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NOTES FROM THE MOTLEY OFFICES

At the Motley Undergraduate Journal, we are not only researchers, writers, editors, and reviewers: we are storytellers. We understand the importance and value of continuing both written and oral accounts; it preserves our humanity and knowledge of the past. Through storytelling, we can concurrently pay tribute to our collective past and look to the future with hope and understanding. As Communications scholars, we understand how the stories we tell are greatly altered by both the teller and what is included and excluded from the narrative. Far too often, we see Indigenous histories obscured or even entirely erased. At the Motley Journal, we hope to actively work against this practice and advocate for Indigenous rights and freedoms. Our journal was founded at the University of Calgary and continues its legacy of creation on these grounds. As such, as a community of people who teach, learn, and work on this land, we owe a debt of gratitude and honour to Moh'kinsstis and the traditional Treaty 7 territory and oral practices of the Blackfoot confederacy, which is composed of the Siksika, Kainai, and Piikani. We also acknowledge the Îyâxe Nakoda which includes the Bearspaw, Chiniki, and Wesley First Nations as well as the Tsuut'ina nations. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 within the historical Northwest Métis homeland. We hope you, the reader, take every opportunity to educate yourself on both Indigenous histories and practices, as well as the current-day issues that impact your specific region and its peoples.

Our journal owes a great debt of gratitude to the faculty of the Department of Communications, Media, and Film at the University of Calgary. In addition to generously volunteering their time to contribute to the review process, these wonderful people tirelessly promoted the Motley and were responsible for nominating all of the papers in this issue. A special thanks is owed to Dr. Maria Bakardjieva, Professor and Chair of Communication and Media Studies at the University of Calgary, as well as the Editor-in-Chief of the Motley, who provided direction and thoughtful support throughout the entire review and publication process. I would also like to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of Dr. Maria Victoria Guglietti who continues to nominate the majority of our submissions and always offers insightful guidance.

I would like to extend a special 'thank you' to the other professors who nominated and reviewed the student works you will soon read: Dr. Arti Modgill, Dr. Julia Chan, Dr. Maria Victoria Guglietti, Dr. Dawn Johnston, Dr. Monique Solomon, Dr. Marcia Epstein, Dr. Tamara Shepherd, graduate students Claire Hadford and Emilie Charette, and doctoral student Shena Kaul. We would have no journal without the support of those who see the potential in students, put their names forward, and donate their time to assess these works.

Of course, no journal exists without authors. We are lucky enough to have an incredibly strong team of student writers with fresh ideas and the generosity to share them. Their talent and dedication make this journal what it is. As the name suggests, the Motley is composed of a great diversity of people, interests, roles, and worldviews.

The Motley is freely and publicly accessible thanks to the Public Knowledge Project's, Open Journal Systems (OJS) platform operating out of Simon Fraser University. OJS allows academic journals to freely utilize their publication software and training resources, with a mission of making academic knowledge accessible to all citizens. The entire OJS library team at the University of Calgary offered the journal team invaluable assistance with building the site, resolving bugs, and providing continuous guidance.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Melissa Morris, the founder of the Motley. Not only did she spend countless hours training me, but she always did so with kindness, patience, and humour. Even after graduating, she was always there to answer any question I had about ISSNs, copyright, or how to properly format page numbers. There is truly nothing that she cannot accomplish; building an academic journal in less than a year from the ground up while being a full-time student is a testament to that. To read the Motley is to glimpse the love and dedication Melissa poured into this journal.

Lastly, I want to thank you, the reader. Your engagement promotes the continued elevation of Communications discourse. On behalf of the entire team here at the Motley, I sincerely hope that you enjoy our most recent issue. A great deal of time, love, effort, and even a few tears went into the creation of the work you are reading now. We hope you feel curious, educated, and inspired. We can't thank you enough.

Skye Baxter, Managing Editor

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF, MARIA BAKARDJIEVA

The Motley is now out of its toddler stage. This is its issue #3! It is walking confidently on its own feet and its eagerness to explore the world has grown exponentially. To produce one issue of a brand new journal could be seen as a stroke of luck, the second issue is a proof of commitment, and the third issue marks an established and reliable track. Our Motley is turning into an institution. Its name has become familiar. It comes up in conversations; undergraduate students have it at the back of their minds when they take up course projects; professors think of it when they read an impressively strong paper. The Motley, in other words, is now a recognized member of our community and a valuable participant in its activities.

Equally important, our talented managing editors have put in place effective organization to ensure that the processes bringing consecutive issues into existence will roll on unabated. The heart and soul of this organization are people – the curious, innovative, aspiring members of the reviewing and editing teams, students who are determined to make the most of their university years. Working on the Motley, they work on their own professional skills and do it in a fun and supportive environment, in collaboration with peers, and in consultation with professors. In the end, there is something they can show for these efforts – a beautiful new journal issue. A win for them, and a win for our academic community!

The current issue of the Motley invites us to reflect on two questions critical for our tumultuous media environment: the representation of minorities as both objects and producers of cultural content and the changing practices of journalism that make the space of news generation more inclusive and at the same time fiercely contested. The published articles clearly demonstrate our undergraduate authors' engagement with the challenges posed by the implementation of equity, diversity and inclusion policies by media organizations. They highlight problematic stereotypical and post-racial representation practices permeating popular culture. The authors' critical awareness is effectively informed by central concepts of media theory that serve as tools for insightful analysis. The novel developments in the field of news production and distribution, for their part, have compelled our authors to scrutinize the blurring of boundaries between professional journalists and their audiences. Wisely, both the participatory possibilities and the severe limitations imposed by corporate social media platforms are taken into account. A similarly nuanced investigation illuminates the two sides of breast cancer awareness campaigns where survivors and interested corporate entities compete in shaping the narrative.

To put it in a few words, The Motley bravely throws itself at some of the most complex puzzles that plague our media-saturated culture. It stands out as a meeting place for young minds determined to tackle these puzzles. It serves as an effective interface between vexing social concerns and academic enquiry, between educational self-development and useful contribution to the real life of the community. Let's wish Issue 3 smooth sailing into this exciting space!

Dr. Maria Bakardjieva, Editor-in-Chief

THE EDITORIAL TEAM



MARIA BAKARDJIEVA

Editor in Chief

Dr. Maria Bakardjieva (she/her), Professor and Chair in Communication and Media Studies at the University of Calgary. Her research examines the social construction of communication technologies and the use of digital media in various cultural and practical contexts with a focus on user agency, critical reflexivity and emancipation. She has numerous publications in leading journals and influential anthologies. The books she has authored and co-edited

include *Internet Society: The Internet in Everyday Life* (2005), *Socialbots and Their Friends: Digital Media and the Automation of Sociality* (2017), *Digital Media and the Dynamics of Civil Society: Retooling Citizenship in New European Democracies* (2021), and *How Canadians Communicate* (2004 and 2007). Between 2010 and 2013, she served as the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. Her current projects investigate the role digital media plays in citizen engagement and democratic participation. Dr. Bakardjieva teaches courses in communication theory and research methodology, communication technology and society, digital media and democracy. She works to promote undergraduate research activities in Communication and Media Studies and engages in knowledge mobilization and community outreach intended to advance the public understanding of issues related to Communication and Media Studies.



SKYE BAXTER

Managing Editor

Skye (she/her) is currently in her third year of a combined degree, studying Communications, Political Science, and Statistics. Over the summer, she was awarded the PURE Research Grant from the University of Calgary to conduct a political critical discourse analysis, which sparked her love of research and academic writing. With a special interest in political communication, feminist media studies, rhetorical analysis, the politics of representation,

and literary studies, Skye takes a great interest in understanding the role that communication plays in social identity and collective discourse. She eventually hopes to pursue a career that combines her passion for writing, research, and community involvement.

**MELISSA MORRIS****Communications Development Specialist**

Melissa Morris (she/her) is the founding Managing Editor for The Motley. She graduated with a BA (Honours) in Communication and Media Studies in Spring 2023. In addition to her role with The Motley, she is the Director of Student Affairs for the Students in Communications Club. In the first two years of her undergraduate degree, she published two papers in the Agora Undergraduate Journal, and won a Student Writing Award. Her Honours thesis

Cottagecore and Colonialism: an Analysis of Visual Discourse in the Cottagecore Aesthetic Subculture delved into political ideology and subcultural identity expression through visual methods such as fashion. Her thesis presentation placed second at the 2023 Arts Undergraduate Research Symposium. Her other areas of academic interest include intersectional feminist research, queer studies, and governmental policy concerning communication and media. Her experience publishing and editing with the Agora Journal spurred her passion for highlighting the ideas of student authors. Melissa has a passion for building community and empowering students to share the depth and variety of their knowledge with others. She plans to pursue a career that brings together her passion for building community, research, and global affairs.

**RUNE BHATTACHARYA****Peer Editor & Peer Reviewer**

Rune Bhattacharya's (he/him) career goal is to pursue a Master's degree in Communications. In his free time, Rune is an avid reader and collector of comic books and graphic novels. His main academic interests include political communication, and researching misinformation and disinformation in right-wing media. Rune is fascinated by the world of conspiracy theories and his guilty pleasure is to analyze and research fringe conspiracy theories. His

favourite food items are vegan and vegetarian. He also has a tail-less cat named "Oni" who is his best friend and companion. Rune feels very happy to be able to contribute to the Motley Undergraduate Journal's continued success.

**NATASHA BODNARCHUK****Peer Reviewer & Peer Editor**

Natasha Bodnarchuk (she/her) is a peer reviewer and copy editor for The Motley Undergraduate Journal. She is in her fourth year completing her degree in communications and media studies with Honours. Natasha's autoethnography, "I Was There Too..." was published in the second issue of the Motley and is about challenging aspects of digital efficiency and practicality. When Natasha's not studying, she can be

found reading, writing, or doing something outside. She is thrilled to get to read more students' work in the third issue.

**BRANDON EBY****Peer Reviewer**

Brandon Eby (they/them) is a trans nonbinary 4th year undergraduate student in the department of Sociology at the university of Calgary. They have participated in independent research through their work on the paper 'The Role of Antiziganism in Brexit', have participated in research projects as a research assistant, and have participated in campus community building through numerous clubs. Eby

has also been involved in campus organizing around food security efforts with Food Justice Now and Students for Direct Action. They are planning on pursuing a master's degree in Sociology after their undergraduate degree. They are interested in Activist informed research, with a special focus on decoloniality, challenging and disrupting existing power structures, the lived experience of Roma in Canada and Ukraine, and Queerness. Eby aspires to participate in Community informed, activist sociology, and is heavily inspired by decolonial and activist scholars, such as Margareta Matache, Marquis Bey, David Graeber, and Sara Ahmed.

**LUKE POMEROY PYE****Peer Reviewer & Peer Editor**

Luke (he/they) is a third-year Media Communications student, and Assistant Researcher at the University of Calgary, and is a proud citizen of the Metis Nation of Alberta region 3. He works with the Motley as a reviewer, editor, and previously an author. He is inspired by the opportunity to give undergraduate communications students a platform to showcase their exceptional work. Luke is working towards a

degree in media communications and has also started pursuing a minor in museum and heritage studies and hopes to use what he has learned to spread awareness of indigenous issues and to showcase the Metis culture.

**TAYLOR VAN EYK****Peer Reviewer**

Taylor (she/her) is a 4th-year communications and new media student at the University of Calgary. She is Anishinaabe from southern Ontario and currently pursuing a career in human relations. As a peer reviewer at the Motley Undergraduate Journal, she contributes her knowledge of racialized, culturally sensitive scholarship to help determine sound and effective studies. In her free time, she explores

themes of First Nations' feminisms and personal growth through visual art. Assisted by her 5-pound Pomeranian, Lana, she hopes to make informed art, contribute to spaces of Indigenous knowledge within communications, and earn a master's degree in the coming year.

**SEBASTIAN VASQUEZ GUTIERREZ****Peer Reviewer**

Sebastian (he/him) is a copyeditor and peer reviewer who started in the fall of 2023. He has always been interested in Investigative journalism; his inspiration began growing up in Colombia, where he saw how corruption can damage a society and wanted to make things right. Sebastian wrote for different newspapers where he talked about his struggles, such as being an International student at UofC and interviewed other students in my exact position, which shaped the inspiration behind his work as well, after being part of an investigation journalism program at the Queensland University of Technology where a group of journalists investigated the gambling industry in Australia where they infiltrated different casinos and the corruption that goes behind the industry, made him passionate about various types of Investigative Journalism, where he hopes to pursue a career.

THE AUTHORS



HANNAH ADRIANO

Colouring History: A Critical Analysis of Racial Representation in Bridgerton

Hannah (she/her) is a third-year student at the University of Calgary with a major in Communications and Media Studies and a minor in Business. She has a strong interest in uncovering the multi-layered, complex meanings of representations in popular culture and dissecting how hegemonic discourses manifest themselves in

contemporary media landscapes. Hannah's piece in The Motley analyzes the representation of race in Bridgerton by exploring ideas of post-racism and Orientalism. Being a fan of both the book and television series, Hannah was interested in the way the show reproduces prevailing discourses in a subtle way. She is currently working as a communications intern for WEDO Canada and hopes to pursue a career that intertwines her passions in writing, digital media arts, and creativity.



COLE CHALLAND

An Analysis of the Social Construction of Breast Cancer Awareness in Media and Cause-Related Marketing

Cole Challand (he/him) is a fourth-year student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Communication and Media Studies and minoring in History. His research interest focuses on Albertan oil and gas companies' sustainability reports and their framing of corporate social responsibility and environmental, social, and governance among others.

Cole's career goal is to apply his Communication and Media Studies degree to a job in the field of ESG. His contribution to the Motley analyzes breast cancer activism's emphasis on awareness and the lived experience as a survivor, not a patient, applying this analysis to media examples. Cole was inspired by his Mom who is a breast cancer survivor and he wanted to analyze how being a survivor is communicated in media.

**SHEROOG KUBUR*****Clowning around in journalism: Exploring local journalistic practices defined by yyc.clowns***

Sheroog Kubur (she/her) is a third year political science and communications student with an interest in journalism, political theory and the intersection between the two. Her submission, *Clowning around in journalism*, was inspired from her experiences growing up in Calgary and witnessing trends in how information is disseminated among younger

demographics in the absence of strong local news outlets. This research inspired her further interests in journalism studies and how global trends manifests on a local level.

**DAMAN PREET SINGH*****A Dummy's Guide to using Instagram like a REAL Journalist***

Daman (He/They) is a second-year student in the Communication, Media, and Film Department at the University of Calgary. Their research interests are in media representation, creative arts, journalism studies, and pop culture and he is looking forward to exploring more research possibilities as their degree goes. They are also keen on

journalism and photography as storytelling mediums and have been exploring different forms of expression in the latter. Right now, he's working as one of the Visuals Editor at the university's student-run news publication, *The Gauntlet*.

**THOMAS TRI*****Beyond Norms and Realities: Reading Queer in Everything Everywhere All at Once***

Thomas (he/him) is fourth-year Bachelor of Social Work student with minors in Global Development Studies and Gender and Sexuality Studies alongside a certificate in Pluralism and Global Citizenship. His research interests are in migration and diaspora studies, queer politics, and postcolonial studies. Thomas is incredibly passionate about

participatory and community-based research where he is involved in research projects at the Centre for Immigrant Research and the Disability and Sexuality Lab. He hopes to pursue a career combining both academia and activism in the future.

**DARNELL WYKE*****Representing the Underrepresented: Exploring Diversity in CBC News Media and the Role of Self-Identifying Journalists in Disrupting Traditional Practices***

Darnell Wyke (he/him) is a first time author with the Motley Journal. As a 5th year undergraduate student at the University of Calgary, majoring in Communications and Media Studies, Darnell is both dedicated and accomplished, appearing on the Dean's List in three consecutive years.

Throughout his studies, Darnell has demonstrated a passion to further his understanding of how marginalized groups are represented in the media and Darnell's desire to make an impact on improving opportunities for diverse populations inspired his PURE Research study of his own design, included in this edition of the Motley. Whether it be through professional or academic pursuits, Darnell plans to continue his commitment to improving opportunities for marginalized populations following his graduation.

Colouring History: A Critical Analysis of Racial Representation in Bridgerton

Hannah Adriano

Abstract

Since its release, the Netflix show, *Bridgerton*, has been a hit series among its mass audiences as it harnesses an average of 103,550,000 views per season and currently holds fourth place in Netflix's most popular English-language series (Tudum, 2024). The show has gained immense popularity not only because of its captivating plotlines but also because of the diverse cast of characters placed within the Regency Era. From this, it is critical to dissect and understand how race is represented within the show to discern the discourses being perpetuated to its viewers. Throughout this essay, I will employ Stuart Hall's theory of representation and the politics of signification to unpack the racial representation within the Netflix show, *Bridgerton*, and how it reproduces colour-blind casting, interracial relationships, and dark versus light symbolism to perpetuate post-racial and Orientalist discourses. This analysis explores how colour-blind casting sustains post-racial discourses in the guise of escapist media, which strips the Other of their lived experience. Moreover, it highlights how the depiction of interracial relationships within the show contributes to both post-racial and Orientalist discourses by placing the Occident over the Orient, and disregarding the prejudice often faced by interracial couples during that period. It further reveals how dark versus light symbolism is embedded throughout the interactions between multiple characters, which elicits the disruption of the white imaginary by Black individuals. As the show progresses and continues to release seasons that reach such large audiences, it is crucial to analyze what discourses surrounding race are being perpetuated and its potential impact on reinforcing stereotypes and misrepresenting marginalized communities.

Keywords

Representation, politics of signification, race, post-racism, Orientalism, *Bridgerton*

Introduction

Netflix's hit show, *Bridgerton*, has gained immense popularity for its captivating romantic and dramatic plotlines. The period drama series is based on the books written by Julia Quinn and takes place in London during the Regency Era of 1811-1820. The show follows the lives, scandals, and romances of the wealthy and prestigious Bridgerton family and their interactions with other elite members of high society. Each season spotlights a different member of the Bridgerton family and their journey for love in high society, with the current two seasons focusing firstly on Daphne Bridgerton and then Anthony Bridgerton. Besides showcasing lavish balls, intricate costumes, and scandalous gossip columns, the show is known for adding a contemporary twist to a historical setting through the incorporation of a diverse cast. In analyzing the representation of race in *Bridgerton*, Stuart Hall's theoretical lens of representation and the politics of signification proves to be a useful tool as it challenges the conventional interpretations of media texts and underlines the cultural power embedded into those meanings. the 'preferred reading' of media texts and understanding the cultural power of those meanings (Campbell, 2017, p. 11). Hall's analysis of media representation is imperative to uncover the power of the dominant meanings ascribed to representations, which are defined as the ways media re-present multiple meanings in presenting certain images (Campbell, 2017, p. 11). This representation of individuals can reinforce stereotypes, misrepresent marginalized communities, or challenge dominant narratives.

