Definition of Comprehensive Examinations: Depth

<u>Mapping Agency-led Journalism Reform:</u>
<u>Intercultural Journalism Practice</u>

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Depth Comprehensive Examination

Mapping Agency-led Journalism Reform:
Intercultural Journalism Practice

Overview: Problematic

This comprehensive field is broadly located in Journalism Studies and examines specific proposals for agent-driven reform of intercultural public communication. The rationale behind this approach is a prioritization of agency within a bounded social history: the selection and evaluation of openings for praxis within the broad systemic framework, normative overview, and material context highlighted in Field 1.

To do this, it draws on three disciplines identified by Schudson (1997), Zelizer (2004), and Walh-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch (2009): sociology, political science and cultural studies. These approaches highlight the debate between structure/agency within journalism reform, with the aim of demonstrating the theoretical possibility of an 'agency within structure' model. This reform strategy is then used to situate two categories of proposed expressions of intercultural journalism practice that work to address the challenges raised in Field 1 concerning contemporary media coverage of ethno-cultural/'racialized' communities within liberal-democratic multicultural societies.[1] Focusing on the critique of *professionalization and epistemology*, these two alternative expressions of media production practices—Global Journalism and Peace Journalism—work to address some of the deficiencies identified. To justify this approach and focus, this field definition draws on literature from both Procedural-Competitive and Participatory-Deliberative normative conceptions of democracy (Held, 1996; Strömbäck, 2005; Hackett and Carroll, 2006). While detailed descriptions of these two approaches (and related debates) are bracketed in Field 1, this field definition begins with a brief discussion of their guiding presumptions with regards to their impact on professionalization (production practices) and epistemology (operating logics and approach to knowledge production) in the field of journalism (Bourdieu, 2005). This field's guiding questions are:

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[1] These deficiencies being the three critiques discussed in Field 1: citizenship; professionalization and epistemology; material reality.

- *What professional and epistemological proposals for intercultural journalism practice exist?*

- *How do considerations of structure and agency impact the practical expressions of these reforms, and what constitutes the enabling environment for such a normative project?*

Part I: Approach Rationale

The field begins with a brief discussion situating the institutional field of journalism and the agents working within it. As noted above, this summary draws on Zelizer's (2004) and Walh-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch's (2009) overviews of the field of journalism studies and Schudson's (1997) discussion of *The Sociology of News Production Revisited*. Given the interdisciplinary nature of Journalism Studies, this field definition includes readings from three disciplines: organizational sociology, political science and cultural analysis. These three disciplines, which are viewed as interrelated, are used to orient the relationship between structure and agency in the field of journalism, as well as offer an overarching organizational schema for the comprehensive field.

This discussion is further framed with reference to the two normative democratic positions discussed in Field 1: Procedural-Competitive and Participatory-Deliberative democracy (Anderson and Ward, Ch. 3, 2007). Briefly, **Procedural-Competitive** approaches to democracy normatively view journalism as an institutionalized means of communication designed primarily as a means of transmitting information to the electorate to inform their actions in periodic public elections, as a barometer of 'public opinion' via polling results and *vox populi* interviews, as a 'watchdog' against the excesses of elected public officials (McNair, 2000; Bennett, 2005, Ch. 1; Strömbäck, 2005; McQuail, 2005; Hackett and Carroll, 2006; Anderson, 2007; Gastil, 2008; McNair, 2009). The presumptions inherent in this normative approach view power as pluralistic; that is, as dispersed throughout multiple centres within society. It is redistributed across groups and individuals through a system of institutionalized checks and balances, one of which is the media system.

