge on home heating among many factors lowering inflation in Saskatchewan. The Canadian Press. https://www.thecanadianpressnews.ca/fact_checking/removal-of-carbon-charge-on-home-heating-among-many-factors-lowering-inflation-in-saskatchewan/article_b7f56dcd-a08a-50e2-a909-a16bb0440719.html

Schultz, S. (2018, Feb. 13). Let's change this journalism motto because 'if your mother says she loves you, check it out,' doesn't check out. *Medium*. https://medium.com/@Susys/lets-change-this-journalism-motto-because-if-your-mother-says-she-loves-you-check-it-out-a953b9a8d96c

Snopes. (2024). Transparency. *Snopes*. https://www.snopes.com/transparency/

Uscinski, J. E., & Butler, R. W. (2013). The epistemology of fact checking. *Critical Review: A Journal of Politics and Society*, *25*(2), 162-180.

The Canadian Press. (2024). *About The Canadian Press Fact Checks*. https://www.thecanadianpressnews.ca/site/about_the_canadian_press_fact_checks.html

Walter, N., Cohen, J., Lance Holbert, R., & Morag, Y. (2019). Fact-checking: A meta-analysis of what works and for whom. *Political Communication*, *37*(3), 350-375. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1668894

White, A. K., Klein, F., Sidler, S., & Hoyle, J. (2024). *Improving performance at America's largest fact-checking site*. https://humanmade.com/work/performance-improvements-at-americas-largest-fact-checking-site/

World Health Organization (2020). *Immunizing the public against misinformation*. https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/immunizing-the-public-against-misinformation
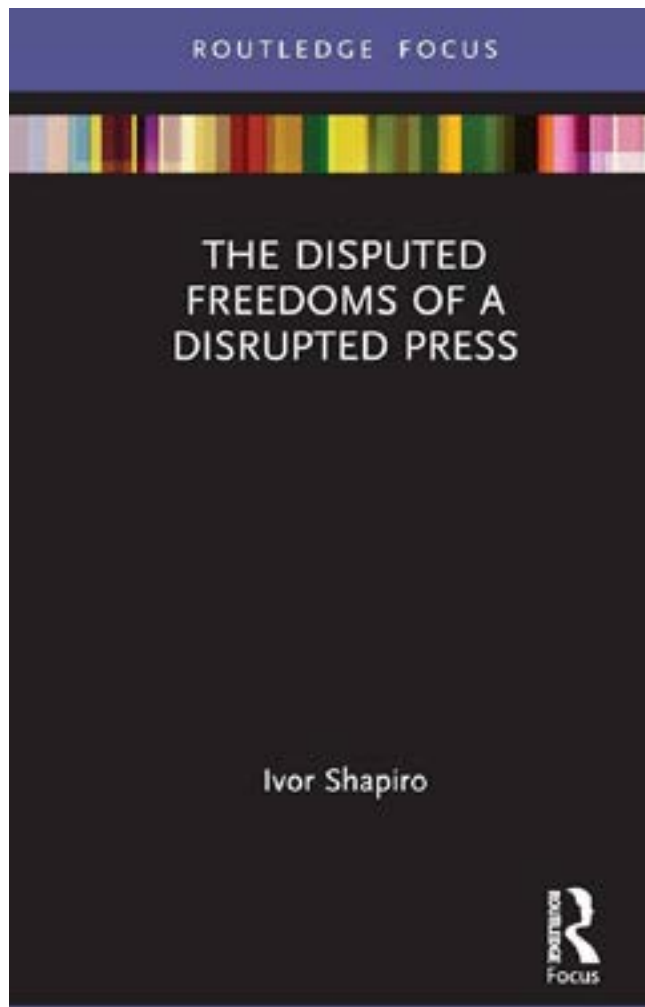
The Disputed Freedoms of a Disrupted Press

Ivor Shapiro
Routledge, 2023
Hardback (xv+146 pp.)

🔊 **LISTEN**

Shapiro shows us how defending journalism means defending press freedom—and how this is complex work.