Under this lens, ideals from Edward Said's influential work on Orientalism can also be revealed. Orientalism is the hegemonic relationship in which the beliefs and cultures of the Occident (West) are assumed superior to the Orient (East) (p. 126). Within this relationship, Said introduces the idea of the Orient as being exotic and romanticized, but still inferior to the Occident. He further argues that Orientalism survives because the Occident attains its wealth through colonizing other countries and their culture (p. 138). Through this, Orientalism has become quietly embedded into our practices and policies. This relation of the Occident/West over the Orient/East has become widely accepted and is manifested throughout various forms of discourse. As Said emphasizes, "it is a statement of power and a claim for relatively absolute authority. It is constituted out of racism, and is made comparatively acceptable to an audience prepared in advance to listen to its muscular truths" (p. 134). Throughout this essay, I will utilize Stuart Hall's theory of representation and the politics of signification to unpack the racial

representation within the Netflix show, *Bridgerton*, and how it reproduces colour-blind casting, interracial relationships, and dark versus light symbolism to perpetuate post-racial and Orientalist discourses.

Colour-Blind Casting

Bridgerton uses colour-blind casting, which Hanus (2023) defines in her article as, “the process of excluding racial identities from character descriptions. This tool is implemented to increase diversity in numbers on screen by opening the positions to anybody while boasting the concept of meritocracy” (p. 2). The use of colour-blind casting in *Bridgerton* attempts to challenge dominant ideologies of racial representation in period dramas but ultimately represents post-racial discourses that remove the racialized body from the sociohistorical context. Post-racism is a utopian environment where it is believed that such significant racial progress has been made, that racial prejudice is absolved and no longer a major social issue (Cho, 2009, p. 1594).

Bridgerton is well-known for its diverse representation in casting which is a trait common to the works of producer, Shonda Rhimes. This deserves some commendation as giving people of colour screen time in such large media productions challenges myths of representation, especially since previous historical dramas lacked diverse representation. Further, it provides a multicultural celebration of people of colour in television spaces and represents them in positions of power and prestige. However, considering that *Bridgerton* is set during the Regency period, the colour-blind casting fabricates a post-racial reality. During the Regency period, people of colour were highly oppressed and rarely participated in extravagant social events of aristocratic families (Ruiz Cantu, 2022, p. 6). Most people of colour in Britain were relegated to domestic work and seldomly part of the nobility, or the *ton*. In *Bridgerton*, however, people of colour are portrayed as holding much higher social positions with more power. For instance, the original books do not suggest that Simon Basset, the Duke of Hastings, is of African descent. According to Ruiz Cantu (2022), “he is described in the books as, ‘striking... tall and athletic, with thick dark hair,’ and his eyes are, ‘icy blue, with an oddly penetrating gaze’” (p. 10). However, in the television series, his character is played by an actor of Zimbabwean descent which demonstrates colour-blind casting at play. Other examples of colour-blind casting include Simon’s nobility, Lady Danbury, and multiple members of the *ton* who are played by African-British actors.

Similarly, in season two, viewers are introduced to Lady Sharma who is South Indian but comes from an aristocratic English family. Another example is the introduction of Marina Thompson who is a Black debutante. Marina is well sought out during the courting season and receives many offers from white suitors after her first appearance at a ball. Her admittance into the ball, let alone her popularity among the white men in high-society London, is not something that would have occurred during the Regency Era and therefore signifies the existence of a post-racial society (Hanus, 2023, p. 7). Ultimately, these positions of power were privileges many people of colour were not afforded during Regency London, despite being demonstrated as such on the show.

These examples illustrate how through this escapism, television media can gloss over the harm and oppression brought onto people of colour by white supremacy. The colour-blind casting of Black actors as prestigious individuals in London Regency downplays the historical racial hierarchy, slavery, and colonialism that existed during that period. Further, by glossing over the oppression of people of colour, it is simultaneously stripping the Other of their lived experiences. The Other is categorized as being foreign, lacking in identity and propriety, and unfamiliar to the dominant culture or society (Al-Saidi, 2014, p. 95). In being stripped of their lived experiences, the oppression endured by the Other as a result of being marginalized is ignored. By disregarding historically accurate backstories and character interactions, *Bridgerton* is reproducing pre-existing narratives around race and naturalizing oppression through this utopia. Therefore, by having people of colour play the role of white characters, there is a lack of attention to cultural specificity which homogenizes the characters and erases cultural richness (Hanus, 2023, p. 3). As stated by Ruiz Cantu (2022), “colourblindness creates a reality where people’s identities have been erased and they are simply people” (p. 22). In attempts to challenge dominant narratives and solve racism by including a diverse cast, *Bridgerton* ultimately misrepresents marginalized communities. This separation of the cultural and racial body from socio-historical contexts aligns with Hall’s discussion that there is often not a true representation of history, people, or events in media; Rhimes’s colour-blind techniques in *Bridgerton* do not offer a true representation of people of colour during London Regency.

In a broader context, Netflix as a media conglomerate partakes in colour-blind casting within *Bridgerton* to absolve societal responsibility for addressing systemic racism. Through Hall’s lens of representation, Campbell (2017) discusses how one myth of representation is the

“myth of assimilation,” where the media assumes that by representing people of colour, especially African Americans, we have “overcome racism and fully assimilated into the American mainstream, where equality has been achieved. This is now referred to as post-racialism” (p. 15). The colour-blind casting of *Bridgerton* signifies post-racial imaginations that not only disregard the reality of racism but also suggest our society does not require further activism to achieve racial equality (Sipe, 2023, p. 338). Therefore, not only does the colour-blind casting of *Bridgerton* downplay the lived experiences of the Other, but it also perpetuates the ideology that racism is resolved in society. To further emphasize this, one must look at Netflix as a whole, which is the production and distribution company of *Bridgerton*. An article by Salsabila (2023) discusses how Netflix uses cultural diversity to fill the demand of the American audience for racial inclusivity even though it still involves Americanized homogenization within their series (p. 23).

In relation to *Bridgerton*, Salsabila (2023) discusses how, “the portrayal of diversity in *Bridgerton* [is] purely to maintain the cultural diversity image Netflix has, as a market and a trend to the 21st century demand” (p. 23). It is evident how Netflix as a media conglomerate produces post-racialism through its cultural casting and Americanization of series such as *Bridgerton* which reinforces how this is a ‘fantasy’ and myth of assimilation. Through this, “colourblind racism relegates the responsibility of racism from the system to the individual, allowing society members to wash their hands of the current issues” (Hanus, 2023, p. 4). This further emphasizes how media tends to convince itself and the audience that by portraying diversity in their content, they have done their duty in representing race and have therefore reached a post-racial utopia. Taken together, when analyzing the colour-blind casting of *Bridgerton*, it represents a post-racial fantasy that downplays historical oppressions experienced by people of colour and promotes the myth of assimilation.

Interracial Relationships

Another common theme in the *Bridgerton* series is the portrayal of interracial relationships. Throughout all current seasons, this signifies both Orientalist and post-racial discourses. Edward Said (1978) explains Orientalism as the hegemonic discourse where Western superiority is assumed over Eastern cultures (p. 126). Such discourse is particularly manifested in season two of *Bridgerton* which focuses on Anthony Bridgerton, the Viscount of the

Bridgerton family, who first courts Edwina Sharma before realizing his true feelings for her sister, Kate Sharma whom he ends up marrying. Anthony is seen as being of high prestige, due to being the eldest son in a highly respected aristocratic family and is therefore extremely sought after during the courting season. Edwina and Kate were raised in Bombay, are daughters of a lowly clerk, and are thus not part of the established aristocracy or have the same long-standing social status as the Bridgertons. Therefore, the interracial relationship between Anthony and Kate highlights the trope of a powerful white person desiring and courting the racial Other and the encouragement of the Orient to fulfil this desire (Sipe, 2023, p. 345). The racial difference within this post-racism fantasy, “exists solely for the fulfillment of white desire” (Sipe, 2023, p. 345). This relates to Said’s (1978) idea that the Orient cannot live without the Occident, and the Occident cannot live without the Orient and because of this dynamic, Orientalism sustains (p. 128).

Since Anthony is from high society and Edwina and Kate come from lower society, their courtship represents the hegemonic notion that the West/Occident is always on top of the East/Orient. Coming from Bombay and being a new member of the social season, Edwina is seen as mysterious to other characters in the show. Adding to this, when the Queen names her the ‘diamond of the season,’ she becomes extremely sought after and thus exoticized. Moreover, Edwina’s character is portrayed as quite naïve and innocent, but still intelligent and poised as she shares her appreciation for literature with multiple suitors. This, coupled with Anthony’s pursuit of her at the start of the season, signifies the Orientalist ideology of the East (the Orient) as something interesting and exotic but still inferior to the West (the Occident). Since Anthony is the Viscount of the Bridgerton family, he is also responsible for the finances of the family and assisting the counts in the running of their province. This can be paralleled to Said’s (1978) idea of the West acquiring its wealth through the colonization of other cultures, as he specifies “... the actual practice of imperialism by which the accumulation of territories and population, the control of economies, and the incorporation and homogenization of histories are maintained” (p. 138). Therefore, Anthony’s relationship with Kate functions to emphasize the reliance on the East for financial gain. By drawing connections in season two of *Bridgerton*, it is inferred that the signifier is the interracial relationship between Anthony and Kate. This signifies the prestigious white man courting the exotic Other which signs Orientalist discourses.

The signifier of interracial marriage functions to romanticize, hypersexualize, and objectify the exotic Other. When looking at the coupling between Daphne Bridgerton and Simon Basset in season one, it is evident that Daphne hypersexualizes Simon, who is the exotic Other. After Daphne begins to develop feelings for Simon, the portrayal of Simon is flipped to become increasingly sexual and the camera focuses on his body which, “not only hypersexualizes him, but also recolonizes his body... Rather than seeing Simon as a human being, we begin to see him as an object that Daphne intends to own, both sexually and maritally” (Ruiz Cantu, 2022, p. 16). This ownership over Simon’s body culminates in episode six when Daphne rapes him after discovering he lied about his ability to have children due to his long-lasting desire to not continue his bloodline (Ruiz Cantu, 2022, p.16). By violating his wishes, Daphne is asserting her power over Simon which both physically and metaphorically represents Said’s (1978) Orientalist discourse of the Occident assuming power over the Orient and Hall’s emphasis on representation being imbued with dominant ideologies. Overall, when analyzing the hyper-sexualization of the exotic Other under the politics of signification, it is evident how the representation of interracial relationships functions to convey the romanticization of the exotic Orient. This portrayal is infused with hegemonic interests, which disregard the racialized, lived experiences of the Other.

In addition to Orientalist discourses, the aspect of interracial marriage within the show symbolizes post-racial discourses by, “constructing a historical fantasy that centres authentic love and desire as the exclusive mechanism for constructing a post-racial and post-feminist society” (Sipe, 2023, p. 334). Hanus (2023) discusses an example of this discourse between the white king and Black queen, when in season one, episode four, Lady Danbury states,

“Look at our queen. Look at our king. Look at everything it is doing for us. Allowing us to become...We were two separate societies, divided by colour until a king fell in love with one of us. Love, Your Grace, conquers all” (p. 7).

In this scene, she is stating how the interracial marriage of the king and queen has yielded racial and cultural unity and allowed people of colour to attain higher positions of power. Lady Danbury argues that the king and queen’s love brought Britain to this racial utopia. Therefore, the king and queen’s relationship is used as a symbol for conquering all racial tension. Their relationship, along with the interracial relationship of Daphne and Simon, and Anthony and Kate, represents the post-racial construct that love is the only factor needed to overcome oppression, but that is not the case. Interracial couples often must overcome racial tensions, obstacles, and a

lack of acceptance, which would be even more evident during the historical context of the Regency era. By disregarding these struggles, the lived experiences of the Other are ignored, and the complexities of racism are oversimplified along with the solutions to overcome it. Campbell (2017) states how,

“Race as it is portrayed on fictional television, is consistent with the American Dream, and appeals to the utopian desire in blacks and whites for racial oneness and equality while displacing the persistent reality of racism and racial inequality or the kinds of social struggles and cooperation required to eliminate them” (p. 14).

Considering this quote with the interracial relationships of *Bridgerton*, it is evident how the diverse representation of race on television is an attempt to use racial oneness to minimize the amount of work and cooperation required to eliminate racism and overcome racial tension. Overall, the politics of signification refer to the ways certain images and symbols are used to convey meaning, and how this process is imbued with the interests of those in power (Campbell, 2017, p. 12). Drawing from the politics of signification to analyze *Bridgerton*, it is evident how using interracial relationships to convey a post-racial utopia is infused with social interests that disregard the racialized, lived experiences of the Other.

Dark vs. Light Symbolism

A third theme in *Bridgerton* is the dark versus light symbolism, where dark represents evil and danger, and corrupts the light which represents purity, safety, and goodness. An example of this is the boxing scenes in season one, which usually involve two Black characters – Simon Basset and his friend, Will Mondrich. In addition to training with Simon, Will partakes in interracial fights with predominantly white spectators. The match between Will and Gillepse is heavily gambled on in season one, episode eight, and this attachment of monetary value to the violence Will is going to both experience and place on his opponent emphasizes the white gaze viewing the Black body as an object to exert dominance on by essentially purchasing Will’s body (Ruiz Cantu, 2022, pp. 18-19). Another example of Black men being portrayed as violent is Simon’s father, who exerted both physically and psychologically violent acts on his son and wife (Ruiz Cantu, 2022, pp. 19-20). In season one episode two, viewers learn that Simon had difficulty speaking as a young boy. In the episode, there is a scene where Simon has a flashback to his father demanding to hear him speak, exclaiming that he “shall get a sound of him still”

while raising a hairbrush to hit him and calling him an “idiot” and a “half-wit” (Ruiz Cantu, 2022, p. 20). This correlation of both physical and emotional violence with Black characters in the show ultimately evokes the association of Black men as threatening in the white imaginary (Ruiz Cantu, 2022, p. 18).

A third example of dark versus light symbolism is the pivotal moment in season one when Simon and Daphne kiss for the first time. Since this occurred before marriage, it effectively ‘ruins’ Daphne. Even though Daphne returns the affection to Simon, they are caught by Daphne’s older brother, Anthony, and the duke is blamed for taking liberties with Daphne, even though she admits to reciprocating the affection. As Hanus (2023) points out, “in this instance, we not only see the dark’s corruption of light but also the ignorance of possible guilt from someone who is white” (p. 10). A fourth example is Marina Thompson and her comparison to white characters, as explained by Ruiz Cantu (2022, pp. 12-13). In season one, she temporarily moves into her cousin’s household, the white aristocratic Featherington family, and receives many suitors. However, as time goes on it is revealed that Marina is pregnant with a previous lover’s child which implies she is a ‘ruined’ woman because she is with child before she is married. Lady Featherington then locks her up in her room so that she does not spread her ‘corruptness’ onto the Featherington daughters. Adding to this, the Featherington and Bridgerton daughters, Penelope, Eloise, and Daphne, express their confusion on how a lady becomes ‘with child,’ which demonstrates their innocence regarding the topic. This innocence contrasted with Marina’s pre-marital pregnancy highlights the impure vs. pure connotations in dark vs. light symbolism. Through these examples, the Duke and Marina represent the portrayal of a Black character as problematic and destructive to a white character’s social standing (Hanus, 2023, p. 10). Taken together, these examples render another myth of representation from Campbell (2017) – the myth of difference (p.15). This myth argues that “...people of colour are routinely represented, in a number of ways, *differently* than white people” (Campbell, 2017, p. 15). Through the myth of difference, we can see how the Black characters of the show are portrayed differently than the white characters despite living in a post-racial fantasy. This holds true in the examples of Simon, Will, and Marina who are represented differently than white characters by being depicted as violent and problematic.

Conclusion

Taken together, by employing Hall's theory of representation and politics of signification to deconstruct racial representation in *Bridgerton*, it is revealed how Rhimes's colour-blind casting techniques deliberately skew a fantasy that ignores the lived experiences of the racialized Other. The show portrays a post-racial fantasy, both in the current day and the Regency period, which pushes the myth of assimilation in media representation. Moreover, while the presentation of interracial couples and romances may act as an escape for viewers of period pieces, it represents Orientalist discourses by exoticizing and romanticizing the Orient while keeping them inferior, and post-racial discourses by suggesting that love is the sole key to overcome racial tensions from interracial relationships. Lastly, by placing Black characters in violent situations and as disruptions to the white imaginary, the show reaffirms Hall's theory that media portrayals of racial stereotypes serve to construct real, existing ideologies around race. Ultimately, this is not to say that diverse casting poses a problem in media representation. It should be recognized that the presence of a diverse cast affords people of colour significant screen time in large-scale media productions. Showcasing diverse and complex relationships between characters of various backgrounds is vital in media representations, especially within genres such as period dramas that tend to lack diversity. However, it becomes problematic when it is used to disregard historical racial hierarchy and oppression while pushing the idea that our society has achieved racial equality. In both the viewing and production of these shows, it is crucial to consider whether it has accurate representations of people of colour and their lived experiences. Perhaps the emergence of honest, varied portrayals of the human experience in line with the sociohistorical context it is set in can serve to break away from these post-racial illusions. In presenting more accurate and authentic portrayals of characters grappling with the realities of identity, race, and power dynamics, shows like *Bridgerton* can offer a more nuanced reflection of society. Through this lens, media has the potential to not only entertain but also provide critical representations of the past and present realities of race and society.