Participatory-Deliberative approaches, while recognizing the problems and solutions identified by Procedure-Competitive democrats, go further in their considerations of challenges and proposals for reform. They proceed from different

normative goals for the role of media in society. Normative proposals from this perspective ideally aim to construct a media system as an open forum(s) that individuals and (historically contingent, overlapping and fluid) groups use to deliberate with elected officials about public policy (Benhabib, 2008; Gastil, 2008). Organized broadly around a 'public sphere(s)' perspective (which encompasses many variants on Habermas's original conception, as discussed in Field 1), this approach presumes a more actively engaged citizenry, and a media system (and accompanying values of professionalism) that is more open to a broader range of voices and communicative styles than the Procedural-Competitive approach (Calhoun, 1992; Garnham, 1992; Splichal, 1993; Gastil, 2008, Ch. 3). Variations on this argument hold that this restructuring of the public sphere approach must be accompanied by broader redistributive mechanisms in order to be effective (see Field 1).

Critical approaches from this perspective view the political-economic organization of society as structured in dominance (Hackett and Zhao, Ch. 7, 1998; Entman, 2000; Couldry and Curran, 2003; Curran, 2003, Ch. 4; Hackett and Carroll, 2006). As discussed in Field 1, these proponents argue that power is exercised by concentrations of capital (economic, political, cultural, etc) that use media systems to maintain their dominant position in a hierarchically structured society.

Despite these differences, advocates from both normative democratic perspectives propose reforms that include elements of structure and agency (Curran, 2003, Ch. 5; Couldry, 2003). This comprehensive field definition takes the position of an 'agency-within-structure' mode of analysis: holding that structural change is in part achieved by the actions of agents working within a given institutional field. This approach views reforms of journalism practice as existing in dialectical tension with the agents working within structural constraints, thus recognizing the mutually constituting relationship between structure and agency. This follows Bourdieu's arguments that agents working within the institutional structure and operational logic of a given field can work to effect structural change (Benson, 2006; Neveu, 2007). In short, the aim of this field definition is to explore research that supports an 'agency within structure' model of journalism reform, and to outline the contours of potential reform strategies that work to address the problems of media, power and democracy in liberal-democratic multicultural societies identified in Field 1.

Part II: Structure and Agency in the Journalistic Field

The **second** part of the field moves from mapping broad descriptions and critiques of the news media system to a consideration of specific reform strategies. These proposals aim to address some of the shared deficiencies identified by both Competitive-Procedural and Participatory-Deliberative normative approaches to democracy: issues of access and representation, commercialization and lack of social responsibility. Building on these shared challenges, it further applies the critiques and proposed solutions of Participatory-Deliberative democracy to achieve broader substantive reform with regards to multiculturalism/'racial' representation in media.

This section necessarily begins with a consideration of the balance of structure and agency (Walsh, 1998) available to agents working within the field of journalism. By highlighting studies that demonstrate both continuity and change within journalism practice, this section aims to identify points of entry for reform proposals. As noted, this section argues that an 'agency within structure' approach allows for the possibility of progressive structural reform within already existing institutional fields (Benson, 2006; Hackett, 2006; Neveau, 2006; Schudson and Anderson, 2009). Key questions considered in this section are:

- *Given the problems in the present media system identified in Field 1, what strategies are available to progressive reformers? Is there potential for progressive change within the already existing media system, or are broader structural reforms necessary?*
- *What are some specific arguments and critiques that have been made with regard to specific factors (news determinants) that impact the news production process?*

The goal of this section is to situate broader considerations of the link between media and power within the specific context of journalism practice. To do this, it draws on various 'news determinants' (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996) that impact the professional practices and epistemology of the field of journalism.

When considering and critiquing **professional practices**, research has suggested that the individual-level traits of media workers such as demographic factors or personal backgrounds fail to have much impact on journalism practices, given that new employees are quickly socialized into newsroom practices and values (Weaver and Wilhoit, cited in

Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Deuze, 2007). This offers evidence for the possibility of agent-driven change to reform the institutional structure of the field of journalism, since it highlights how individual news workers can separate morphological characteristics from their professional practices. It follows academic research that points to the effect of organizational constraints and professional norms (Bennett, Ch. 5, 2005; O'Neill and Harcup, 2009) as regulating and guiding journalist behaviour. By working within these historically contingent, socially constructed (structural) constraints, individual journalists can exercise a degree of agency in their work: and in a dialectical process of continuity and change, can work to reform them 'from the inside'. This serves as a clear illustration of the possibility of a 'structure in agency' approach to journalism reform.