Review by Shannon Dea

Ivor Shapiro's *The Disputed Freedoms of a Disrupted Press* (Routledge, 2023) is essential reading for anyone who cares (as we all should) about the future of journalism. As the title suggests, the book has two main focuses: freedom of the press, and the technological, political, and cultural disruptions media is today undergoing around the world. Thus, the book is at once theoretical and richly empirical. There could be no better author for such a volume than Shapiro, a long-time and award-winning journalist and editor turned professor and university administrator (now emeritus) who knows the world of reporting from the front-lines, as an industry leader, and as a scholar.[1] These combined perspectives result in a volume that is historically and philosophically rich, and deeply engaged with the real-world grit of global journalism. Shapiro's message throughout the book is that, now more than ever, we all—journalists and the public alike—need to steward

---

[1] Notably, between 2012 and 2016, Shapiro was one of the Canadian principal investigators of the Worlds of Journalism Study.

freedom of the press so that a free press can continue to serve the public good.

In the first two chapters, Shapiro lays a sophisticated philosophical and historical foundation for the remainder of the book. He weaves together the history of journalism and the corresponding emergence of such core principles as freedom of the press to illustrate their historical contingency and interdependence. Amazingly, for a book as slender as this one, Shapiro manages to avoid tidy, monolithic origin myths: He traces the ancestry of news media to ancient antiquity and four continents, to 15th century disinformation and 17th century scandal sheets. Shapiro similarly resists simplistic understandings of the relevant philosophical principles. A teacher to the core, he is not content merely to explain philosophical views to his readers; through a series of prompts, puzzles, and cases, he encourages readers to work through them for themselves.

He starts the first chapter, "The Cost of Liberty," with eleven provocative sentences and asks us to consider whether they are true, false, or a matter of opinion. Examples include:

> Qualified and reputable researchers dispute the effectiveness of conventional responses to pandemics and climate change. . . .
>
> .Governments' financial aid for news organizations protects the free flow of knowledge about public affairs. . . .
>
> Cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed are a type of hate speech. (p. 2)

These and eight other provocative sentences express a range of views on various expressive freedoms. Shapiro is quick to note that readers who work through the examples will have widely varying opinions on the answers. If he thinks that there are right answers to the questions, he doesn't let on. This is an exercise that one expects to encounter in a university philosophy class, not a book on journalism. That Shapiro opens his book with the exercise is evidence of his deep conviction that to defend journalism, we need to defend press freedom, and that to defend press freedom, we need to understand it in all its complexity.

Shapiro develops, and throughout the book re-

turns to, the view that the freedom of the press is not an innate right but an instrumental or contingent right, constituted for the purpose of making newsgathering possible. The rights that come along with a press badge, he explains, "are not attached to the chronic condition of being human but reserved to the acute condition of being a journalist, and reserved rights usually come with conditions attached" (p. 37).

To map the purposes, rights and conditions of newsgathering, Shapiro takes readers on an erudite and engaging tour from the history of European liberalism, across various world belief systems, to ubuntu philosophy and the formation of the South African constitution. The primacy of the South African context in these important early chapters is a function of Shapiro's early days growing up and working as a journalist in apartheid-era South Africa, but also of his insistence that human rights were not invented by—or at least not solely invented by—Europeans. He capably discusses such European and North American philosophers as John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, John Rawls, and Carol Gilligan. But he also discusses the origins of contemporary press freedoms in ancient and contemporary African and Asian thought, including in South Africa's post-apartheid constitution, which includes strong protections of press freedom but excludes from those protections wartime propaganda and advocating for hatred. Although he emigrated from South Africa decades ago, Shapiro's own approach to press freedom—freedom with conditions attached—remains recognizably South African.

Having laid the theoretical groundwork for the book in the first two chapters, Shapiro devotes the remaining four chapters to describing a range of disruptions threatening the free press, and the evolving shapes that journalism takes around the world in response to those disruptions. Each chapter focuses on a particular challenge and journalistic examples from a particular country.

Chapter 3 invites the reader to reflect on who counts as a journalist for the purposes of receiving access and constitutional (or similar) protections. To illustrate the complexity of the question, Shapiro delves into two Canadian cases of access denied: the arrest of journalist Amber Bracken and documentary producer Michael Toledano at the Wet'suwet'en pipeline blockade in 2021; and

the Federal Courts' overturning of decisions in two successive elections that denied Rebel News journalistic accreditation to attend federal leaders' debates. Both cases turned on the claim that the journalists in question were engaging in advocacy rather than journalism. It is a canny juxtaposition. I am likely not the only reader of this chapter who found myself rooting for the journalists covering the pipeline, and against Rebel News. Shapiro's analysis, though, makes it tough to have it both ways.