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An Analysis of the Social Construction of Breast Cancer Awareness in Media and Cause-Related Marketing

Cole Challand

Abstract

Today, women's experience following breast cancer is being a survivor. This experience is a demedicalized one, there are no medical connotations attached, women are not patients, they are survivors. Breast cancer activism discourse presents this survivor experience and seeks to destigmatize the disease through public awareness. The demedicalized nature of the disease and its messaging of awareness has provided an opportunity for companies to capitalize on this discourse through cause-related marketing. This paper uses Arthur Frank's concept of the communicative body to explain the origins of the social construction of breast cancer as a demedicalized experience and to analyze new media messaging of breast cancer activism within the past decade. The analysis conducted establishes two dominant themes in breast cancer activism in new media. Firstly, the use of survivors employing Frank's communicative body to build awareness, which can be traced back to the origins of the movement in the 1970s. Secondly, the corporate capitalization of the movement, namely the pink ribbon through cause-related marketing. This paper argues the demedicalized experience of having breast cancer still maintains its core values as a survivor-focused movement about women communicating their illness as survivors through their communicative bodies. However, the demedicalized nature has in turn allowed companies to capitalize on its messaging for their own financial gain. This paper finds that the 'pinkwashing' produced by cause-related marketing for breast cancer damages activist messaging through its monetization, distorting the social construction of awareness, and dividing survivors in their views of how awareness should be communicated. This ultimately creates two sides of raising awareness: one created through survivors using Frank's communicative body, the other established by companies using cause-related marketing.

Keywords

Frank's communicative body, social construction, breast cancer, cause-related marketing

Introduction

Breast cancer activism has a deep-rooted history of advocating for public awareness and destigmatization of the disease. The movement still enjoys individual support from survivors (Elliott, 2007, p. 523) showing there is still an individually driven element of the movement. This current individual support stems from the 1970s when women's patients and consumer's rights movements sought to eliminate stigma by moving breast cancer out of the private sphere and into the public (Sulik, 2010, p. 28). This shift means that contemporary women's experience with breast cancer is rarely that of a patient, and instead one of a survivor (King, 2004, p. 473). Part of this 'survivor experience' is the emphasis on garnering awareness of the disease. Awareness can be constructed in two ways: through a survivor's communicative body, such as Wanda Sykes (Figure 1), and through for-profit advertising, such as Mike's Hard Lemonade (Figure 2). This is because the pink ribbon continues to be used in advertising, corporate activism included (King, 2004, p. 488). The demedicalized social construction of breast cancer has enabled opportunistic companies to tie their brand to activism through cause-related marketing. This creates 'pinkwashing,' which in the context of breast cancer refers to a company claiming to care for the activist cause but, in reality, goes against it. The historical roots of breast cancer activism symbolized by the pink ribbon socially constructs breast cancer awareness today as a demedicalized experience enabling cause-related marketing to capitalize on the activism, which distorts breast cancer discourse.

Figure 1

Screenshot of a Tweet from Breast Cancer Research Foundation of Alabama



Note. From Breast Cancer Research Foundation of Alabama [@BCRFAlabama], August 20, 2021. <https://twitter.com/BCRFAlabama/status/1432383204812460033>

Figure 2

Screenshot of an advertisement for Mike's Hard Lemonade



Note. From Cerullo, 2014.

<https://www.eater.com/2014/7/3/6195271/this-july-fight-breast-cancer-with-mikes-hard-lemonade>

The Origins of Breast Cancer Activism in the 1970s as Owning the Disease

The prevalence of North American breast cancer activism today originated in the 1970s. Formerly, breast cancer was a private experience because of the confidential doctor-patient relationship, and the stigmatization of the disease conferred ‘deviant’ status to women and was treated as a death sentence (Sulik, 2010, p. 27). The private nature of the disease at the time and its associated stigma resulted in social isolation for most patients, as they were unaware of others with the same diagnosis (Sulik, 2010, p. 28). This lack of information regarding other women’s diagnoses with breast cancer meant the experience with the disease was individual, kept within the confines of the private sphere and doctor-patient relationship.

The individualized experience women in the 1970s faced with a breast cancer diagnosis effectively made the disease unknown. According to Broyard (1995: 50 as cited in Gwyn, 2001), the ill person needs to personify and ‘own’ their illness, not let it be anonymous like medicine depicts (p. 15). To clarify, the anonymity of an illness refers only to a patient’s experience. Anonymity came from being categorized under the umbrella of ‘the patient.’ This meant the 1970s movements “encouraged patient empowerment, the development of lay medical knowledge, and commitment to sharing information with other women” (Sulik, 2010, p. 28). This empowerment, commitment to sharing knowledge, and refusal to let the disease be anonymous was a response to the harmful medical discourse that isolated women. Patient empowerment and the widespread sharing of information was how women of the 1970s began to ‘own’ their illness, refusing to suffer in isolation any longer.

Arthur Frank’s Communicative Body as Central to the Roots of Breast Cancer Activism

Arthur Frank’s concept of the communicative body explains how women ‘owning’ their breast cancer went from an individual to a collective movement. Frank defines the communicative body as one that manifests solidarity with others’ suffering and the body itself communes with others, inviting them to recognize themselves in it (Gwyn, 2001, p. 15). The invitational nature of the communicative body is central to breast cancer activism because of the shared experience it creates between patients. This commitment of those who ‘own’ their illness

and build awareness removed the individual anonymity of breast cancer, destigmatizing the disease by communing with others. Frank's communicative body centers the patient experience through the invitation of another body. This explains why the women's and consumer rights movements of the 1970s created a vibrant and successful social movement with diagnosed women at the center of it (Sulik, 2010, p. 28). This is because having diagnosed women at the center of the movement invited other diagnosed women to recognize themselves within the movement.

The Contemporary Social Construction of Breast Cancer

The movements in the 1970s to destigmatize breast cancer and empower women was a success as the movement is currently "an enriching and affirming experience during which women with breast cancer are rarely 'patients' and mostly 'survivors-'" (King, 2010, p. 286). The term 'demedicalized' describes the shift from the experience and terminology of a patient to a survivor. Instead of experiencing a medicalized experience as a patient when the disease was stigmatized, survivors experience an affirming demedicalized experience of survivorship. Being a survivor does not hold the medical and social connotations that being a patient does, which makes being a survivor a demedicalized experience. To reflect this demedicalized survivorship, a universal symbol was needed to symbolize the movement. The use of pink can be traced to the Susan G. Koman Foundation handing out pink visors in the 1990 Race for the Cure, while the pink ribbon was handed out by the same foundation in the 1991 race (Eliott, 2007, p. 523). Since then, pink has been embraced as the colour of breast cancer, symbolizing the struggle to overcome by survivors (Eliott, 2007, p. 523). While each survivor's story is different, the iconic pink ribbon and the colour pink act as unifying symbols of triumph over the disease that survivors can rally behind. The pink ribbon is a further development of Frank's communicative body, inviting breast cancer survivors to recognize themselves under the collective experience it offers. The breast cancer movement then and now is what codifies the pink ribbon's significance, making the symbol inseparable from the movement.

The discourse of survivorship and the symbol of the pink ribbon dominate the social construction of breast cancer today. Conrad and Barker (2010) describe the conceptual framework of social construction as emphasizing "the cultural and historical aspects of phenomena widely thought to be exclusively natural" (p. 567). The history of breast cancer

activism in creating a shared survivor experience and the iconic pink ribbon act as the conduits of the cultural and historical aspects of social constructionism of the movement today. Currently, survivors still believe building awareness is important, in Taylor and Knibb's study, they found awareness was the most prominent theme for survivors and

“[i]t is important to survivors—in their personal lives, for their friends and family, and for other women in general” (Taylor and Knibb, 2013, p. 197).

Taylor and Knibb's findings regarding the importance of awareness of the disease trace back to the 1970s movement to destigmatize the illness through women sharing information with each other. This prevalence of social awareness of the disease through the communicative bodies of breast cancer survivors connects modern activism to its roots. The use of figurative language is significant in the social construction of an illness, as “cultural analysts pointed out illnesses may also have metaphorical connotations” (Conrad and Barker, 2010, p. 69). Breast cancer as an illness draws on survivorship as a metaphor for the patient's experience. Medical language does not provide metaphorical connotations, which is why the language of being a survivor and not a patient is used. This difference is significant as the use of metaphors in the social construction of breast cancer, namely the metaphorical connotations of being a survivor, contributed to the disease being demedicalized.

The Social Construction of Breast Cancer Activism on Social Media as Supported by Frank's Communicative Body

An example of the social construction of breast cancer today being based on Frank's communicative body as a discourse is the Breast Cancer Research Foundation of Alabama's (BCRFA) August 2021 Twitter post featuring Wanda Sykes (Figure 1). The post not detailing any information about Wanda Sykes' diagnosis is crucial to the social construction of breast cancer, demonstrating the demedicalized discourse. Additionally, breast cancer survivors possess embodied knowledge of breast cancer, which they apply to their lived experiences (Taylor and Knibb, 2013, pp. 189-190). The embodied knowledge breast cancer survivors possess and the demedicalized social construction of the disease means that the discourse produced by the BCRFA's Twitter post does not need to be medical in nature. The user itself (the BCRFA) is the only reference to medicine. This adds credibility to the post as the poster is a non-profit organization, signifying their objective in posting is not driven by profit. The poster being a

non-profit is important for the encoding of the post, as in this case, the post's discourse is not distorted by its publisher through means of commodification.

Frank's communicative body as discourse is communicated through the featuring of actress Wanda Sykes (Figure 1). There is no description of Sykes' story, with her only descriptors being "actor" and "breast cancer survivor" (Figure 1). While minimal, these labels are significant in conveying Frank's communicative body, as Sykes' name, career, and face are attached to the status of "breast cancer survivor" (Figure 1). These identifying features mean her breast cancer is not anonymous and her association as a survivor is her way of 'owning' it. Her status as an actor is also significant, as breast cancer activism utilizes the power of celebrity (Sulik, 2010, p. 112). Sykes' image, and status as an actor and breast cancer survivor, establishes a communicative body which the BCRFA uses in #MondayMotivation (Figure 1). The context of the post as a motivational post further establishes the demedicalized construction of breast cancer, as the use of Sykes is for unspecified motivation.

While Sykes plays an important role in the communicative body discourse produced by the post, the use of the colour pink and the iconic pink ribbon in the bottom left (Figure 1) demonstrate the unifying nature of breast cancer symbolism. The use of the colour pink as an embraced symbol of triumph by survivors indicates Sykes' status as a breast cancer survivor. Additionally, Sykes' status as a survivor shows the importance of metaphors in the social construction of breast cancer. The discourse produced in this Twitter post is the communicative body of Wanda Sykes, which has been adopted as a metaphor for the patient experience. Since the colour pink is encoded as symbolism for breast cancer awareness, using Sykes' communicative body alongside the colour invites survivors to recognize themselves in it.

The example of the BCRFA's Twitter post demonstrates the social construction of breast cancer through a communicative body discourse. The creator of the post being a non-profit and using breast cancer survivor Wanda Sykes alongside the colour pink creates an optimal discourse for survivors. This is because the post spreads awareness and is not commodified through a product tie-in. This is important for breast cancer survivors, as Taylor and Knibb's (2013) study group identified representation as crucial to fostering awareness of breast cancer but criticized its commodification (p. 194). This post creates optimal awareness as it conveys awareness of breast cancer through the representation of Sykes as a communicative body without commercialization. The social construction of breast cancer through its history and the symbolism of the pink ribbon

is powerful; it can be harnessed by media posts such as the BCRFA's Twitter post to produce a positive discourse for survivors. The metaphorical connotations of survivorship as the patient's experience with breast cancer allow the use of the power of celebrities, such as Sykes, to further resonate with an audience.

Cause-Related Marketing's Distortion of Breast Cancer Activism's Social Construction

Mass media is important to the social construction of breast cancer, contributing to its dominance in the public image (Sulik, 2010, p. 112). The BCRFA's Twitter post is an example of how media can be used for an optimal discourse on breast cancer awareness as it features a non-commercialized post of a breast cancer survivor and the symbolic colour pink. The use of pink through mass mobilization fulfills John Durham Peter's communication function of "building worlds together" (1999 p. 30, as cited in Elliott, 2007, p. 523). Mass dissemination connects breast cancer survivors, unified by the pink ribbon which dominates the public image, but also can dominate major brand portfolios (Sulik, 2010, p. 112). Once companies get involved in the dissemination of breast cancer awareness through their commodification of the cause, like Mike's Hard Lemonade (Figure 2), activism becomes monetized. While mass dissemination can be useful to uplift breast cancer awareness, it can also distort its message (Elliott, 2007, p. 524). The distortion of breast cancer activism's discursive messaging is produced by the commercialization of breast cancer activism and its pink ribbon.

This commercialization of breast cancer awareness has a specific name: cause-related marketing, which is:

"An agreement between nonprofit and for-profit organizations to promote a product that provides benefit for the cause through increasing awareness and financial contributions from sales;" (Harvey and Strahilevitz, 2009, p. 26).

The use of awareness is important in the definition of cause-related marketing because it is significant to breast cancer survivors. No corporations are licensed to have exclusive use of the pink ribbon (Harvey and Strahilevitz, 2009, p. 26), which means any enterprising company can take advantage of the symbol. This distortion by mass dissemination is seen in cause-related marketing as the demedicalized experience of breast cancer survivors who value awareness is boiled down to its literal definition by companies. Survivors seek to achieve awareness through their storied experience and communicative bodies, while for-profit companies build awareness

by tying the pink ribbon to their product. The difference between the two is survivors build awareness based on their storied experience such as the example of Wanda Sykes. Companies like Mike's Hard treat awareness based on marketing and product placement. This is evident in the Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade advertisement (Figure 2) which instead of using a survivor's story or experience as the focus point, Mike's Hard uses its product.

Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade's breast cancer promotion (Figure 2) is an important media example that demonstrates the distortion of breast cancer activism's discourse by some companies. Since no corporation has exclusive rights over the pink ribbon, misuse of the ribbon can occur through the marketing of products that can increase breast cancer such as alcohol (Harvey and Strahilevitz, 2009, p. 26). As an alcoholic product, Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade falls under this umbrella. The ad features the use of the colour pink as well as the iconic pink ribbon (Figure 2) which is not a surprise as "the pink ribbon has ubiquitously become the symbol for breast cancer awareness in the US and increasingly the world" (King, 2010, p. 286). The use of this symbol by products such as Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade is problematic as it capitalizes on the importance of awareness for survivors.

The power of the pink ribbon has been taken advantage of by cause-related marketing. Its demedicalized nature and the pink ribbon enable the easy commodification of breast cancer awareness. This is because there is already an existing symbol tied to the movement and an emphasis on awareness by survivors. There is no barrier to using the pink ribbon. Anyone can use breast cancer activism and its symbol as a marketing ploy to build awareness of their product. This is problematic as it does not follow Frank's communicative body for building awareness that survivors use. While on the surface, the ad does bring awareness, the problem lies in the product tie-in, removing the communicative body aspect and monetizing the messaging.

The ad for Mike's Hard Lemonade shows the worst of cause-related marketing and how mass dissemination with the aim of monetization such as ads distorts the social construction of breast cancer. The social construction relies heavily on metaphors of the patient's experience, such as the classification of breast cancer patients as survivors who won their battle against the disease. Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade capitalizes on this metaphor through the slogan attached to the ad which is "Grab Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade & Join the Fight Against Breast Cancer" (Figure 2). The irony of grabbing an alcoholic beverage that can cause cancer to fight breast cancer demonstrates the lack of restrictions on who or what can use breast cancer activism in

media. Although ironic, this slogan also distorts the social construction of breast cancer by tying Mike's Hard lemonade to the metaphor of fighting against breast cancer. This distorts the social construction of breast cancer by monetizing the use of a metaphor experienced by survivors.

The inappropriate use of Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade being tied to the pink ribbon is a clear example of 'pinkwashing,' which the advocacy group, Breast Cancer Action defines as "marketing harmful or carcinogenic products in the name of breast cancer" (Taylor and Knibb, 2013, p. 195). Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade is physically harmful as it can increase the risk of breast cancer, but is also harmful to breast cancer activism due to the distortion of the original message. A key indicator that this company treats breast cancer activism as a marketing ploy is the creation of the pink lemonade flavour for breast cancer awareness month (Cerullo, 2014, para. 1). This suggests they are treating breast cancer awareness akin to a holiday-promotion flavour, demonstrating the awareness they seek to build is aimed more towards their product, not genuine support for the cause.

While Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade is an example of pinkwashing, it is worth noting that it still brings awareness to breast cancer. The monetization of breast cancer activism by companies has divided survivors on the extent they support cause-related marketing. Participants in Taylor and Knibb's (2013) study group expressed sentiments that there was empty commercialization in breast cancer marketing but also expressed hopeful sentiments that there were aspects that did create awareness and spread information (p. 196). Elliott (2006) discusses how the most fervent denouncers of pink codification are survivors, partly because of the commodification of the colour and its meaning by corporations (p. 526). These two cases show the acceptance of cause-related marketing is not universal to all survivors. The damaging aspect comes from how cause-related marketing forces survivors to create a level of comfort with the commercialization of activism. This divides survivors, as they have different beliefs regarding the monetization of the movement. While the pink ribbon unifies survivors' various lived experiences, cause-related marketing divides them.

Conclusion

The history of breast cancer activism and the pink ribbon is responsible for the social construction of breast cancer today. This message has been distorted by corporations' use of cause-related marketing to merge breast cancer awareness with their product. Breast cancer

activism's history explains why survivors owning their illness and utilizing Frank's communicative body is central to the movement. In the current media landscape, the awareness of breast cancer generated by survivors is still persistent. This is clear in the chosen example of Wanda Sykes, where her communicative body as a survivor and actor is used to spread awareness. Frank's concept of the communicative body helps us understand the role of survivors in breast cancer awareness. It is what ties contemporary breast cancer activism to its historical roots.

Unfortunately, the emphasis on awareness in breast cancer's social construction has opened the doors to companies that aim to boil this movement down to its literal definition through cause-related marketing. This is evident in Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade's ad, which not only ties the pink ribbon to their alcoholic product but also features an alcoholic beverage tied to the movement. This is a case of 'pinkwashing, which distorts the aim of breast cancer activism's messaging. This is supported by the fact that this product can cause cancer and forces survivors to take a divided stance on the commercialization of breast cancer activism. The key difference between the case of BCRFA's Twitter post and Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade ad is the use of Frank's communicative body. The BCRFA's post upholds the social construction of breast cancer activism by sharing Sykes' story alongside the pink ribbon, communicating her story to other survivors. Mike's Hard Pink Lemonade ad has no storied experience tied to it, instead, the ad is tying its product to the pink ribbon.

