

“The Other Ganges”: Genre-Blending in Journalistic Storytelling

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ABSTRACT

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This research-creation thesis explores the practice of subjectivity in journalistic storytelling and the broader concept of “genre-blending” in research. “Genre-blending” is described here as the practice of creating work that reaches beyond the institutional limitations of artistic, professional, or academic work. This kind of work is an effective way to create a cultural archive and to expand the knowledge pool beyond its previous boundaries. Subjective practice in narrative journalism, particularly with stories that require a high level of empathy, allows for greater connection between journalist, interviewee, and audience. This research works within the audio medium – the case study for subjective practice is established in a “genre-blended” podcast series that situates the journalist as a character in the story they are building. The audio medium is a prime candidate both for “genre-blending” and for subjective journalism due to both the increased intimacy afforded by the recorded human voice and to the long history of audio documentary on the radio and more recently in podcasting. The topic discussed in this research as a good candidate for subjective narrative reporting is immigration/immigrants. Other reporting topics that could benefit from purposefully subjective and emotional reporting include stories surrounding other vulnerable populations, or stories that engage with “wicked problems” like climate change, which are easier for an audience to understand via person-to-person narratives.

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Introduction

A project can be simultaneously a work of academic research, a professional piece, and an artistic performance (Naranjo, 2017). Within journalistic practice, this idea of liminality is reflected through the study and creation of narrative or “storytelling” journalism. Here, the dangers of assuming objectivity are counteracted by the conscious use of subjectivity in reporting (Gubrium and Holstein, 2012). Critics of “objective” reporting have long argued that it is an impossible and even undesirable ideal. By contrast, subjective stories challenge objectivity by situating the journalist as part of the story, without sacrificing accuracy (Calcutt & Hammond, 2011; Hunter, 2014). Narrative journalism has evolved within the audio medium because the recorded voice is a powerful storytelling tool (Chion, 1999). More specifically, this kind of work has grown in the form of podcasting (McClung, 2010; Lindgren, 2016). Podcasting has become increasingly popular in recent years as a platform where journalists can experiment, drawing together current events with historical context and creative storytelling.

My research seeks to engage with the themes of historical context, current news events, and creative narrative-building by bringing these divergent fields together in a practice I refer to as “genre-blending”. To date there remains little scholarly work regarding podcasting and the ethics of narrative storytelling (Lindgren, 2016). My work aims to contribute to the burgeoning foundational work on these issues and contribute a new perspective to journalism studies. The story I am telling is one of the community that formed on Salt Spring Island in British Columbia in the 1960s, viewed through the lens of my father’s family, who immigrated there from Germany. This story connects to the current discourse surrounding immigration in several ways, particularly regarding the lens through which the public defines “immigrants” and how

this lens affects the ways immigrant communities engage with each other. The experimental format I have employed could serve as a model for how to tell other immigration stories in purposefully subjective and empathetic ways.

Research Questions

My research revolved around the following central research question and sub-questions:

1. How can “genre-blending” through podcasting and narrative journalism be used effectively to create a cultural archive?
 - a) What are the ethical and power/agency issues at play when creating this type of archive?
 - b) What is the value of self-identification in journalism, and using reporting to create a cultural archive?
 - c) How does this type of storytelling intersect with/challenge traditional media representations of immigrants and the immigrant experience?

Methodology

This research project consisted of two components. First, I created an original podcast series (“The Other Ganges”), using the story described above as a lens through which to examine perceptions of the modern “immigrant” on a broader scale in Canada. The podcast made use of in-depth interviews (Gubrium and Holstein, 2012; Johnson and Rowlands, 2012) and audio techniques spanning journalism, soundscape, and music design (Kern, 2008; Abel, 2015). The podcast is a five-episode series, with each episode being about 40 minutes in length. Each episode is centred roughly around a certain period of time in Salt Spring history during the 1900s. The first episode contains family histories and stories from the early 1900s; the second

and third, the mid-19th century; the fourth, the 1960s, 1970s and moving forward; and the final episode contains broader reflections and my own thoughts on the process of creating the podcast. The podcast was built on principles of narrative journalism and of the concept of the audio documentary (Lassila-Merisalo, 2014). I built the podcast out of a selection of long-form, conversational in-depth interviews, making use of common principles of subjective interviewing (Johnson and Rowlands, 2012). Interviews were sourced from members of my family, as well as running ads and call-outs on Salt Spring Island's newspaper (The Driftwood), the community radio station, and from calls for interviews posted on community Facebook groups. In order to genre-blend the podcast, I also incorporated original music and soundscape elements to the show. I visited will visit Salt Spring Island three times over 2019 in order to record interviews and capture field recordings. These field recordings were mixed with an original score that I built in Logic and weaved into the podcast episodes. These soundscape and music pieces are themed on different aspects of the geography and landmarks of the island (the harbour, the forest, the towns, etc.). The geographic sound pieces interlock with the chronological stories told by the interviewees. The result is an immersive, creative audio documentary that builds individual stories into a broader narrative.

This thesis report, written to accompany the research-creation, will focus on narrative journalism, subjectivity in reporting, and genre-blending. This report draws on the process of creating the audio project and discusses new definitions of journalism (Naranjo, 2017). The report opens with a review of existing literature concerning objectivity, subjectivity and narrativity in journalism. Then, a discussion of the theoretical context of this project is presented, first in terms of sound theory and audio media studies, and then with respect to the concept of “genre-blending” that draws the work together. The second section of the report contains

reflections on the practical and theoretical process of producing the project and a discussion of future impacts of this research.