If Chapter 3 is concerned with journalism as an institution, the following chapter is centred on grassroots activism. Shapiro's focus in Chapter 4 is on various forms of misinformation. This time, the context is Argentina, where Chequeado, "one of the world's oldest and most innovative dedicated fact-checking organizations" (p. 55) uses an astonishing array of community-based tactics, from YouTube videos and Substacks to eye-catching flash mob-style public events to, in the words of Chequeado general director Laura Zommer, "reach people who don't follow the news . . . to increase the cost of lying" (p. 56).

Chapter 5's focus is the perhaps unsurprisingly excellent professional standards for Norwegian journalism. ("But, yes, that's Norway," Shapiro wryly observes [p. 92]).[2] Shapiro here makes the case that, especially with right-wing populism on the rise, it is urgent for journalists worldwide to regain the public's trust by developing and respecting clear professional standards.

Shapiro's final chapter takes us to Kashmir—where threats to journalism range from financial instability to government-imposed media blackouts—to show that a liberal constitution is not enough to protect press freedom. Globally, Shapiro reports, threats to the media vary widely. "This is not a news-business crisis; it's a freedom crisis," he warns, "and the biggest question becomes: how many people in any given place actually care enough about their diminishing freedom to do something about it?" (p. 106) What's needed, he tells us, is "unprecedented combinations of brave and focused action by publishers and journalists" (p. 106). He offers 15 ideas that he hopes will help. These include such suggestions as publicly guaranteeing editorial autonomy (p. 106), embracing professional standards (p. 107), and strengthening accountability (p. 108). Each idea is accompanied by examples. While the challenges are daunting, Shapiro finds cause for optimism. In the 48 hours prior to writing some of the final sentences of Chapter 6, he tells us, he learned 10 new things because journalists did their jobs.

This is a book designed to be useful to its readers. From the abstracts at the start of each chapter to the suggestions in the final chapter, this slender volume is a handy and indispensable user manual for both creators and consumers of journalism. It is also a terrific read—not only because of the varied and fascinating content, but because of Shapiro's incredibly snappy writing. While reading the book, I repeatedly laughed aloud at Shapiro's witty juxtapositions and cheeky turns-of-phrase. It is such a delight to read novel, thoughtful material by an expert steeped in the field who also happens to write lively, sizzling prose. This book might just be the most important book you could ever read for fun on a beach!

My only bone to pick with the book is with its characterization of standpoint epistemology—an approach to knowledge originated by feminist philosophers of science in the 1970s and 1980s. Roughly and readily, standpoint theory holds that marginalized "outsiders" have expertise because of the ways in which they are marginalized, and that this expertise can and should contribute to our understanding of the world. (It's more complicated than that, of course, but this is not a philosophy journal.) For a chunk of Chapter 4, and occasionally thereafter, Shapiro identifies standpoint epistemology with so-called "post-truth" approaches to news. Unfortunately, despite the care he takes in his other philosophical discussions in the book, he doesn't actually cite any standpoint theorists. The result is a reductionist and ultimately inaccurate characterization of standpoint theory, not unlike the popular (and populist!) misrepresentation of critical race theory that has become familiar. In reality, standpoint epistemology isn't a post-truth resistance to truth-seeking; rather, it is a careful and responsible method of truth-seeking, purpose-built for contexts in which injustice can

---

[2] Readers may wish to compare the Norwegian standards with the Canadian Association of Journalists' (2023) Ethics Guidelines.

get in the way of the truth.[3] This was the only sour note for me in what was otherwise an engaging, thought-provoking, and revelatory read.

The threats Shapiro describes are daunting, but he offers cause for hope. The history of the press has always been a history of disruption. As long as there has been a free press, journalists have responded to those disruptions, carving out enough freedom to do their jobs and get their stories out. They must continue to do the hard work of fighting for this freedom, as must the public that is affected by the stories journalists tell. *The Disputed Freedoms of a Disrupted Press* is a useful guide on how to do this hard work well.

Shannon Dea (she/they) is a Professor of Philosophy and Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Regina, on Treaty 4 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis/ Michif Nation. Her recent work focuses on academic and expressive freedom. Before she was an academic, she was a community journalist. Email: shannon.dea@uregina.ca

---

REFERENCES

Bowell, T. (n.d.). Feminist standpoint theory. Internet encyclopedia of philosophy. https://iWep.utm.edu/fem-stan/

Canadian Association of Journalists (2023). *Ethics guidelines*. https://caj.ca/wp-content/uploads/Ethics-Guidelines-v2023.pdf

Shapiro, I. (2023). *The disputed freedoms of a disrupted press*. Routledge.

---

[3] T. Bowell (n.d.) is a good primer for readers wishing to learn more about standpoint theory.