It is important to recognize there is no universal agreement by survivors on the extent to which cause-related marketing should be accepted, which is why the practice is so damaging. Breast cancer activism seeks to destigmatize the disease and bring survivors together, unifying their stories under the pink ribbon. Cause-related marketing is profit-driven and since anyone can use the pink ribbon, controversial products can be advertised alongside the pink ribbon under the guise of spreading awareness. This divides breast cancer survivors in their willingness to accept cause-related marketing as a form of activism and distorts the social construction of breast cancer awareness through its monetization and creating two forms of awareness. One form is survivor-based, using the survivor's communicative body to build awareness. The other is cause-related marketing, which distorts the social construction of the former by boiling down breast cancer awareness to its literal definition, damaging the storied meaning and history of the movement.

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Beyond Norms and Realities: Reading Queer in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

Thomas Tri

Abstract

This paper examines the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, portraying a Chinese-American family navigating complex familial dynamics. The film, featuring stellar performances by Ke Huy Quan, Michelle Yeoh, and Jamie Lee Curtis, garnered Oscars and marked a historic win for Asian women in the Best Actress category. Beyond its sci-fi front, the movie transcends genre boundaries, contributing significantly to new queer cinema. This paper argues that the film disrupts essentialist notions of race, sexuality, and gender by exploring diverse themes. Drawing from queer theory, this paper analyzes the film's problematization of gender norms and Asian American stereotypes, as well as the encouragement of critical spectatorship in viewers. The analysis identifies the film's deliberate use of queer codes, inviting viewers to think beyond conventions. The film confuses normative thinking, as demonstrated through Ke Huy Quan's character, Waymond, who blurred assignments of masculinity and femininity. Finally, the analysis extends this critique to Asian American representation, interrogating stereotypes associated with the model minority myth. Through the film's well-crafted storytelling and excellent performances by actors, this paper's analysis demonstrates how a queer reading can encourage thinking beyond 'normal.'

Keywords

Model minority, queer theory, film studies, racialization, gender, sexuality

Introduction

In *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, the portrayal of a Chinese-American family navigating complex familial dynamics unfolds. The narrative commences by vividly capturing the protagonist, Evelyn Wang's, unsettling morning. Engaged in cooking breakfast for the family and preparing paperwork for the looming Internal Revenue Service (IRS) audit of the family's business, Evelyn sets the stage for a storyline fraught with familial tensions. Amidst the chaos, she deals with her husband, Waymond Wang's childishness while disapproving of her daughter, Joy Wang's queer relationship. As they head to the IRS office, Alpha-Waymond, from an alternative universe, occupies Waymond's body through advanced technology, explaining to Evelyn the existence of various universes and an impending evil named 'Jobu Tupaki.' The film explores Evelyn's navigation of various universes while running away from Jobu Tupaki. Evelyn transfers her consciousness to multiple universes, through the method of 'verse-jumping,' where she effortlessly acquires skills contingent on her circumstances. As she begins to experience glimpses of life in these various universes, she is gradually drawn into Jobu Tupaki's conviction that "nothing matters" (Kwan & Scheinert, 1:01:00). However, as she interacts with Waymond in multiple universes, an epiphany strikes Evelyn, prompting her to recognize that life is innately meaningless unless one gives it meaning. Following this realization, she mends the problems she created in the numerous universes and finally approaches her daughter to rekindle their contentious relationship.

The actors Ke Huy Quan (Waymond), Michelle Yeoh (Evelyn), and Jamie Lee Curtis (Dierdre) all won Oscars for their performances (Lee, 2023). This was a salient moment, marking the first time an Asian woman has won an Oscar for the category, 'Best Actress' (Lee, 2023). This film is among the many new films that use the idea of a metaverse, representing that alternate parallel universes exist all at once. Despite its sci-fi aspect, the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once* transcends the need to belong to one genre, encompassing a wide range of genres. Among the many genres it belongs to, this award-winning film makes a significant contribution to new queer cinema, weaving powerful themes of family dynamics and the immigration experience with queer possibilities. The film's queerness is a critical point of analysis. The film portrays the intricate lives of characters such as Waymond and Evelyn, deviating from fixed categories of race, gender, and sexuality. Further, the film critically troubles societal norms and encourages viewers to question and redefine 'normal' and 'reality.' It is

without doubt that the film resists the hegemonic ideals of mainstream culture and seeks to set a precedent for future Asian American films (Coe, 2023). Drawing from queer theory, this essay posits that *Everything Everywhere All at Once* subverts essentialist understandings of the ‘norm’ by queering the ‘gaze,’ masculinity and femininity, and Asian American representation.

Theorizing ‘Queer’ in Film Studies

The term ‘queer’ and ‘queerness’ are used as umbrella terms to encompass non-straight sexualities and genders (Doty, 1998). Initially, ‘queer’ was used by activists to describe a “community of difference” (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004, p. 5). Following these political and activist movements, academics theorized ‘queer’ as a form of analysis, arriving at queer theory (Doty, 1998). A core tenet of queer theory is questioning what is considered normative (Green, 2002). Queer theorists have obscured the categories and classifications that society has imposed, particularly with gender and sexuality (Green, 2002). By destabilizing normative understandings of gender and sexuality, queer theory has also questioned expressions of masculinity and femininity (Azhar et al., 2021). Among numerous queer theorists, Judith Butler (2006) played a pivotal role in introducing the concept that gender and sexuality are 'performed,' positing that these social constructs derive meaning through performances categorized as 'masculine' or 'feminine.' Traditional gender expectations view men as assertive, rational, and decisive, whereas women as sensitive, polite, and friendly (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Such gender logics prescribe and proscribe a set of values, behaviours, and characteristics considered as ‘feminine’ for women and ‘masculine’ for men (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Worthen, 2021).

When one goes against these gender stereotypes or societal norms, they are deemed ‘deviant’ (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Worthen, 2021). Psychiatrists coined the term ‘sexual deviance’ to describe what they perceived as "unusual sexual behavior," a label historically applied to pathologize homosexuality as ‘abnormal human behaviour’ (De Block & Adriaen, 2013, p. 266). While sexual deviance has long been associated with homosexuality (De Block & Adriaen, 2013), it can be understood in relation to gender deviance. Worthen (2021) contends that the “condemnation for deviant gender performance is inextricably tied to the performance of sexuality” (p. 102). For instance, a male athlete who does not conform to "strong, masculine... and hyper-heterosexual" characteristics may face societal backlash and be deemed ‘deviant’

(Worthen, 2021, p. 103). Therefore, straying from 'gender rules' or 'gender norms' can be understood as sexual and gender deviance (Worthen, 2021).

The repudiation of gender and sexual deviance within society can be manifested most extremely through violence against queer people (Worthen, 2021). However, it can also be identified through the portrayal of negative stereotypes of queer people within early film and cinema (Davies & Smith, 2000; Li-Vollmer & Lapointe, 2003). Early films reproduced normative ideas of gender and sexuality. Gay men were depicted using stereotypical features such as being overly flamboyant and effeminate for comedic relief (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). Further, queer characters were portrayed as villains, predators, and murderers, existing in films to only face death, “often in quite brutal ways” (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004, p. 90). Because there was a typical film trope of tragedies being tied to queer characters, the phrase ‘bury your gays’ was coined in response (Cover & Milne, 2023). These examples suggest that initial films with queer characters conflated sexual and gender deviance with tragic endings, implying that those who go against the norms of society will be punished (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; Davies & Smith, 2000). There has been a notable transformation in the portrayal of queer individuals in media, with a shift toward more positive and affirming depictions (Donovan, 2016). Queer theory can offer a profound understanding of the historical and contemporary context of queer depiction within film.

Queer theory has extended its influence to the realm of film and cinema studies, giving rise to the concept of queer cinema (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). This cinematic domain goes beyond a mere portrayal of queer characters; it involves a nuanced exploration that delves into the subtleties, encouraging interpretations that blur the lines of gender and sexual categories (Doty, 1998). Academics and activists alike were imbued with social movements like AIDS activism, growing a closer relationship between queer theory and film (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). Finally, new queer cinema emerged, aiming to question essentialism and explore the intersections of sexuality with gender, race, and class (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). New queer cinema, having roots in theory, rose as an oppositional and political force to what is considered ‘mainstream’ (Morrison, 2006). Queer theory will be employed in the following paragraphs to analyze the film’s depiction of complex themes and characters.

Queering the Gaze

The film promoted the adoption of a 'queer gaze' by urging viewers to discern queer motifs throughout its narrative. McNealy (2021) describes the queer gaze as a means to “imagine seemingly impossible alternatives to our current world order” (p. 461). This statement encapsulates the film's philosophical themes, intentionally embedded as a queer code. The film had philosophical themes of nihilism and absurdity, arguing that existence has no inherent value or meaning (Toabnani, 2023). This exciting play on philosophy has a parallel to queer theory, more particularly the depiction of alternative realities that seem ‘absurd.’ The prominent theme of nihilism and absurdity also reflects how humans conceptualize what is ‘normal’ and what is not. In one reality, hot-dog fingers are normal (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022, 0:58:27); in another, raccoons can speak and control humans by pulling on their hair (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022, 1:06:21). Thus, what is ‘normal’ in one reality may be outlandish in another. These themes “challenge viewers to question their beliefs and perceptions of reality” (Toabnani, 2023, p. 43). The film extends ideas of normalcy to morality, questioning the arbitrary allotment of what is considered ‘right’ versus ‘wrong’ (Coe, 2023). This is demonstrated through Jobu Tupaki’s statement, “‘Right’ is a tiny box invented by people who are afraid and I know what it feels like to be trapped inside that box” (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022, 1:33:12). Despite having these philosophical roots, there is a prominent relation to queer theory in its attempts to challenge normative thinking. The film aims to interrogate the universalizing of truth and meaning, similar to postmodernism which underlies queer theory (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). The wave of postmodernist thinking coincides with queer theory by questioning categorization and rejecting definitive identity markers (Kirsch, 2020). Thus, there is no objective truth nor reality but numerous ones, all at once (Toabnani, 2023). Viewers are then tasked to view the film through a ‘queer gaze.’ The mere display of queer people is not what creates this lens, but through the use of queer-coded elements of philosophy, viewers are encouraged to read between the lines.

Queering Masculinity and Femininity

Waymond’s character aims to subvert gender expectations and assignments. Waymond is portrayed as ‘feminine’ in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. Namely, Evelyn perceives Waymond as playful and light-hearted to a fault. This idea is reiterated through his habit of placing googly eyes on items in the house as well as dancing with a customer (Kwan &

Scheinert, 2022, 0:08:25). Furthermore, Waymond's demeanour in the film, especially during his interactions with Evelyn, suggests a passive and compliant nature as he obediently follows Evelyn's instructions, such as cooking noodles and checking the pot (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022, 0:02:19). In contrast to Waymond's behaviours, personality, and character, Evelyn is portrayed as more stereotypically 'masculine.' She is the family's matriarch, from taking care of the business to dealing with the turmoil of familial relationships. This stark contrast between Evelyn and Waymond suggests a form of gender deviance in which the typical traits associated with men and women are not conformed. Initially, viewers are encouraged to agree with Evelyn's rejection of Waymond's behaviours, viewing him as inept and meddling with Evelyn. But slowly, the film undermines this initial conception by showing that Waymond's 'feminine' personality is a saving factor in numerous situations. This is reflected in the scene where Waymond convinces Deirdre, the IRS agent, to extend the deadline for submitting their tax returns. While Evelyn initially repudiates Waymond's 'feminine' attributes by stating, "my silly husband... probably making things worse" as she spots him attempting to reason with Dierdre (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022, 0:24:27; 1:43:30), Waymond is successful in securing an extension to submit their taxes. Waymond's feminine-coded behaviours later become a pivotal catalyst in shaping Evelyn's outlook on life. This is reflected in the film's climax when Waymond contends, "The only thing I do know is that we have to be kind. Please be kind. Especially when we don't know what's going on" (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022, 1:46:35). Such a statement becomes an epiphany for Evelyn to shift her perspective on life. Waymond's character and embodiment of what can be read as 'feminine' is a means to challenge traditional assignments of masculinity and femininity. Waymond's demonstration of gender deviance highlights the nonsensical imposition of gender norms. Embracing what feels most natural to oneself over conforming to societal norms thus becomes a powerful strength.

Through Ke Huy Quan's beautiful performance of his counterparts, Alpha Waymond and CEO-Waymond, he demonstrates the performativity of gender and sexuality. Alpha Waymond starkly contrasts Waymond's personality and demeanor. Alpha Waymond is portrayed as serious, stoic, and sharp-witted. Similarly, CEO-Waymond is portrayed as wealthy, wise, and sophisticated with his slicked-back hair and tuxedo. These two can be coded as 'masculine' through their demeanours and appearances. However, the similarity between CEO-Waymond and Waymond is their 'feminine' shared values of kindness and optimism, reinforcing the fluidity of

masculinities and how gender is performed. CEO-Waymond shares his wisdom in a scene with Evelyn, stating, “When I choose to see the good sides of things, I’m not being naive. It is strategic and necessary” (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022, 1:46:11). Both Waymonds, despite acting and appearing as polar opposites, have similar worldviews that can be considered ‘feminine’ (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Although appearing as a contradiction, one can simultaneously have a ‘feminine’ trait (i.e. valuing kindness) and appear ‘masculine.’ All in all, Key Huy Quan’s gender performance aims to destabilize traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity, highlighting society’s arbitrary assignments to gender.

Queering Asian American Representation

Azhar et al., (2021) argue that “gender and sexuality are inseparable from racial identities” (p. 286). To comprehensively analyze gender and sexuality, it is imperative to scrutinize how race is embedded in these categories (Azhar et al., 2021). In Shek’s (2007) literature review of Asian American masculinity, they found that Asian American men are perceived through “white perspectives” (p. 383). That is, viewing Asian American men as “asexual while at the same time patriarchal and domineering” (Shek, 2007, p. 384; Azhar et al., 2021; Ponce, 2021). These characteristics associated with Asian American men are historicized in the profoundly racist legislation and laws enacted by the American government (Shek, 2007). This historical context shapes the public perception of Asian men today (Shek, 2007). Waymond challenges the imposition of asexuality by being portrayed as someone eager to save his marriage. His desire for a stable relationship is apparent in his longing glances at the elderly Asian couple in the IRS office and in the scene where he sits with Evelyn in the car, hoping to mend their relationship. (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022, 0:13:12; 0:42:57). Additionally, Waymond’s gender deviance, seen through his femininity, challenges the idea of an authoritative man. Throughout the film, he is compliant and easygoing, rejecting all stereotypical notions given to Asian American men (Shek, 2007).

The film deliberately appraises the popular model minority myth as an attempt to queer Asian American representation (Coe, 2023). The idea of the model minority myth is a product of the United States during the Cold War period, contending that Asian Americans are just like their white counterparts: they are “economically self-sufficient, politically quiescent, and nuclear family-oriented” (Ponce, 2021, p. 101). Such an idea has roots in racism, heteronormativity, and

neoliberalism (Ponce, 2021; Coe, 2023). Additionally, queerness in relation to Asian Americans is placed in between extremes: receiving “honorary white status” by conforming to the dominant heterosexual culture or being subjected to rampant homophobia in ‘unassimilated’ immigrant communities (Ponce, 2021, p. 102). The film challenges racist and heteronormative understandings of Asian American families through its portrayal of the family’s raw struggles with capitalist systems and the gradual acceptance of queerness. The film's beginning exhibits Evelyn’s sense of restlessness, a symptom of capitalism’s enforcement of efficiency (Heron, 2019). Similarly, Evelyn states, “I’m no good at anything” (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022, 1:03:31). The idea that one needs to be good at one thing, in other words, ‘specialize’ is an outcome of neoliberalism (Heron, 2019). This model minority myth places the Wang family as “failed Asian Americans” that “‘make nothing’ of their lives” (Coe, 2023, p. 42). This sense of failure that the film portrays is not without a happy ending. Despite succumbing to capitalist expectations, which are at odds with the model minority myth, the family managed to rectify their conflicts. Furthermore, the film follows the journey to acceptance of Evelyn’s queer daughter, Joy. At first, Evelyn hesitates due to her fear of her father, Gong Gong, and his potential reaction. However, following her epiphany, she confidently introduces Becky to Gong Gong as Joy’s girlfriend. Although initially appearing confused, Gong Gong later learns to accept Becky alongside Joy’s queerness (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022, 2:08:47). These realities depicted in the film aim to subvert the idea of a model minority myth.

Conclusion

This essay argued that *Everything Everywhere All at Once* challenges normative understandings of race, sexuality, and gender through the queering of the ‘gaze,’ sexuality, and Asian American representation. As illustrated, *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, is a brilliant production, critiquing various forms of oppression and problematizing dominant ways of thinking. This essay addressed the philosophical elements of the film, positing that viewers are encouraged to think beyond the film’s surface. By delving into Ke Huy Quan’s gender performances, this analysis demonstrates how gender categories of what men and women ‘should be’ are blurred in the film. This notion is echoed in Waymond’s gender deviance as a redemptive element rather than a disadvantage. Finally, this analysis addressed the prominent model minority myth, showcasing the film’s deliberate confrontation of Asian American

stereotypes. The film's combination of an Asian American family, philosophical themes, and the use of a metaverse form an enticing plotline, engaging viewers to think critically. All in all, this cinematic piece contributes to the ongoing discourse in film studies and queer theory, leaving a powerful mark in history through the storytelling of queerness.

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Representing the Underrepresented: Exploring Diversity in CBC News Media and the Role of Self-Identifying Journalists in Disrupting Traditional Practices

Darnell Wyke

Abstract

In recent years, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has bolstered its diversity efforts, and in 2021 they announced a new equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) plan to be implemented through 2025, designed to better serve underrepresented groups in Canadian media. Throughout the past decade, CBC has made multiple efforts to increase EDI practices throughout its organization. However, scholarship has identified the limitations of previous policies in making a meaningful impact, and research documenting the underrepresentation of diverse groups in Canadian news media is almost non-existent. The objective of this study is to acquire a deeper understanding of how CBC News programming reflects Canada's current cultural diversity by studying how diverse groups are represented in CBC News programming. To measure this, a two-week content analysis of written and televised CBC News was conducted, which explored and categorized emergent themes in the representation of diverse Canadians and the journalists who cover diverse stories. The data revealed CBC's extensive coverage of Indigenous communities and a commitment to empowering diverse journalists with the opportunity to tell such stories about the communities to which they belong. To further investigate the latter phenomenon, a discourse analysis of diverse stories written by self-identifying journalists was conducted. This section highlighted how self-identifying journalists incorporate personal experience to tell more impactful stories about the communities they identify with. Finally, this report illuminates potential oversights in CBC's coverage of underrepresented groups in news media. This report encourages CBC to conduct an internal organizational review to evaluate how they can improve news coverage of underrepresented groups before the conclusion of their current EDI plan in 2026, suggesting the continued empowerment of self-identifying journalists and including more diverse perspectives into the newsfeed as potential solutions.