Evidence for the potential of agent-driven reform of professional practices is explored in two contexts: cultural studies and media sociology. A cultural studies approach works to uncover the underlying values and logics that guide the production of news products (Gans, 1978; Allen, 2004; O'Neill and Harcup, 2009). From a Competitive-Procedural approach, these practices are seen as guiding principles for ethical professional practice – as helping journalists fulfill their 'watchdog' function (Kovach and Rosensteil, 2001). However, critics note that historically, news values also serve to promote problematic values such as consumerism and ethnocentrism. Therefore, critics argue that journalists should work to reform production practices and routines in a way that addresses these problems (Gans, 1979, Rosen, 2000; Allen, 2004).

Representing the **epistemology** critique, objectivity is seen as an important site for cultural reform within journalism practice (Hackett and Zhao, Ch. 5, 1998; Allan, Ch. 3, 2005). Both Competitive-Procedural and Participatory-Deliberative democrats have moved towards a critique of traditional objectivity in journalism, and some overlap exists in terms of their belief in the possibility of reform through new forms of practice and education. For example, some argue that 'pragmatic objectivity' is a methodological solution towards news production practice that aims to overcome the excesses of traditional objectivity (Ward, 2004). Participatory-Deliberative democrats similarly note the historical contingency of the concept of objectivity (Allan, Ch. 1, 2005) and the epistemological and practical problems involved in its implementation, but further expand their critique to encompass broader institutional logics and political-economic considerations (Hackett and Zhao, Ch. 2 and Ch. 3, 1998) as well as issues of citizenship

and public involvement in multicultural societies (see for example Avison and Meadows, 2000). This discussion encompasses a 'de-Westernization' of journalism studies (Wasserman and de Beer, 2009) and a recognition of hybridized conceptions of news production practice (Allan, Ch.4, 2005), as well as the ability of working journalists to exercise agency in promoting structural reforms of the process of objectivity (Hackett and Zhao, Ch. 8, 1998; Bennett, Ch. 8, 2005).

A media sociology approach locates its consideration of professional practices in the context of daily news production processes. Such studies explain media routines through an understanding of the pressures of organizational requirements. For example, from this perspective, objectivity is employed by journalists as a "strategic ritual" to avoid critique, and information is collected in a "news net" subject to constraints of time and place (Tuchman, 1978). Source-media interactions also impact daily news production (Erickson et al, 1989; Bennett, Ch. 4, 2005; Hackett and Carroll, Ch. 3, 2006; Berkowitz, 2009), and critics note that an over-reliance on elite sources for the majority of news results in an over-representation of powerful groups and a constraint on the range of debate represented in the news, creating a "hierarchy of credibility" (Allan, 2004). That said, although the actions of individual news-producing agents are undertaken within the structural boundaries of institutionalized media organizations, professional news routines are subject to agency-driven historical change as well as countervailing pressures towards continuity (Curran, 2002; Becker and Vlad, 2009).

Research indicates there are many examples of indirect structural impacts on agent-driven news production processes. These include the effect of technologies and institutionally-mandated work arrangements (Deuze, 2007), as well as the impact of ownership structures and professional socialization through company policies, codes of ethics, allocation of resources (time, technology, money), professional self-regulation (Ward, 2009), discursive formats (Bird and Dardenne, 2009) and day-to-day socialization (Tuchman, 1978; Anderson, 2007). This is one reason many reform approaches have worked to develop an immanent critique of news practices, using the field's internal logic as justification for change. As well, despite these indirect structural pressures, creative agents have found space for resistance, for example in their function as 'gatekeepers' of selecting the information that is transformed into news (Shoemaker et al, 2009).