Keywords

EDI, journalism, representation, diversity, news media, CBC, Indigenous



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Introduction

For decades, researchers have highlighted and examined how diverse Canadians are underrepresented across the Canadian media landscape (Mahtani, 2001). Studies have demonstrated that despite Canada's real and perceived multiculturalism, diverse populations continue to be misrepresented and underrepresented in Canadian media (Mahtani, 2001; Clark, 2014). As others have highlighted, this issue is not localized to Canada, in many countries across the Western world, cultural minorities are both misrepresented and underrepresented across a wide variety of media discourses (Klein & Shiffman, 2009; Clark, 2014; Arguedes et al., 2023).

In 2008, diversity within news media was recognized by Canadian media professionals as one of the five areas of Canadian media that requires further research (Savage, 2008). Despite the call for action, over the last 15 years, studies that investigate diversity in Canadian media remain scarce. Driving much of the research in this area is Brad Clark, whose 2014 and 2017 studies of CBC's organizational norms revealed the difficulties of CBC's EDI policies in meaningfully impacting the news coverage of underrepresented groups (Clark, 2014; Clark, 2017). Clark demonstrates news media's implicit biases against reporting on diverse groups and offers actionable strategies to combat these biases, including empowering diverse reporters with the opportunity to use their cultural knowledge in diverse stories (Clark, 2017). In the nine years since Clark conducted his initial study, Canada's population has become more diverse (StatsCanada, 2022b). There are now over 450 ethnic groups living in Canada and the percentage of people who belong to racialized groups has increased every year since 2016 (StatsCanada, 2022b). Therefore, it is imperative, now more than ever, that Canadian news media represent Canada's diverse population and perspectives.

To this point, there has been a paucity of quantitative research on the extent to which diverse Canadians are being underrepresented in news media, which groups are being underrepresented, and the nature in which these groups are being underrepresented. However, it would be incorrect to suggest there has been no research at all into these areas. As Clark (2017) highlights, there have been studies in North America that have produced quantitative demographic data about minority participation in news media, however, this research mostly emerged during the early 2010s and focused on the identity of news producers, rather than the subjects of the news themselves. This study seeks to emphasize the importance of researching the stories that are produced by Canadian news organizations, and while the producers of the

texts are considered, the bulk of the data focuses on the news texts. In this aspect, this research study is the first Canadian quantitative study of the author's knowledge to approach the study of diversity and representation in Canadian news media from this perspective.

Methodology

This two-part study began with a hybrid qualitative/quantitative content analysis of National and Local CBC Front Page News. The content analysis used qualitative research methods to develop codes to highlight themes and trends, while quantitative methods were used to document the data. This method has proven to be successful in previous studies in which the researcher seeks emerging themes from the data (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In these instances, hybrid coding is useful. To understand what would be required for the content analysis, before the project officially began, I immersed myself in CBC news content to familiarize myself with the structure and norms of both television and written news. This process lasted approximately two weeks and helped me gain a deeper understanding of the types of data points I should look for, where to look for them, and how CBC's website worked to categorize and display different news stories. Once I was satisfied that I had a strong understanding of CBC's news content, I conducted a small literature review of media representation studies to understand the steps others had taken to create codes and what they felt was most important to document during their research. I then combined my preliminary research with that of previous scholarship to inform a set of *priori* codes to begin my study with. The *priori* codes were developed to fit within the accepted academic framework and engage with existing literature, as recommended by Proudfoot (2022), in his analysis of inductive and deductive hybrid thematic analysis in mixed methods research.

The second component of this study was a discourse analysis of stories written by diverse self-identifying journalists about the communities with which they identified with. Since its rise in popularity in the 1980s, discourse analysis has been an important tool in the study of mass media messaging (Van Dijk, 1983). Discourse analysis provides the opportunity to research themes within the texts, observing both what is said and what is omitted, as well as the strategies that inform the production of such texts (Van Dijk, 1983). Short of conducting interviews with self-identifying journalists, discourse analysis provides the best opportunity to understand the practices of self-identifying journalists at CBC.

The term ‘diverse’ is used often throughout this paper and, given it has become a buzzword in modern society, a definition is useful for understanding its purpose in this study. The term was selected as it was thought to be more positive than categorizing people as racialized or marginalized. By using ‘diverse’ in place of these words, the focus on the differences of individuals does not carry a negative connotation. Additionally, this study was designed to be as inclusive as possible to impact the greatest number of diverse groups who have historically been underrepresented in Canadian legacy news media and are, in general, not the majority population in Canada. While other studies have typically focused on a select few core groups, this is exclusive and potentially ignorant of other groups that are also experiencing underrepresentation, which is why this study includes ethnic minorities, gender minorities, religious minorities, and people with disabilities under the umbrella term ‘diverse individuals.’ It is also therefore important to identify why women, while not excluded from the study, do not make up a distinct category in the qualitative data of this study. In short, while the quality of the study may have improved from gendered coding, one of the most important aspects of this study was its commitment to straying away from traditional labeling practices that are often used in these types of studies and instead relying upon the self-identification of individuals and news producers to aid in the coding process. Therefore, since most sources of gender were not identified, it did not feel right to assign genders and make it a part of this study. Furthermore, the scope of the study was already very large given the timeframe, and including as many different groups was prioritized above differences within specific groups. This study does, however, recognize that women, specifically diverse women, are a historically underrepresented group as both news producers and sources of stories, and future inquiry into this topic is recommended.

Part 1: Content Analysis**Table 1*****Total Number of News Stories***

TYPE OF NEWS	DIVERSE LOCAL NEWS	NON-DIVERSE LOCAL NEWS	DIVERSE NATIONAL NEWS	NON-DIVERSE NATIONAL NEWS	TOTALS
TELEVISION NEWS	25	36	46	70	177
WRITTEN NEWS	37	220	150	352	759
TOTALS	62	256	196	422	936

The sample for the study comprised 62 *Diverse Local News Stories* and 196 *Diverse National News Stories*, for a total of 258 *Diverse Stories* (stories referencing a diverse group or individual in some form or fashion). This study tracked how numerous stories appeared in the news each day to identify what percentage of stories are diverse, which is the reason 936 stories are identified in Table 1. However, the 678 non-diverse stories were not coded any further and are thus not a part of the sample.

In total, *Diverse Stories* made up 27.6% of *All Stories* (every story, both diverse and non-diverse, that appeared throughout the study). Even if diverse populations were not the focus of the story, stories were coded as diverse, even when a diverse individual only appeared as a source in the story, or a theme about a diverse group was mentioned. An example of this would be a story that mentions the government wanting to improve infrastructure for Indigenous communities as part of a larger story about policy. *Diverse Stories* made up 24.6% of written news stories, appearing 29.9% in *National Written News* and 14.4% in *Local Written News*. *Diverse Stories* made up 40% of all television news stories, appearing in 39.7% of *National Television News* and 40.1% of *Local Television News*.

Table 2

Frequency Data: Number of Stories Underrepresented Groups Appear In

GROUP BEING REPRESENTED	# OF STORIES BY SELF IDENTIFYING JOURNALISTS	# OF STORIES NOT BY SELF-IDENTIFYING JOURNALISTS	TOTAL # OF STORIES GROUP APPEARS IN
2SLGBTQIA+	0	16	16
ASIAN	3	10	13
BLACK	0	69	69
DISABLED PEOPLE	0	17	17
DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS (ALL)	1	3	4
EAST INDIAN	0	33	33
FOREIGNERS	0	2	2
IMMIGRANTS	0	10	10
INDIGENOUS	17	66	83
INDIGENOUS (MÉTIS)	2	8	10
LATIN AMERICAN	0	7	7
MIDDLE EASTERN	1	8	9
RELIGIOUS MINORITIES	0	13	13
UNIDENTIFIED VISIBLE MINORITIES	0	20	20

The data from *Table 2* seems to indicate a higher number of *Diverse Stories* than previously reported in this paper. However, some stories focused on multiple groups at the same time. For instance, a singular story could be about both Black and Indigenous people. While the

story is coded at each code, it does not mean an additional story is about diversity, hence the discrepancy in the two figures.

The most represented diverse group during this study is Indigenous people, who appear in 32.2% of *Diverse Stories* and 8.9% of *All Stories*. The second most represented group is Black people, who receive coverage in 26.7% of *Diverse Stories* and 7.3% of *All Stories*. The distant, yet clear third most represented group is East Indian people, who appear in 12.7% of *Diverse Stories* and 3.5% of *All Stories*. In total, the *Three Most Represented Groups* appear in 71.6% of *Diverse Stories* and 19.7% of *All Stories*. No other group is represented in over 8% of *Diverse Stories*.

Less Represented Groups refer to those groups who appear in 10 or more stories but are not part of the *Three Most Represented Groups*. *Less Represented Groups* include 2SLGBTQIA+ people, Asian people, Disabled people, Immigrants, Métis people, Religious Minorities, and Unidentified Visible Minorities (visible minorities who are not identified as belonging to a specific group). In total, *Less Represented Groups* appear in 30.6% of *Diverse Stories* and 8.4% of *All Stories*.

The *Least Represented Groups* are those that appear in less than 10 stories across the length of the study. This group includes Foreigners (people represented as foreign visitors/permanent residents with no other identifiers), Middle Eastern people, Latin American people, and Diverse Individuals (stories referring to multiple diverse people at the same time who do not belong to the same group). In total, the *Least Represented Groups* made up just 8.5% of *Diverse Stories* and 2.3% of *All Stories*.

Stories were also coded according to where they appear in the news. When it comes to the news, the location of the story matters. There is a difference between front-page and back-page news. While this study focuses only on *Front-Page News*, this is defined through the context of a modern digital media landscape, in which news is most often delivered digitally, not physically. Digital distribution allows for more stories to reach *Front-Page News*, as readers can easily scroll through the website without having to physically flip through the pages. Once a reader is forced to commit an action that involves anything other than simply scrolling (aside from clicking on a story they would like to read), the story is no longer considered to be a part of the front page.

Table 3

Diverse Stories Told by Self-Identifying Journalists

AUTHOR IDENTITY	# OF STORIES TOLD	# OF UNIQUE STORIES TOLD
INDIGENOUS	7	6
INDIGENOUS AND BLACK	1	1
BLACK	8	3
MÉTIS	3	2
KOREAN	1	1
FRENCH	1	1
TOTALS	21	14

Out of 258 *Diverse Stories*, only 21 stories (8.1%) are told by journalists who self-identified as belonging to a specific cultural group. This number differs from the 24 stories referenced in Table 2 because some stories were told by self-identifying journalists who focused on more than one diverse group. The most likely reporters to self-identify are Indigenous and Black people, who when combined account for 16 stories (76.2%) told by self-identifying journalists. When repeat stories are omitted, there are just 14 unique stories told by self-identifying authors, with half being told by Indigenous authors.

Table 4***Frequency of Diverse Stories***

# OF DAYS STORY APPEARS	APPEARS ONCE	APPEARS MORE THAN ONCE	TOTALS
THE AUTHOR DOES NOT SELF-ID	136	48	184
AUTHOR SELF IDs	14	7	21
NO REPORTER IDENTIFIED	9	11	20
ORGANIZATION	28	5	33
TOTALS	187	71	258

71.3% of *Diverse Stories* are told by journalists who refrained from self-identifying themselves as belonging to a particular cultural group. 20.5% of *Diverse Stories* are not credited to any one specific author. Stories are coded as having *No Reporter Identified* when there is no reporter associated with a particular story. Stories are coded as being authored by an organization when the story is accredited to a news organization instead of a particular author, such as CBC News or AP News.

Table 5***Number of Stories that Appeared Twice or More on the Same Day***

# OF DAYS STORY APPEARS	THE STORY APPEARS ONCE ON THE SAME DAY	THE STORY APPEARS TWICE ON THE SAME DAY	TOTALS
STORY APPEARS ONCE	164	23	187
STORY APPEARS TWICE	64	7	71

187 stories only appear once in the newsfeed. However, this number is still not indicative of the number of *Unique Diverse Stories* that appear in this study. 23 stories appear twice or more on the same day in *Front Page News* and only once in the news cycle. Seven stories appear twice or more on the same day in *Front Page News* and appear multiple days in the news cycle.

Taking this into account, there are a total of 164 *Unique Diverse Stories* that appear in the newsfeed, which makes up 63.6% of all *Diverse Stories* that appear in this study. Further research should be conducted on how often unique diverse stories appear in the newsfeed compared to unique non-diverse stories.

Topic Data

18 unique topics were identified and coded. A high number of topics were identified to highlight the variety of diverse stories encountered throughout the study. The same story could be coded to multiple topics if the content of the story called for it. For instance, one story used the story of visual artists and their exhibits to discuss cultural concerns affecting the artist's community. For this story, it was appropriate to code it both as a story about *Arts* as well as *Concerns of the Community Culture*.

The most discussed topic in *Diverse Stories* is *Concerns of the Community*. I identified four mutually exclusive types of community concerns categories. These included **Culture** (Concerns of the community that have to do with that the specific group to which the story is discussing) and environment (Concerns of the Community regarding the environment). **Health** (Concerns of the community regarding the overall health of the group or one of its members), and **Place** (Concerns of people living within the same place, spatially or economically). Ultimately, all these subcategories were grouped into *Concerns of the Community* as the primary topic, the community concern about a particular event/thing, is the same.

Table 6*Topics of Diverse Stories*

TOPIC	INDIGENOUS	BLACK	EAST INDIAN	OTHER (11 GROUPS)	TOTALS
CONCERNS	29	34	20	63	146
INT NEWS	2	15	10	11	38
ARTS	10	10	0	13	33
NTRL DIS.	17	3	0	7	27
EXCEPTIONALISM	8	8	1	8	25
INNOVATION	14	1	2	5	22
INJUSTICE	1	5	0	13	19
HEROIC STORIES	3	2	0	10	15
VIOL. (INFLICTED)	3	1	7	1	12
AGGR. (INFLICTED)	1	1	0	9	11
SPORTS	2	12	0	2	16
VIOL. (COMMITTED)	0	2	0	4	6
AGGR. (COMMITTED)	0	0	0	1	1
GOOD SAMARITAN	7	2	0	4	13
HIGHLIGHTING CULTURE	6	1	0	3	10
TOTALS	103	97	40	154	394

Diverse Stories discuss *Concerns of the Community* 37.1% of the time. The topics with the next highest frequency are *International News* and *Arts*, which are discussed 9.6% and 8.4% of the time, respectively.

In general, Indigenous and Black people are afforded the widest variety in coverage compared to all other diverse groups represented within the study. A noticeable omission in the news coverage of underrepresented populations is stories in which a member of a diverse group commits an act of violence or aggression. With just 1.8% of *Diverse Stories* dealing with these topics, there appears to be a clear editorial choice by CBC to avoid depicting underrepresented populations as dangerous.

Source Data

In my study, every story that is not categorized as a diverse story is assumed to be told through the lens of whiteness. While there are certainly many non-minority sources in *Diverse Stories*, I did not document them, as a non-minority source would be considered the norm in Western news media. However, non-minority sources are coded as *white* if *Diverse Stories* have an absence of diverse sources. Sources are coded as *white* when they self-identified as Caucasian, or when sources did not self-identify and looked white in appearance and displayed no identifiable diverse markers.

Table 7***Type of Sources***

TITLE OF SOURCE	INDIGENOUS	BLACK	EAST INDIAN	WHITE	OTHER DIVERSE IND. (11 GROUPS)	TOTALS
ACTIVIST	4	12	3	0	8	27
ARTIST	5	11	0	0	8	24
ATHLETE	1	8	2	0	7	18
GVRT. OFFICIAL	12	3	9	4	12	40
COMMUNITY MEMBER	20	14	11	3	22	70
STUDENT	9	4	3	0	13	29
OTHER (21 TYPES)	9	5	8	8	37	67
TOTALS	60	57	36	15	107	275

As to be expected, based on the other data presented in the *Frequency* and *Topics* subsections, Indigenous, Black, and East Indian people receive the most representation as sources. However, while Indigenous and Black people are the focus of 83 and 69 stories respectively, they only appear as sources in *Diverse Stories* 60 and 57 times. This indicates that even if a diverse group is the focus of a particular story, they will not always be the source of said story. This characteristic is exaggerated further when one considers the likely possibility that all Indigenous and Black sources coded in the study may not have exclusively informed Indigenous and Black stories. While the *Three Most Represented Groups* are the subject of 71.6% of *Diverse Stories*, they only appear as sources in 59.5% of *Diverse Stories*. All other diverse groups appear as sources in 41.6% of *Diverse Stories* and white people appear as the

only source of *Diverse Stories*, just 5.4% of the time. Once again, multiple sources can appear in a singular story, and this is the reason the cumulative percentage is higher than 100%.

Besides documenting which diverse group a source belongs to, this study also coded the title/profession of the source. This was done to demonstrate how sources of *Diverse Stories* are given legitimacy by CBC and to further highlight how diverse groups are being framed in CBC news media.

The most common type of diverse sources is *Community Members*, who make up 25.5% of all sources in *Diverse Stories*. Unsurprisingly, given CBC's position as a publicly funded media company, *Government Officials* is the second most common source, accounting for 14.5% of all sources of *Diverse Stories*. When we think of underrepresentation in the media, we do not always think of which people within the underrepresented groups receive the most attention. However, this was not an issue at CBC during this study. The source data indicates a strong diversity in the types of voices that were given a platform by CBC, not only in terms of their cultural identity but their professional identity as well. This is best demonstrated by the fact that sources across 21 different professions make up 24.4% of the sources of *Diverse Stories*.

Part 2: Discourse Analysis of Stories Told by Self-Identifying Diverse Journalists

Diverse journalists at mainstream media outlets are often tasked with the coverage of diverse stories and communities (Nishikawa et al., 2009; Sui et al., 2018). There is a belief that minority journalists' proximity to diverse communities, and their own lived experience as members of these communities, will allow them to cover these types of stories better than their white colleagues (Nishikawa et al., 2009; Sui et al., 2018). However, there is also research that supports the idea that many diverse reporters may actively avoid using their lived experience to inform diverse stories, and in some extreme cases, avoid acting as an advocate entirely, as these practices are often unaligned with accepted journalistic standards (Nishikawa et al., 2009). Another potential issue that arises in assigning the bulk of coverage of diverse stories to diverse journalists is that diverse stories are often viewed in the newsroom as less important and less significant than other 'more newsworthy' stories about politics or business (Pritchard and Stonbely, 2007). Typically, this results in white journalists continuing to cover the most newsworthy stories, which are most likely to earn journalists a promotion, whereas diverse journalists are stuck covering the less newsworthy stories, resulting in the reinforcement of white

dominance in the newsroom (Pritchard and Stonbely, 2007). In this sense, diverse journalists are essentially asked to sacrifice their own professional goals to become advocates for their communities (Pritchard and Stonbely, 2007). However, despite the real or perceived pitfalls for diverse journalists in covering such stories, this study reveals that several CBC journalists are choosing to self-identify with a particular group and commit to telling important stories about communities they are a part of. This section examines the strategies used by self-identifying journalists at CBC that take advantage of journalists' lived experiences as members of diverse communities. This section highlights how these strategies are used to inform and educate the public, demonstrating how self-identification can be used by diverse journalists to enhance stories about underrepresented populations. Furthermore, this section seeks to demonstrate how self-identification is a tool that applies to improving the coverage of all underrepresented groups in the Canadian news media.

Table 8***Unique Stories Told by Self-Identifying Journalists***

AUTHOR IDENTITY	UNIQUE STORIES ABOUT INDIGENOUS/MÉTIS CULTURE	UNIQUE STORIES ABOUT KOREAN CULTURE	UNIQUE STORIES ABOUT MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURE
INDIGENOUS	6	0	0
BLACK	3	0	0
INDIGENOUS/BLACK	1	0	0
MÉTIS	2	0	0
KOREAN	0	1	0
FRENCH	0	0	1
TOTALS	12	1	1

For this section, only those stories written by self-identifying journalists who covered the cultural group to which they self-identified as belonging are included in the sample. This

decision was made as this study sought to understand how individuals' lived experiences as a member of the community were used, or were not used, to inform the story.

A common theme across CBC News stories authored by self-identifying journalists is the inclusion of culturally specific language in the story. In the stories studied, Indigenous language is used to confer meaning to places or people and is used to respect both the individual and Indigenous culture. In a story discussing the development of a new arts centre, an Indigenous author incorporates both the traditional names of the Kanien'kehá:ka community and the Kahnawà:ke word for council chief.

The Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) community, south of Montreal, has been working since 2016 on financing the construction of a multi-purpose arts centre that will house the Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Centre (KORLCC), Turtle Island Theatre Company, and a visitors centre. Not only is it a home for these three organizations, but it is also a home for the community...to celebrate our own language, said Ietsénhaiehs (council chief) Jessica Lazare from the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (Deer, 2023, paras. 3-4).

Reintegrating Indigenous language into modern culture is empowering, as it represents the legacy of those who overcame attempted language annihilation (McCarty et al., 2022). Furthermore, just as McCarty (2022) suggests that Indigenous languages' inclusion in school curricula serves an important educational purpose in society, I propose that integrating traditional cultural language into the news media can play an educational role in public discourse. On a basic level, integration makes traditional languages seem more commonplace and mainstream, which in turn lessens how much diverse groups are othered within society. On a deeper level, teaching the public a culturally significant language and the meaning behind the words provides the opportunity for all Canadians to see the world from one another's perspective, as certain words in other languages can convey meaning that goes beyond a simple translation. An example of this comes from a story about two Korean artists struggling to come to terms with what it means to be Korean Canadian. During the interview, one of the artists and the journalist, who is also Korean, explained the importance behind the Korean term *Jeung son Jah*, educating the audience in the process.

Source: I'm kind of in an odd position because I'm the *jeung son jah*, which is very important.

Journalist: Yes, very important! Continuation of the bloodline.

Source: Exactly, yes. The first son of three generations (Yoon, 2023, 2:38-2:50).

In this instance, the author's understanding of the Korean language helps her connect to the sources being interviewed and serves as a confirmation of cultural similarities and understanding, as well as educating the audience. The written portion of this story is also offered entirely in Chinese and Korean, providing further accessibility options. The fact that multiple authors from different diverse groups incorporate their traditional language into their news stories implies that self-identifying journalists view language preservation as important and that they view news media as a legitimate platform in which the public can be educated.

In each story included in the sample, a member (or members) of the diverse group is included as a source in the story. Each time, diverse sources were the first sources that appeared in the story. As other data highlighted (see Table 7), this is not always the case in *Diverse Stories*. This privileges underrepresented voices by granting them authority on matters that are important to their culture and gives power to diverse perspectives that are often marginalized. In a story about Indigenous musicians, the journalist empowers diverse perspectives by providing a platform on which Indigenous artists can speak freely and openly about why music is so important to their cultural identity.

Kanatakta said that as Indigenous people when our drumming, languages and even traditional foods were banned by colonizers, we began making new traditions of our own. Traditions like bannock emerged, but new types of music flourished, blending Indigenous sounds with other genres like reggae and blues. There's a beautiful resistance, and not resistance like I want to fight. It's resistance that I want to make love (Kanatakta, as cited by Johnson, 2023, paras. 6-8).

By offering a distinct perspective on what the audience is accustomed to, self-identifying journalists encourage thinking and discussion about the intricacies of the topic itself. In a story

about disagreements between First Nations and Métis groups in Ontario, in response to new legislation, an Indigenous author highlights differences between Indigenous and Métis groups in Ontario and how these differences can cause issues between them. Often, Indigenous and Métis cultures can be lumped together by the media, and the two groups are often depicted as having the same goals. However, as a self-identifying Indigenous woman, the author demonstrates an understanding of the differences between Indigenous and Métis cultures and offers a perspective that potentially challenges readers' beliefs about these two groups.

Ontario's recognition of the six historic Métis communities identified in 2017 is at the root of the issue for some First Nations. The RHW's research said the move by the province provided the MNO with de facto veto power over land-based projects and territorial negotiations involving First Nations by requiring them to consult with the MNO on issues like economic development, mining and infrastructure licensing, specific land claims and treaty land entitlement negotiations (Schwientek, 2023, paras. 18-19).

In their study of the Brazilian News ecosystem, Ganter and Paulino (2020) revealed how independent digital journalists have worked to counteract dominant media ideologies and by doing so larger hegemonic societal beliefs (Ganter & Paulino, 2020). Tactics used by self-identifying journalists can be used to achieve a similar result in Canadian media. By privileging a perspective that is not the dominant one, whether this is through a singular focus on a non-majority opinion or incorporating multiple conflicting perspectives, self-identifying journalists are challenging the notion that news and opinions require homogenization.

Some self-identifying journalists use their position at CBC to bring awareness to stories in smaller communities in which they currently live, grew up, or identify with. This coverage goes beyond an Indigenous reporter simply reporting on Indigenous groups monolithically, instead focusing on specific subcultures. For instance, one reporter who self-identified as being a part of the Kahnawà:ke Indigenous community authored a story about a local Kahnawà:ke activist who is advocating for safe driving initiatives in the community to create safer spaces for local children. Other self-identifying journalists, specialized in covering topics from specific Indigenous communities and areas (not Indigenous culture as a whole). This is clear in journalist profiles on the CBC News website. In the example below, the journalist is identified as

specializing in the coverage of Atlantic Canada's Indigenous communities. "Oscar Baker III is a Black and Mi'kmaw reporter from Elsipogtog First Nation. He is the Atlantic region reporter for CBC Indigenous" (Baker III, n.d., para. 1). Just as reporters specialize in weather, politics, or sports, self-identifying journalists' proximity to the communities they cover allows them to act as experts in this area, guiding readers through the twists and turns of the story by providing a context that helps build a larger picture for unfamiliar readers. In this instance, the author's familiarity with Indigenous and Black communities allows him to provide additional insight into mental health concerns affecting these communities, without coming across as insensitive or stereotypical.

(Green) said men have poor health outcomes in several areas with shorter life expectancy than women, they have more frequent attempted and completed suicides, more alcohol and drug misuse, and more brain injuries. Then if you look at some specific groups of men under the umbrella of male-identified, you have Indigenous and Black men who have even worse outcomes (Baker III, 2023, paras. 9-10).

A recent study reveals that Western audiences are becoming more open to individual opinions in serious journalism, as new media trends continue to blur the dichotomy between journalistic genres (Riegert, 2021). While objectivity is a core principle of traditional Western journalism, cultural journalism allows subjectivity to be incorporated into the news (Riegert, 2021). As demonstrated above, self-identifying journalists' proximity to the communities they cover affords them the specialization required to be considered 'experts' when it comes to reporting on diverse groups. However, in this scenario, their expertise is informed by their lived experiences as members of the communities, or similar communities, and this legitimizes self-identifying journalists as authority figures on these topics. This authority allows self-identifying journalists to incorporate subjectivity into news stories, as it acts as expert opinion as if they are interviewing a source from the community. By incorporating their own lived experience into news stories, self-identifying journalists can incorporate subjectivity into news stories similarly to cultural journalists. In this example, the author uses her lived experience to establish the story she will tell. This gives the author authority on the subject and demonstrates her interest in the topic.

Ever since I came to Canada from Korea as a kid, I've been wondering what it means to be Korean-Canadian. Then I met these two Korean-Canadian artists who had just done an exhibit on this very issue. I sat down with them over some Korean fusion food and asked them...when you're a part of two cultures what do you gain (Yoon, 2023, 0:00-0:22, 2023).

Missing from self-identifying author's coverage in CBC News are stories that approach current issues and events from a cultural perspective. No stories provided a diverse perspective on topics such as politics or business. Each story is firmly within the cultural community in which diverse stories are allowed to exist in Canadian society. As previously highlighted, diverse Canadians exist in contrast to the 'normal' that is white Canada (Peake & Ray, 2001), and this normalized whiteness is continued through existing practices in the news media (Pritchard & Stonbely, 2007).

Another noteworthy absence from the study of stories written by self-identifying journalists is the inclusion of their own perspective on why they chose to self-identify while other coworkers did not. Unfortunately, I did not have access to the journalists in this study and therefore could not get a sense of why they decided to self-identify, while other employees declined. It is recommended that a future study further explore this practice.

Discussion

CBC's EDI plan *Progress in Progress* is built upon five pillars, to which CBC refers to as their 'daily commitments' (CBC, 2021). CBC has committed to *Choosing EDI* by recognizing and removing barriers for diverse employees and approaching workplace culture through an EDI lens (CBC, 2021), *Creating Content for All* Canadians by ensuring their content reflects the experiences of all people living in Canada regardless of their ethnicity or identity (CBC, 2021), *Improving Workplace Culture* by recognizing EDI as a core workplace value (CBC, 2021), *Connecting to Communities* by building relationships with underrepresented communities to better understand and represent their needs (CBC, 2021) and *Straightforward Communications* by informing Canadians of their progress in these aforementioned areas and encouraging discussions about EDI throughout Canada's media industry (CBC, 2021).

CBC's pledge to create content that accurately reflects Canada and its diverse population, as well as its overarching commitment to serve Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit communities through this plan (CBC, 2021) is both necessary and praiseworthy. As Canada's public service broadcaster, CBC is rightly held to a higher standard than other Canadian news media companies when it comes to reflecting and reporting on Canadian society. However, CBC's responsibility to improve the coverage of underrepresented communities should not be taken for granted and thus celebrated as an important step in achieving accurate and meaningful representation for underrepresented communities in the future. CBC has highlighted the importance of accountability for the implementation of EDI initiatives (CBC, 2021) and this section of the report aims to fulfill this civic duty. While many elements of CBC's EDI plan emphasize internal initiatives, the data produced in this report is best suited to address the second pillar, *Creating Content for All*.

If CBC is striving to create content that represents Canada and all its diverse groups, then the percentage of space allocated to CBC's news coverage of diverse groups should at a minimum closely resemble the number of Canadian citizens who identify as visible minorities. This method has been used in previous media representation studies (Klein, 2009; Sharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2022). According to Stats Canada, 9,639,200 Canadians identify as visible minorities, this amounts to 26.5% of the Canadian population (StatsCanada, 2022a). However, StatsCanada does not recognize Indigenous people as visible minorities (StatsCanada, 2022a). To adjust for this, I added the total number of Indigenous people living in Canada to the number of visible minorities. In 2021, 1,807,250 Canadians identified as Indigenous (Government of Alberta, 2023), bringing the new total to 11,446,450 or 31.5%. While imperfect, as it does not account for white religious minorities and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, 31.5% is a relevant baseline to establish and it should be understood that in reality, this number is slightly lower than the number of diverse Canadians.

In *Local Written News*, CBC underrepresented minorities in the media at a disproportionately low rate, with just 14.4% of stories covering underrepresented communities (see Table 1). On the other end of the spectrum, *Local Television News* covers underrepresented communities at a rate of 41%. One potential explanation for the increased coverage of *Diverse Stories* in *Local Television News* content is the visual element of TV news. If CBC wants to promote their improvements in EDI, television is an avenue in which Canadians can see this

progress for themselves (Clark, 2017). The differences in the frequency of *Diverse Stories* in written and television news have the potential to increase public perception of the degree to which CBC is telling and promoting diverse stories. Data from this study demonstrates that CBC distributes more written news stories than TV news stories on any given day (see Table 1), however, this does not consider the cultural significance of the two media. When we combine the data from *Local Written News* and *Local Television News* together, *Local CBC News* reports on underrepresented communities just 19.5% of the time.

CBC performed stronger at a national level. In *National Written News*, CBC represents underrepresented groups at a rate that is proportional to the presence of diverse groups in Canadian society at 29.9% (see Table 1). Similarly, to Local News, *National Television News* represents diverse groups at a rate of 39.7%. When we combine the data from *National Written News* and *National Television News* together, *National CBC News* reports on underrepresented communities 31.7% of the time, nearly identical to the 31.5% baseline. At a national level, it is fair to say that CBC has succeeded in creating content that reflects the cultural diversity of Canada. However, upon closer examination, this statement cannot hold up.

In practice, some groups receive much more coverage on CBC News than others. This results in many diverse groups receiving little to no coverage and their continued underrepresentation (see Table 2). A primary example of this underrepresentation is the lack of coverage of Asian Canadians. According to StatsCanada, Asian people make up nearly 50% of all visible minorities in Canada (2022a), however, they only appear in 5% of *Diverse Stories*.

Given CBC's organization-wide mandate that includes special provisions to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities (CBC, 2021), it should come as no surprise that Indigenous people are the most frequently represented group in diverse news stories (see Table 1), the most frequently represented sources of diverse news stories (see Table 7) and the most frequently represented group by self-identifying journalists (see Table 4). However, the lack of coverage of Métis and Inuit stories is noticeable. During the two weeks of coverage, just 10 *Diverse Stories* referenced Métis people and there were no stories of Inuit people that appeared in *Front-Page News*. While this study does not attempt to understand CBC's reasoning behind representing certain groups more than others, it is important to highlight that increased attention has been brought to social inequalities facing Indigenous and Black Canadians over the past three years. Most notably, the discovery of 215 unmarked residential school graves in 2021 and

the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020. This study advocates that CBC continues to spotlight Indigenous and Black stories while simultaneously highlighting other underrepresented communities.

As discussed earlier, diverse journalists are often burdened with a choice between pursuing their own professional goals or being advocates for their communities (Pritchard and Stonbely, 2007). One potential solution would be for news organizations to place greater emphasis and importance on stories about underrepresented communities so that diverse journalists feel as though their stories about diverse groups are just as important as any other story in the newsroom (Clark, 2017). To achieve this, I suggest that a ‘Diverse Perspectives’ section be added to the CBC News Front Page, which would feature one story about an underrepresented group each week. If this were to be implemented, it would have the potential to increase the quality of reporting on diverse stories and allow diverse journalists to make use of their cultural capital, as diverse journalists would be further empowered to use their lived experience and cultural knowledge to inform diverse stories.

Additionally, CBC is encouraged to make use of developer tools to create a customization feature, which would allow users who are interested in diverse stories to specify which cultural groups they are interested in and have their news feed updated accordingly. Perhaps this feature would also include a translation function, allowing users to read stories in their native languages. This has the potential to allow underrepresented groups to have better access to stories about their communities and simultaneously provide CBC with important data on how many Canadians are interested in stories about specific cultures and communities.

Conclusion

This study continued ongoing efforts to monitor diversity in Canadian news media, as equity, diversity, and inclusion practices in Western news media are increasingly viewed as important both socially and economically (Clark, 2014; Clark, 2017; Arguedas et al., 2023). Through a hybrid quantitative/qualitative content analysis, this study tracked how front page diverse news stories were covered at CBC News to understand how diverse Canadians were being represented in the media. The outcome of this analysis showed conflicting results. While CBC consistently represents Indigenous and to a lesser degree Black and East Indian groups in news media, it provided insufficient coverage for nearly every other diverse group. This study

focused on the strengths of CBC's coverage of underrepresented groups and sought to understand how self-identifying CBC journalists of diverse backgrounds used their lived experiences to inform stories about their communities. A discourse analysis of news stories told by self-identifying diverse journalists about their communities revealed that self-identifying diverse journalists take special consideration to include diverse sources in every story and elevate diverse voices to the forefront of the conversation. This section also revealed that self-identifying diverse journalists use their lived experiences to provide additional context and nuance to diverse stories, which provides the opportunity for education. Absent from the coverage of diverse stories by self-identifying journalists was the coverage of popular topics, such as politics or business, through a diverse perspective. The discussion section revealed that although CBC's coverage of diverse Canadians represents their prevalence within society (StatsCanada, 2022a), the coverage of diverse Canadians is not uniform, resulting in the continued underrepresentation of many cultural groups in CBC News media. This study recommends that CBC review strengths in its EDI plan that may have led to the increased and vibrant coverage of Indigenous groups and extrapolate these strengths to other underrepresented groups to achieve the goals they have set for themselves in their 2022-2025 EDI action plan. This study advocates for and encourages further research into the self-identification tactics of diverse journalists across Canadian news media.