External factors also serve to impact news production. These political economic factors include government policies (McChesney, 2004; Brandenburg, 2007; McChesney, 2008) and advertising pressures (Bettig, 2002), which impact the agency of journalists. At a more micro level, journalists engage with sources who work to influence the news through sophisticated Public Relations techniques. That said, the source-journalists relationship is best described as mutually constituting: external sources must also conform to the 'rules of the game' and modify their activities to fit the constraints of the field of media (Bourdieu, 2006). Journalists can also choose to ignore or challenge these external pressures, although depending on their influence, may suffer personal or professional penalties for doing so.

The final news determinant discussed by Shoemaker and Reese is ideology. Building on some strains of Participatory-Deliberative democracy's application of Gramsci's notions of hegemony to analyses of media, this argument holds that a dominant (hegemonic) ideology can serve to restrict the range of debate available in the news media (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Curran, 2002; Allan, 2004; Hackett and Carroll, 2006). At the same time, hegemony is recognized as undergoing a constant process of change as it works to incorporate and reject counter-hegemonic processes. Through this continuous dialectical process of negotiation, progressive agents can work to reform structures through influencing hegemonic ideologies.

In summary, despite the strong structural influences of the news determinants outlined, much evidence indicates that agents have opportunities to enact (limited) reform of media structures. Research points to the conclusion that journalism practice, like all institutionalized activities, is not a reified set of practices, norms and beliefs; rather it is the product of an ongoing process of social construction, and through the activity of agents working within the field, constantly undergoes change as well as renewal.

Part III: Approaches to Agent-Driven Journalism Reform

The **third** section moves from a discussion of the structure/agency debate within journalism to focus on two streams of proposed intercultural journalism reform. This discussion is foregrounded by recognizing the contested nature of a central concept: that is, the presumptions embedded within an articulation of **intercultural communication.** These presumptions are explored in Fraser's discussion of the necessary link between

'recognition' and 'redistribution' when formulating social justice-oriented normative theory (Fraser, 2003). In evaluating the recognition approach to social justice, she notes the importance of addressing the issue of material inequality (redistribution), and its connection to communicative action (Fraser, 2003). Fraser convincingly argues that only through foregrounding power imbalances and equal participation and presuming an ethic of redistribution and material equality can meaningful recognition be achieved by all. This is contrasted with symbolic-oriented approaches to recognition that foreground communicative action at the expensive of material redistribution, and if not handled carefully, can fall into the trap of universalizing differences and ignoring power imbalances—and argument raised for example by Henry in her critique of Canada's multiculturalism policies (Henry, 2002).

The two reform streams explored in this field are: **Global Journalism** and **Peace Journalism**. These two reform proposals are chosen because they address some of the key critiques raised by media scholars in terms of the challenges of multicultural news production practices, as well as contain the possibility of incorporating Fraser's (2003) approach towards amalgamating redistribution and recognition. Both streams are theoretically rooted in the Participatory-Deliberative tradition of normative democracy, and both view a properly organized media system as addressing issues of power and inequality, as well as of cross-cultural translation/recognition, with the aim of ensuring all affected parties have equal voice in the democratic process of deliberating public policy (Bailey and Harindranath, 2006; Glasser et al, 2009). The broader philosophical and political context around these issues are explored in detail in Field 1; this section instead turns to examine the practical expressions and proposals for journalism practices that aim to fill these normative goals (see Benson, 2005 for an application of this argument to US journalism; Downing and Husband, Ch. 9, 2005).