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Clowning Around in Journalism: Exploring Local Journalistic Practices Defined by yyc.clowns

Sheroog Kubur

Abstract

Traditional legacy media have found themselves between a rock and a hard place – struggling to find their foothold with younger audiences and at the same time, forced to adapt to the demands of the industry minimizing the presence of local journalism. While social media has proven itself to be a means of connecting journalists to audiences, it is still unclear who is truly seeking out these journalists. The dominant perspectives on how social media could help address the challenges journalism faces today have been primarily preoccupied with how social media is used by traditional legacy media to connect with audiences. This study instead turns to social media environments where the people are seeking to connect to their local news through a well-known social media page in Calgary, yyc.clowns (now known as yycwave). The Instagram page has sustained a large following since 2019 and experimented with several types of content but has consistently remained a source of news for its large following, providing coverage and reporting on major stories of interest within Calgary. Through a discourse analysis of six news posts made by the account, this study seeks to answer how yyc.clowns defines the practices of local journalism, situating it as a viable source of news for its followers. This project consists of a video essay exploring the findings alongside a written literature review and discussion. The Instagram page acts as a liaison between its audience and legacy media, borrowing directly from legacy media news sources to deliver timely coverage of local topics of interest. This opens up the horizon for understanding how these popular social media accounts act as intermediaries allowing audiences that may not engage with legacy media to still receive news of relatively high quality.

Keywords

Local journalism, discourse analysis, citizen journalism, social media, Instagram

[Watch the Video Essay Here](#)



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Introduction

Journalism is still alive and well, despite the decline of the professional journalistic sphere. However, there seems to be a disconnect between professional journalism and news reporting, namely due to the economic crisis of journalism (Splichal & Dahlgren, 2016; Meyers & Davidson, 2016). These pressures spawned a form of news reporting that is both initiated by citizens and appeals to its audiences. The Instagram page yyc.clowns has developed a sizable following since it started posting in October of 2019, currently sitting at 69 thousand followers, just slightly more than the official Instagram page for CBC Calgary (CBC Calgary, n.d.) and almost 40 thousand more than CTV Calgary (CTV Calgary, n.d.). The page brands itself as the “#1 Calgary news and entertainment page,” and since 2019, has taken on a different look and quality, offering news updates and coverage of local news while maintaining steady engagement for these posts (YYC Clowns, n.d.; Social Blade, 2023). The news coverage is combined with entertaining memes and commentary about mundane life in Calgary. The transformation of yyc.clowns from a local meme forum to a culturally significant source of Calgary news warrants some investigation.

This research aims to uncover how yyc.clowns defines the practices of local journalism in Calgary. It plans to investigate this question by exploring the practices of yyc.clowns as they relate to journalistic practices and comparing them to traditional journalistic practices. From there, it will evaluate these practices to uncover how local journalism is practiced in Calgary in a way that appeals to a large audience.

Literature Review

A major theme in the literature surrounding journalistic practices and social media is the issue of journalistic control. Journalistic control embodies multiple dimensions; however, it can be best understood as the ways in which journalists are trusted as the primary mediators in interpreting social realities (Meyers & Davidson, 2016). Many of the issues raised regarding social media and citizen journalism are predicated on the professional journalist losing some degree of control and authority in news reporting.

The relevant literature concerning citizens and professionals directs its attention to the tensions that exist between citizen and professional journalism. The literature frequently cites the idea that ‘anyone can be a journalist,’ and seeks to uncover the differences between these

different forms of journalistic practices as they relate to news coverage (Greenwood & Thomas, 2015; Larson & Linder, 2018; Paulussen & D’heer, 2013). These discussions are frequently situated in the context of the economic crisis that journalism faces, namely the lack of adequate and reliable funding combined with an increased desire for trustworthy news coverage (Splichal & Dahlgren, 2016; Meyers & Davidson, 2016). The economic crisis of journalism also contributes to its de-professionalization, where journalism no longer fits in the parameters of what constitutes a profession (Splichal & Dahlgren, 2016). As journalism relies on a professional authority to do its job properly (Meyers & Davidson, 2016), without this professional authority, there is a risk of news reporting being outsourced elsewhere. This authority is consequently threatened because of the deterioration of the journalistic profession and the increase in alternative news sites to fill in these gaps (Paulussen & D’heer, 2013).

Evolving from citizen journalism news sites, there is a lengthy discussion into how professional journalists use social media and how this can be reconciled with deteriorating journalistic authority. Studies unpack how journalists interact with social media in particular, exploring both the affordances of social media sites in addressing some of the issues in journalism and how the journalist can use social media to regain some professional authority (Hermida & Mellado, 2020) in addition to how social media threatens professional authority (Ferrucci, 2018). Alfred Hermida and Claudia Mellado’s 2020 study into social media logic coinciding with journalistic practices strongly displays a trend in these studies by highlighting how Instagram and Twitter can effectively be used in accordance with news values. This is further contextualized by Jonathan Hendrickx’s 2023 study into social journalism, in which he attempts to understand how news values are implemented in a social media context by journalists attempting to appeal to a younger audience. Both of these studies exemplify the trend of how journalists interact with social media and their audiences effectively and identify opportunities for professional journalists to further utilize these tools.

A newer line of thinking considers how journalistic practices are shaped both by the journalist and the audience. Relevant literature suggests that journalists interact more with their audiences and more intentionally, relying on the audience to show them what they desire to be covered (Hendrickx, 2023). Michael Karlsson and Christer Clerwall’s 2018 study unpacks how journalistic norms and practices are socially constructed and illustrates how the audience’s perception of these norms and practices takes form today. This research is reflected in

discussions of social media and journalists, where journalists can respond to audience engagement with news coverage by allowing that engagement to inform news coverage (Hendrickx, 2023; Hermida & Mellado, 2020). This highlights a changing conception of journalistic practices as they relate to both the audience and social media. However, there is no discussion of how these factors contribute to a potential re-professionalization of journalism.

Much of the literature on the subject focuses on professional journalists and their reaction to the evolving practices. Despite some literature privileging the audience's perception of journalism, there is little discussion of the interaction between citizen journalists and their audiences. The position of the professional journalist is inflated in much of the research, often framing the understanding of social media and citizen journalism through the context of professional journalism. This sidelines citizen journalism that either does not adhere to traditional journalistic practices or dismisses where the audience seeks out news reporting. Additionally, there is a tendency in research to only address citizen journalism that exhibits isomorphism, or how it closely resembles professional journalism. The goal of this research is to address these gaps by privileging citizen journalism that defines its own practices without the limitations of professional journalism. This type of citizen journalism is worthy of being studied because it reflects a return to a form of journalism beyond institutional and professional constraints.

This contributes to the understanding of the professionalization of journalism because, while journalism as a profession may be threatened, the practice of journalism is alive and well. The de-professionalization of journalism may constitute a return to the professional ideology of journalism and these practices may be a return to the public service purpose of journalism.

There is also a significant gap in investigating how Instagram is used as a journalistic tool. While much of the research focuses on how Twitter is used by journalists, a report by Statista showed that, as of June 2023, Instagram is the third most popular social media platform in Canada, beaten only by YouTube and Facebook (Statista, 2023). Theoretically, Twitter holds affordances that are more adaptable to the news values (Hermida and Mellado, 2020), but Instagram remains more popular among Canadian social media users. This research addresses this gap because yyc.clowns is an Instagram native account and presents its information through a visual medium, something that is often overlooked in journalism research.

Methodology

This research was conducted using a discourse and rhetorical analysis of the first five news posts made by yyc.clowns during November (see Appendix A, B, C, D, E). The news posts were discerned from the entertainment content through the formatting of the post, which shifted during the undertaking of the research. News posts were marked by the format of appearing as a screenshot of a post from X, with a focus on a clear headline and a photo accompanying the post with a caption explaining the context of the post.

The posts were chosen based on timeliness alone rather than perceived newsworthiness. The trends analyzed were present in all reporting, although they were strongly exemplified by criminal reporting (see Appendix B, C, D). One area for further potential research would be looking closer into the posts that do not focus on criminal reporting and their presentation of the news and potentially the engagement around such posts.

The process for conducting the study involved doing background research into the standards and practices of existing news organizations. First, I observed trends in existing organizations that operate on a local level and found their journalistic standards and practices, which were often available on their respective website (CBC, 2023; Global News, 2023). While these were not any different from mainstream journalistic standards, reading through each of those guiding ethics helped orient me to a Canadian, specifically Calgarian, context.

Those guiding principles were then used to orient the analysis of the content on the yyc.clowns page. The change in the content's format made it relatively easier to break down the elements of each post and what yyc.clowns considered to be essential, especially when it came to condensing the longer news stories into digestible content for Instagram. The content was analysed by breaking down each key element of the post to understand how it adhered to existing journalistic practices and the ways the page implemented these practices. This was a more effective process than answering a series of predetermined guiding questions because the captions were often taken word-for-word from other sources, which meant that the captions behaved primarily as the primary news element of the post.

The context of the posts was most relevant around the major story that yyc.clowns reported on: the shooting in mid-November. The context was supplemented by examining the statistics relating to followers lost and gained compiled for social media accounts, collected

through *Social Blade*. This platform provides insights into how the public is engaging with a given Instagram page en masse as opposed to through comments or likes.

A limitation of this method is that it does not scrutinize the quality of reporting as much as it examines what is reported and the reach of the content. Additionally, it operates on the assumption that yyc.clowns is producing original content, which is disproven. This assumption meant that throughout the study, some presumed overlapping values between yyc.clowns and legacy media later needed to be re-evaluated. However, given the scope of the research, the methodology is sufficient for understanding how journalism is practiced by yyc.clowns.

Discussion

The key takeaway of the project was that, in terms of disseminating news, news organizations have options. It seems that there is no shortage of accurate reporting and, from a democratic perspective of making sure citizens are informed, an Instagram page like this is a viable option for citizens to get their news. This is no solution for systemic issues in journalism and would likely cause more issues, but it challenges the notion that young people simply are not getting news. Clearly, yyc.clowns sees value in disseminating news and their audience engages with them, so there is a source of local news that audiences turn to.

The biggest challenge while working on the project was the constant changes in the Instagram page itself. In between the time of submitting the proposal and conducting research for the project, yyc.clowns changed their post format to favour screenshots of tweets from their original red translucent banner with a headline, and shortly after the research was completed, they changed their name to match what could be considered their sister page in Edmonton, yegwave. While these changes were not detrimental to the study, it was difficult to keep up with the updates and try to figure out how these might factor into their organizational identity. The biggest shift was changing their branding from “Calgary’s #1 News & Entertainment page” to “Calgary’s #1 Culture and Entertainment page.” Reorienting themselves to be culture and entertainment-based after the research was contingent on them calling themselves a news page raised questions about whether it could be considered this a source of news, seeing as they seemingly no longer wish to associate with that title.

The idea of yyc.clowns being an effective distribution mechanism is supported by the research. The process of compartmentalizing the different stages of production and distribution

of journalism was something that came up quite often while working on the project, which further challenged the pre-existing business model of traditional news media. This project highlighted that centering news organizations in the context of distribution hinders the potential of reaching wider audiences. Previously, it was assumed that advertisers were tasked with delivering audiences to news organizations, but perhaps that is only true for a specific part of the internet. In a world where more and more people are turning to social media platforms to get the bulk of their information, it follows that social media platforms would develop their own ecosystem relating to distribution and audience relations.

This process follows other cultural industries, where compartmentalizing different phases of production could cause a disconnect between producers and consumers, or readers and journalists. On one hand, leaving the distribution of news in the hands of public figures within their own communities means that journalism is made more widely available to all. On the other hand, this creates a wider divide between a journalist and their audience.

At the same time, the existing model of distributing news to audiences is not functional, as we can see by the fact that local journalism is not local. All of the legacy media studied were local branches of national media organizations. This Instagram page was purely local, starting roughly around 2018 and maintaining relevance since. The development of a purely local news distribution channel means that the page is curating the local news for their local audience, sifting out the national in favour of things that directly affect and concern community members that may not get as much airtime.

There is a palpable hesitancy to support the idea, however, the page seems to have its own internal standards that were not publicized but were closely followed. Despite the intellectual property theft, the information on the page was accurate either because it came directly from accurate reporting or because that was the reputation it created for itself. Thinking back to the page's origins, there was always this culture of hands-off distribution of content without contributing anything — it delivered desired subject material to its audience on a silver platter without interjecting, and that is how the page always operated.

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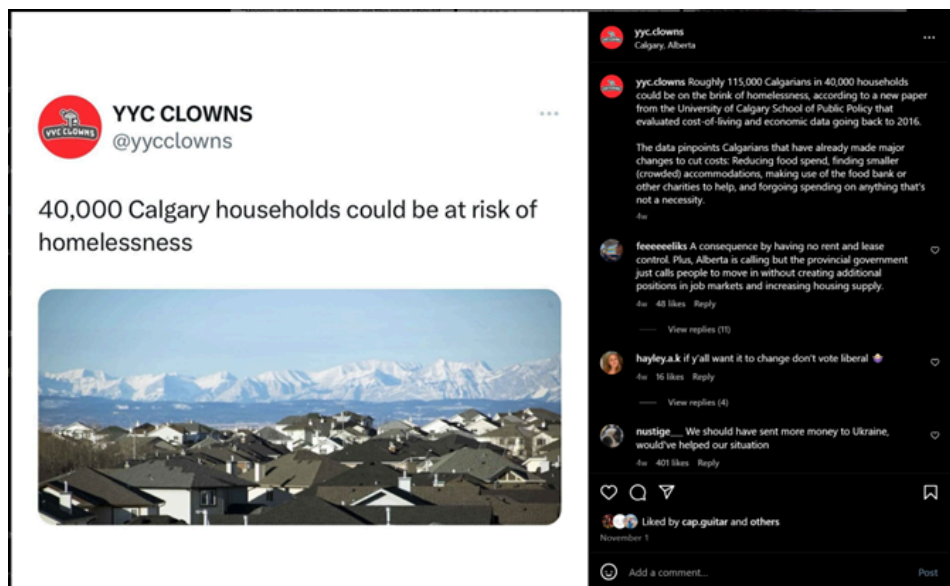
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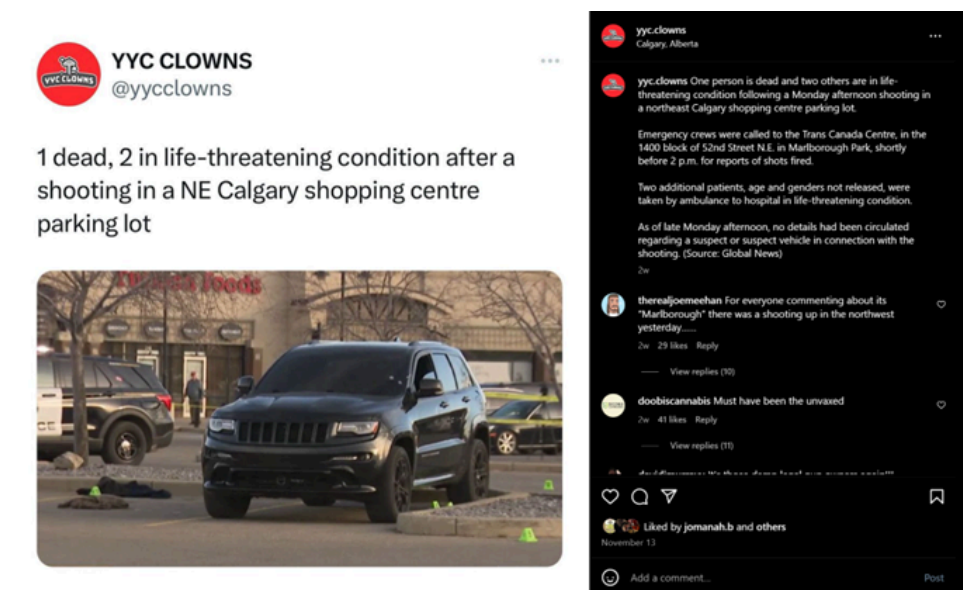
Appendix A

Screenshot of post from yyc.clowns concerning the number of houseless people in Calgary, dated November 1, 2023.



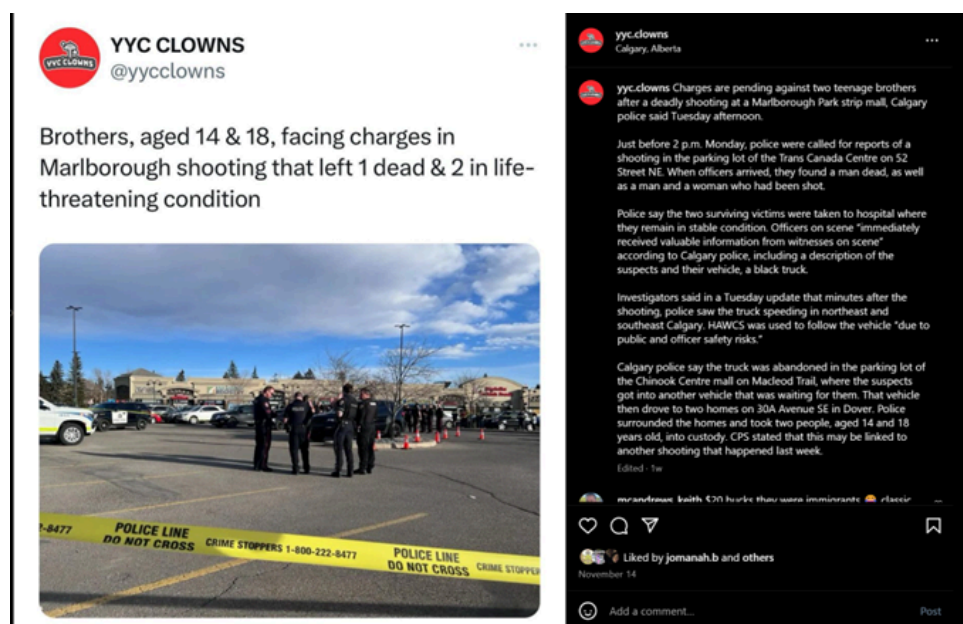
Appendix B

Screenshot from yyc.clowns reporting on shooting in northeast Calgary, dated November 13, 2023.