Approaches to Reform I: Global Journalism

As defined in this field, **Global Journalism** builds on findings from interpretive anthropology (Geertz, 1983) to propose a globalized conception of intercultural journalism practice (Cottle, 2009). This approach focuses on journalism practice that self-reflexively reflects on the shifting/hybrid/disaporic nature of cultural/ethnic identity, and through a relational approach to journalistic storytelling, presumes the possibility of

shared points of contact between groups and a shared form of 'intercultural communication' (Husband and Downing, Ch. 6 and Ch. 9, 2005). This perspective follows Geertz's interpretive anthropology (1983), which holds that it is epistemologically and methodologically possible to translate meaning between cultures. Using careful observation, adequate context and clear communication, agents working within the parameters of a given field can apply their expertise to represent another group's point of view within a medium of communication (Dervin and Clark, 1993; Husband and Downing, Ch. 6, 2005; Kraidy and Murphy, 2008; Benhabib, 2008). This conception of Global Journalism employs elements of (but is distinct from) Berglez's definition, which restricts its focus on a form of communication that serves to link local to global processes, highlighting interconnections and relationships between those modalities rather than multicultural society and intercultural communication (Berglez, 2008).

Critics note the dangers of this approach, given its potential to ignore power discrepancies, essentialize group identities, exclude voices, and reproduce historical relations of inequality (Smith, 1999). To address these issues, Global Journalism takes into consideration critiques of 'Orientalism' (Said, 1978) and 'racial discourse' (Hall, 1995; Li, 2007) that illuminate the (at times hidden) variables of power/dominance within communicative forms. See Field 1 for a more developed discussion of these issues.

Despite these challenges, proponents argue that in well-practiced Global Journalism, differences can be bracketed through a self-reflexive consideration of power/domination, including an emphasis on relational forms of issue perception, organizational routines, discursive structures and political-economic structural constraints of involved agents (Bailey and Harindranath, 2006; Berglez, 2008; Glasser et al, 2009). This approach is reflected in several specific reform strategies.

A growing body of research promotes the concept of a 'global journalism ethics' (Ward, 2005 and 2009), which self-reflexively foregrounds the notion of a globalized conception of journalistic norms and works to apply pressure on agents working within the journalistic field through the creation of standardized codes of conduct and enforceable laws (Youm, 2009). However, to be effective, these conceptions must also take into consideration the overarching political-economic, structural and epistemic conditions they are embedded within (Zhao and Hackett, 2004).

Some reform-minded news outlets are working to foster intercultural stories that proceed from a normative ideal of 'racial comity' as opposed to 'animosity' or 'ambivalence' (Entman and Rojecki, 2000). Education is one route that mainstream news organizations are taking to develop more globalized approaches to news production practices. Attempts are made to 'de-mainstream' binary oppositions in reporting the 'other' (Terzis, 2008) and to conceptualize the 'other' using alternative discursive practices (Fürsich, 2002). Downing and Husband summarize this approach in their discussion of the application of the insights of intercultural communication to news production practices (Downing and Husband, 2005).

'Ethnic' and 'Diasporic' media (that is, non-mainstream commercial or public sector media) (Gabriel, Ch. 1, 1998; Atton, 2009) are essential to any reform project aimed at constructing a self-reflexive form of intercultural global journalism practice. Therefore, this field incorporates several case studies of ethnic media. Broad summary studies include work by Cottle (2000), Mahtani (2001, in the Canadian context) and Wilson et al (2003, in the US context). Bredin (forthcoming) traces the connection between indigenous media and alternative media, noting that the two forms share several similar normative goals, including a willingness to employ a variety of discursive formats and a commitment to participatory engagement with local communities and individuals.

More specific case studies include Avison and Meadows, who trace the history of the Aboriginal newspaper sector in Canada and Australia, noting the importance of these 'indigenous public spheres' in engaging with a broader 'mainstream public sphere' about issues concerning Aboriginal communities (2000). Jacobs (2000) makes a similar argument in a study about African American newspapers and their interaction with mainstream media during periods of civil society 'crisis'. However, such an 'engagement-oriented' approach must involve careful self-reflection on the part of the 'ethnic' journalists to ensure they are not inadvertently socialized into 'mainstream' media practices, values and epistemologies (Wilson, 2000). Riggins (1992) similarly notes the importance of ethnic minority media production practices in supporting a viable form of cultural survival, and the challenges against tendencies of assimilation into mainstream news processes and majority cultures. A similar argument is made by Karim (2003) with regards to the balance between hybridized diasporic communities and

majority groups, and Guyot (2006) who explores the interaction between minority language media and the 'mainstream' public sphere.