Appendix C

Screenshot from yyc.clowns reporting on arrest of two young men following a shooting in northeast Calgary, dated November 14, 2023.

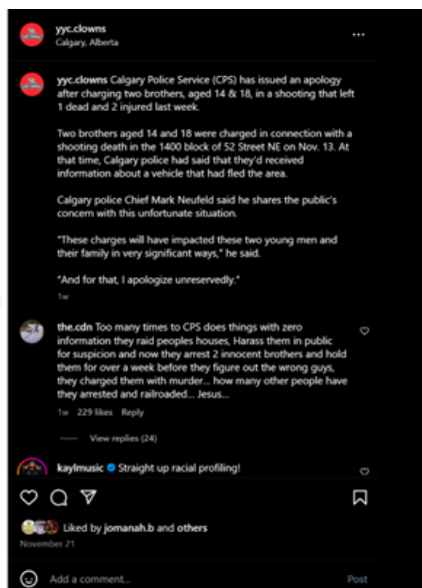


Appendix D

Screenshot from yyc.clowns reporting on the apology issued by Calgary Police Services following the wrongful arrest of two young men, dated November 21, 2023.



CPS has apologized after wrongfully charging two brothers, aged 14 & 18, in a fatal shooting that took place last week

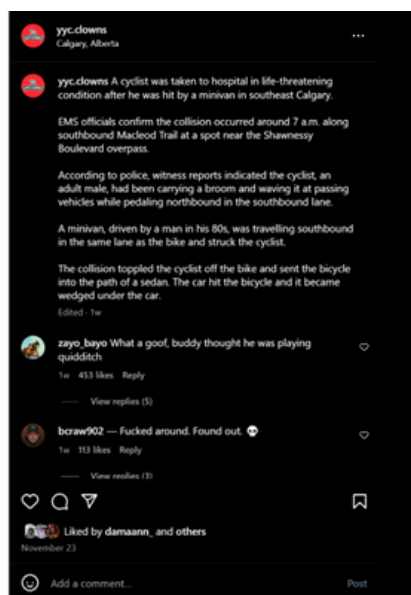


Appendix E

Screenshot from yyc.clowns following a cyclist being caught in a hit-and-run, dated November 23, 2023.



Cyclist hit by car and left in life-threatening condition after riding against traffic and swinging a broom at vehicles



A Dummy's Guide to Using Instagram Like a REAL Journalist

Daman Preet Singh

Abstract

Journalism is an ever-growing industry. In the digital age of the 21st century, social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram (Meta) have become a place for engaging with audiences in an attempt to humanize news publications. Until the summer of 2023, social media platforms were open spaces for the accessible sharing of news. The reliance of journal publications on social media to interact with the audience not only built a boundary between personal and professional image for journalists but also made journalists' interactions with their audiences very passive. With the changes implemented by Meta in response to Bill C-18, which took away news organizations' accounts from their social media platforms in Canada, the process of engaging with audiences and presenting news changed to become more journalist-oriented. Furthermore, journalists participated more actively as they had to present themselves by using their personal accounts. Now that the line between professional and personal identity on social media is blurred, it provides space for discourse on how a journalist brands themselves on a platform that is silencing their work. My study investigates a local independent student news publication's editorial board practices to observe how student journalists are resisting the news-sharing ban Meta has introduced. I found that the platform's policy changes were mostly superficial, and loopholes were easy to find and exploit. The findings were used to make an Instagram account in the form of a guide for student journalists, documenting the process of bypassing the content-sharing ban.

Keywords

Social media, journalism, Instagram, ethnography, resistance

Introduction

First and foremost, this guide is intended to function as a reliable manual for student and citizen journalists. It asks why Instagram is so important to journalists and what happens now that journalists ‘officially’ cannot use it anymore to share their work. It is founded upon data gathered from an autoethnographic study of a journalist working at the University of Calgary’s student-run publication, *The Gauntlet*, and draws on previous literature to establish and challenge theoretical frameworks around journalism in a digital age and how notions of traditionalism can be contested.

Social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook were created to bring people together and create community, and until this summer, they were conduits of information-sharing in terms of news and creating awareness about various issues. For publications, these platforms provided a means to engage with audiences and to humanize the newspaper itself. In doing so, it made the journalists’ interactions with their audience very passive as their personal social media accounts were not prioritized. Since the changes implemented by Meta took away news accounts’ ability to post, the process of engaging with audiences and presenting information changed and became more journalist-oriented. Their participation and personal engagement with the platform became more active as they had to brand themselves to present their news. Using a personal account to share news brings a new definition to the idea of a journalist’s professional identity. Bill C-18 introduced by the Canadian government put pressure on media conglomerates like Meta and Google to pay news sources for their work on the platforms; instead of complying, these companies decided to take news off their platforms entirely. Since then, the role of journalists has gone beyond the newsroom. Preliminary observations show that their online engagement has increased because they are under pressure to use their personal accounts to share news media. The study behind this guide intends to examine how practices have changed in digital student journalism after Instagram’s policy change prohibiting news sharing on their platform.

The study is centered around my position at *The Gauntlet*’s Editorial Board and my Instagram account where the news-sharing practices were documented in a journal and supplemented with screenshots provided from my account. Documenting my online practices from when the summer ended allowed me to explore common themes around humour being used

as a tool to draw attention and examine loopholes in policy changes that I could use to my advantage.

Literature Review

Social networks force news media to adapt to their “logic” (van Dijck & Poell, 2013, p. 11), which includes the strategies and economics that direct the platforms’ dynamics and affordances. van Dijck and Poell’s (2013) conceptualization of social media platforms acknowledges how “every major institution is part and parcel of this transformation by a revamped media logic” (p.11) and their notion creates a foundation upon which we can study journalists’ social media. Bossio (2023) studied image-focused social media and how journalists present themselves on a platform like Instagram, where they found that “creating an engaged community of followers on Instagram was a way to combine professional labour with personal enjoyment” (p. 1785) for journalists. They found that some journalists felt a unique sense of community that was not available on other platforms and even felt safer on Instagram (Bossio, 2023). The unique visual affordances of Instagram, including the ability to see ‘behind the scenes’ assist in humanizing journalists. However, these affordances can also introduce issues in the examination of online. Interviewing their sampled journalists, Bossio (2023) found that this personal branding on a journalist's Instagram can bring a sense of engagement to a personalized audience that can be used to share work. Beyond that, the sharing of this ‘behind the scenes’ content such as work ethics, day-to-day life, and aesthetic images is used to build a sense of micro-celebrity. Micro-celebrities commodify their unique online personas and promote an aesthetic to a garnered audience (Bossio, 2023). This study focused on what is being posted by journalists, leaving me with the opportunity to continue the investigation and examine how personalized branding strategies on platforms can influence forms of resistance in light of news-sharing policy changes. I also aim to acknowledge how personal business accounts are being used for similar purposes now. Instead of trying to be influencers, journalists are using their accounts as an extension of the news outlet.

One of the main challenges of studying journalistic practices on social media is that the professions’ conceptual boundaries are increasingly blurred. Brems et al. (2017) studied personal branding on Twitter, choosing the platform for its “public and interactive features” (p. 444), finding that journalists are loyal to their news outlet and their identity on the platform revolved

around their colleagues' work (p. 456). Although focused on Twitter, the study provides a foundation upon which the study of practices of personal branding can be expanded.

Brems et al. (2017, p. 444) use Goffman's (1959) metaphor of roles to conceptualize journalists as performers on a stage, where the stage is the platform (p. 444). They highlight that the location of where the conversation takes place and the people at the other end of communication are very important to the context of the metaphor. He differentiates between a front stage and a backstage - the front is visible to the audience where the performer presents and, in the back, actions that are not supposed to be seen are exposed. Using a similar framework to Brems et al. (2017), we can establish the Instagram profile of a journalist as the front stage where they 'perform' by posting for their audience. These are posts that have been 'built and shaped,' effectively establishing their content as a 'performance' for their audience.

On TikTok, the boundaries between a journalist and an influencer continue to blur as observed by Negreria-Rey et al. (2022) in their study about journalistic performance on the platform. They observed that journalists often apply journalistic values to the platform and become influencers to "connect with the younger generations" (Negreria-Rey et al, 2022, p. 153). Their study focused on TikTok as they believed it to be "different from other social networks because of its main audience, language, and logic" (p. 152). They used Mellado & Hermida's (2021) study that defined journalistic performances on social media into three categories: The Promoter, The Celebrity, and The Joker; the three roles assume different positions on social media and how they share their content. The Promoter uses professional branding and promotion tactics, whereas The Celebrity uses their fame and branded hashtags for event exposure, and the Joker uses self-deprecation, deliberate jokes, and ridicule rhetoric to characterize themselves (Mellado & Hermida, 2021, p. 4). Using Mellado & Hermida's (2021) conceptualization of the roles and Goffman's (1959) *The Presentation of Self In Everyday Life*, I obtained the theoretical concepts that will structure the project. The studies using TikTok and Twitter as platforms of journalistic branding form a framework around social media practices as I include the discussion of Instagram as a platform for self-branding.

Since the studies on the uses of social media by journalists largely focus on brand building and personal identity, my study aims to fill the gaps regarding uses and negotiations between platforms and news producers. My work will also build a foundation for expanding on the uses from a production and journalist perspective.

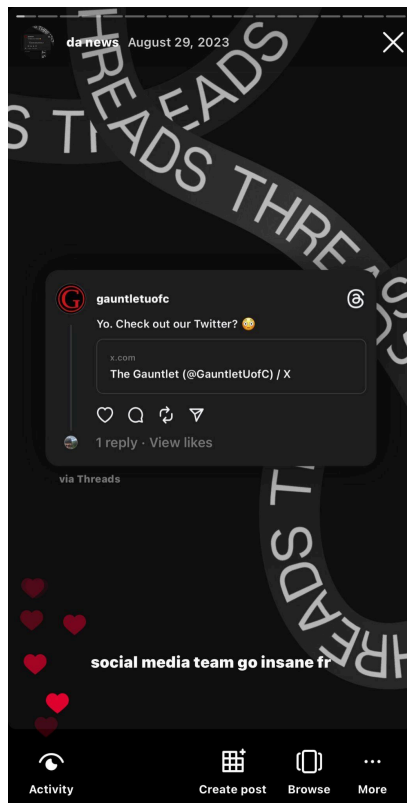
Sharing News Content on Instagram After Bill C-18

Over around a month from October 17th to November 24th, I documented my news-sharing practices on my personal Instagram account. Before I started the study, I examined how news publication accounts on Instagram were blocked, and I explored what I could do on the platform to find any loopholes in the policy changes. As I will soon describe, I documented the entire experience.

I initially found that anything I shared on my story from a news source would not be visible to my audience, however, sharing posts from Threads was possible. As a result, the official *Gauntlet* account moved to other platforms while my personal account on Instagram remained an outlet to repost content shared from *The Gauntlet*. Figure 1 shows how our social media team employed humour to attract viewership onto different platforms and as I noted, “the effort went in vain” since we could not bring much attention to either X (formerly Twitter) or Threads (Singh, 2023, Journal Entry 1).

Figure 1

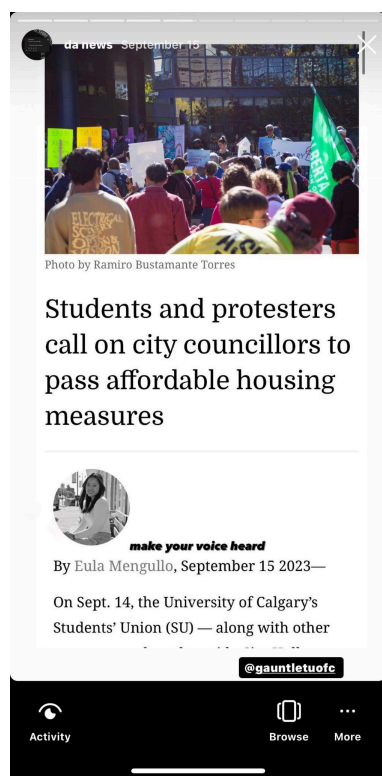
A screenshot of a Threads post being shared on Instagram stories.



While we kept our Threads account active alongside X and TikTok, I tried something new. I observed how Instagram does not block content if it is a screenshot from the news website or a photo, I noted that “maybe it’s because they can’t analyze content that way or could be that they aren’t bothered” (Singh, 2023, Journal Entry 1), giving me my first insight into how unfinished and even ‘rushed’ the policy change was. A few days after I started sharing screenshots of articles from *The Gauntlet* website on my story (Figure 2), I had to limit my personal comments on the screenshots as I believed my engagement with the content would reflect badly upon the notion of “objectivity” and make the content seem “somewhat ironic” (Singh, 2023, Journal Entry 2).

Figure 2

Screenshot of a news article on an Instagram story from The Gauntlet website that includes minimal personal voice.



Anderson and Schudson (2022) make note of how professionalism in journalism is heavily equated with being ‘objective’ when such a notion is contested. As a result of this arbitrary emphasis on ‘objectivity,’ I had a great deal of anxiety when including my voice in the article. Soon, the question of ‘what is objective’ started arising in my mind and I came to terms

with the fact that journalism has transformed: “It [journalism] is not supposed to be separated from social reality” (Singh, 2023, Journal Entry 2). I realized that employing my voice in these stories might allow me to garner more attention. Going forward, I started picking and choosing the articles that would be shared in my story seeing where I could include personal anecdotes, and I found myself leaning towards introducing my humour into the stories to see if they would pull more attention towards the news content. Mellado & Hermida (2021) established roles that journalists employ in their social media performance that I started observing in my online presentation. I employed my humour: what started as “this is where your money goes!!!!” (Figure 3) turned into a whole paragraph presenting the newspaper like an advertisement (Figure 4), I assumed the traits of “The Joker” with a rhetoric of ridicule, and deliberate jokes (Mellado & Hermida, 2021, pp. 6-7) that I used to engage with my audience.

Figure 3

Screenshot of an Instagram story that includes a humorous anecdote and a call to action link to follow

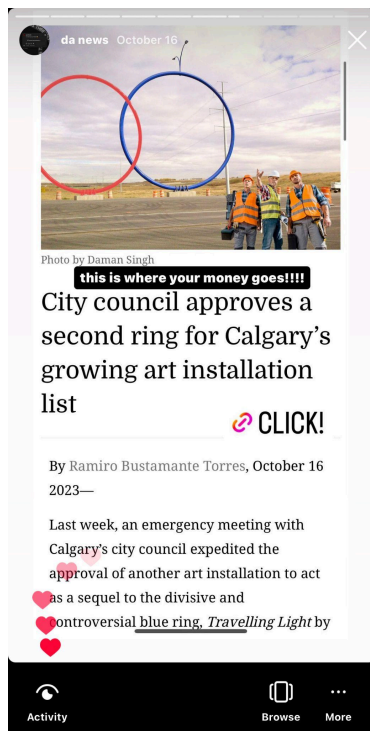


Figure 4

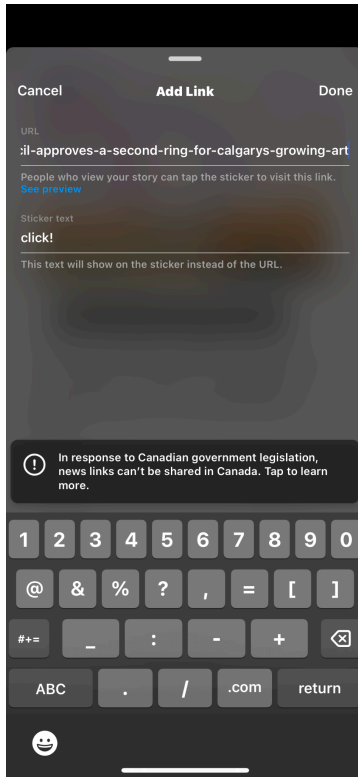
Screenshot of an Instagram story that is a photo of a newsstand with an advertisement-like text.



Incorporating humour also brought more engagement in the form of likes on my story. Figure 3 shows the first time I was able to share links to my story, the first loophole I found to bypass Instagram’s policy changes. I realized I could bypass the ban on sharing links to news articles by using a URL shortener. Figure 5 shows what I would originally see while trying to include a link in my story. This loophole I found “showed how rushed Instagram’s policy was and how easy it is to bypass it” (Singh, 2023, Journal Entry 3). In doing so, I observed Nelson & Ganter’s (2022) notion of platform power. Some local publishers cannot use the opportunities that Bill C-18 presents, and suffer due to the policy changes because of an increasing reliance on platforms: “local isn’t valuable anymore” (p. 162). I could work freely despite the bans given my experience with social media platforms, but the thought of using a URL shortener came from years of using platforms like Instagram and Facebook. This solution may not be as obvious to others.

Figure 5

Screenshot of Instagram blocking a news link being put in a story



The study also provided insight into how journalism has transformed. Journalism is not just a privileged, elite newsroom anymore. In my case, it is active engagement with my content and putting my face out there to get people to read *The Gauntlet* because we do not have an alternative outlet to do so. Even though I found loopholes to work around, “my identity is blurred with my professional identity” (Singh, 2023, Journal Entry 4), and this obscurity changes the way I interact with my account now. Where once I would post without thinking anything, now every time I share something I have to keep in consideration that my publication is directly attached to me.

Final Notes & Conclusion

Before we go into the guide, I would first like to acknowledge that the study was fairly limited given time constraints and the sample was only one journalist in a local student publication. Despite the limited sample, the study still allowed for an expansion of journalism studies in a world where social media is a completely new challenge. My study works to dilute fearmongering around the notion of journalism and Instagram. There is fear around the reliance of student journalists on social media platforms, and since the content-sharing ban dictates what is permitted and what is not on Meta platforms. This study also focused on local student

journalism which often gets neglected in the dialogue between governments and legacy media, who will eventually benefit from this policy change.

Now finally, *A Dummy's Guide to Using Instagram Like a REAL Journalist* is not finished, but it will grow. It is a step in the right direction in learning how to incorporate humour and resistance into the use of these platforms that hold too much power. Making the guide on Instagram is a deliberate choice to foment resistance.

I hope you find this guide both helpful and laughably ironic: [A Dummy's Guide to Using Instagram Like a REAL Journalist](#)

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