Approaches to Reform II: Peace Journalism

The second reform approach explored in this field is **Peace Journalism**. Drawing from Peace and Conflict Studies, this strategy examines attempts to encourage a self-reflexive form of journalism practice that aims to reform news conventions to encourage global consensus building and understanding among parties as opposed to historical forms of journalism practice that tend to dichotomize and exacerbate conflict. Shinar argues that Peace Journalism can lead to better reporting, strengthen ethical values in the media, contribute to the public sphere and widen scholarly and media horizons (Shinar, 2007). Tehranian notes that Peace Journalism can be used to help inform a system of global media ethics, though to be successful, it must be enabled through supportive political-economic structures (Tehranian, 2002).

This section's fundamental guiding presumption follows work by media scholars in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies (Becker, 1982; Hackett, 1991). This research holds that the media, along with other forms of communication, are implicated in escalations of 'material' conflict (Spencer, 2005). This argument can be extended to include cross-cultural conflicts (LeBaron and Pillay, 2006). In journalism, this tendency towards conflict is due in part to journalism conventions that serve to discursively represent reified groups that are positioned in binary opposition to one another in a 'zero-sum' struggle with one another. Rather than working to cultivate space for consensus building, subordinate voices and cultural differences in ways that promote dialogue and compromise, news production practices tend to harden dichotomies, emphasize differences and escalate conflict (Spencer, 2005; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005; Ross, 2009).

Critics have pointed out possible shortcomings to the Peace Journalism strategy. Some focus on issues of power/domination – the necessity for an adequate consideration of 'social justice' as opposed to symbolic recognition, as noted (and addressed, via Fraser's 2003 arguments) above. Some proponents of a 'social justice' approach question whether consensus-building is always a laudable (or achievable) goal, given longstanding structural material inequalities between communities. Instead of promoting

dialogue and negotiation, these critics argue that redistributive justice should be based on difference rather than consensus (Hanitzsch, 2005; Hamelink, 2008). However, proponents of Peace Journalism note that it recognizes the problem of structural violence (Becker, 1981) and recognizes the need for material redistribution as well as recognition, and rather than 'false consensus' calls for conflict transformation (Peleg, 2006).

Critics also raise practical critiques, including the potential for Peace Journalism to become 'advocacy journalism', thus undermining the credibility of the field as a whole, as well as its unrealistic belief in the power of media effects in their ability to achieve material change—and the ability of journalists to exercise agency (Hanitzsch, 2005). They also point out that it is not the role of journalists to engage in policy decisions or peace-making activities—and by doing so in practicing Peace Journalism, they may be redirecting pressure that should be applied to the politicians and officials (Hanitzsch, 2004). Finally, critiques point out that Peace Journalists assume powerful, linear media effects—that changing media practices will affect material change, which is a questionable assumption for many (ibid).

In response to these practical considerations, proponents point to the need for Peace Journalists to maintain professional standards of accuracy and neutrality, as well as broaden the scope of debate and source access in the news (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005). These proponents note that Peace Journalism does not need to entail linear media effects, but rather acts a form of mediation that expands the field of conflict and renders visible its logic and effects—in short, it helps open policy options and issues to public discussion, rather than 'forcing' direct action on the part of decision-makers (Spencer, 2005; ibid).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this field definition highlights key issues to consider when proposing a substantive form of agent-focused intercultural journalism practice. After summarizing some of the structural, political and practical challenges of achieving and proposing intercultural journalism reform, it moved to focus on two potential strategies for change: Global Journalism and Peace Journalism. The two normative proposals for journalism practice outlined both apply arguments raised by Participatory-Deliberative democrats and social justice theorists (understood as the necessity to consider both recognition and

redistributive justice with regards to intercultural conflicts). Building on these

arguments, the field definition highlighted and explored relevant debates and problems

inherent in these two proposed reform strategies.

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