This project is theoretically grounded in Michel Chion's (1999) concept of the power and agency of the acousmatic disembodied voice. Chion explores how acousmatic sound – that is, sound that is heard while the source remains unseen – inhabits a unique sonic space, and that the liminal quality of a sound without a source holds a particular power over an audience. This notion can inform the production of an audio piece. It also emphasizes the need to critically examine questions around ethics and agency when producing recorded audio work (as mentioned above), where the voices heard will necessarily be acousmatic. Further theoretical structure is provided by the broader historical framework of hermeneutics and phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962), specifically relating research and innovative knowledge creation. The conceptual “hermeneutic circle” is continued by first completing rigorous research and critical review; then, knowledge creation that seeks to expand the current dialogue both completes one cycle and begins another. This cycle describes the intended outcomes of this project: both academic review, and a tangible project that will hopefully invite further critical thought. This approach to learning, traditionally used in fields like art history, also serves as another aspect of genre-blending with respect to this research.

This project is an experiment in rethinking journalism. Journalism that is intentionally subjective, vulnerable, and personal, while still accurate, is an important alternative frame to the problematic ideal of objectivity (Loviglio, 2007). More specifically, this piece tells a previously untold story of a particular view of immigration and sense of place, adding to the conversation surrounding immigration and culture that is currently at the forefront of political discourse and

exemplifying a model of subjective communication that gives narrative agency to immigrant voices.

Review of Existing Research

History and Critiques of Objectivity in Journalism: Stephen Ward

The history of journalism as a vocation has been dogged by questions surrounding the role and authenticity of the reporter. Perhaps one of the most enduring arguments of them all, in both the philosophical and practical realms, is the ongoing debate over objectivity and its place in the journalism world. On a broader scale, objectivity as a concept is traditionally a source of much discussion and debate due to ambiguity surrounding its definition and the extreme difficulty of determining the “objective” origin of a concept or belief (Ward, 2004). Generally, objectivity is taken to imply a sense of factuality - things that exist beyond individual thought or experience are objective. Within this frame, concepts like scientific method, “truth”, and accuracy fall under the umbrella of objectivity. In the journalism world, objectivity is largely considered to refer to reporting that is “neutral”, presented with a fair balance of sources, and free of any spin, flourishes, or personal bias from the journalist. The “ideal of objectivity” has been controversial within journalism from the beginning, with some schools of thought prizing journalism that is detached and impersonal as less biased, while others point out the impossibility of human objectivity and bring forward more literary forms of reporting (Ward, 2004).

In Ward’s *The Invention of Journalism Ethics* (2004), he outlines the growth of “traditional” objectivity in journalism, which began to solidify in the early 20th century in America. According to him, objectivity falls into three main spheres - ontological, epistemic, and

procedural - and traditional journalistic objectivity sought to uphold all three. The standards that define objective work (as opposed to work that is *subjective*) are outlined as follows:

“(a) *Factuality*: Reports are based on accurate, comprehensive, and verified facts.

(b) *Fairness*: Reports on controversial issues balance the main rival viewpoints, representing each viewpoint fairly.

(c) *Non-bias*: Prejudices, emotions, personal interests, or other subjective factors do not distort the content of reports.

(d) *Independence*: Reports are the work of journalists who are free to report without fear or favour.

(e) *Non-interpretation*: Reporters do not put their interpretations or opinion into their reports.

(f) *Neutrality and detachment*: Reports are neutral. They do not take sides in a dispute. Reporters do not act as advocates for groups and causes.” (Ward, 2004, p.19)

Ward does not deny the importance of factuality and fairness as set forward by these standards, but he does critique many of the other points brought up within these six concepts. In particular, he points out that asking journalism to be a passive practice of simply reporting facts with no interpretation whatsoever is not serving the higher ideals of journalism (as a service for the public good) to the fullest extent. Moreover, asking reporters not to inject any of their personal findings into their work often proves futile. Objectivity in this manner also leaves room for other problematic practices to take place. Much debate has taken place, for example, over the utility of “balanced journalism”, especially on issues where one side of the issue is significantly better researched and grounded in reality than the other (for example, a credible climate scientist on one side and a climate change-denying individual blogger on the other. Giving both of these

sources equal space in an article implies that they have both achieved equal levels of education and expertise on this topic, which could lead the public to draw factually incorrect conclusions).

Ward rejects the traditional standards of objectivity, but does not seek to depart entirely from objectivity as a norm. Rather, he presents his concept of “pragmatic objectivity”: a framework that sees all journalism, from reporting of the facts to editorials and beyond, as a practice of interpretation. As such, journalism cannot be separated from evaluation on the part of the journalist. Instead of seeking to avoid interpretation, Ward’s pragmatic objectivity suggests that this interpretation should seek to be factually accurate in a testable manner, such that it still upholds the higher ideals of objectivity (and remains “truthful” by that definition). This is a definite departure from the historical standards of journalistic objectivity, and Ward advocates for a redefinition of the concept, especially with the increasingly multimedia world of journalism and the changing definition of the “journalist” as a vocation (Ward, 2019).

Analysis of Subjectivity in Journalism

To follow Ward’s lead and continue along the historical path of journalism as it evolved in the 20th-century American context (which, of course, heavily impacted Canadian journalism practice as well), it is necessary here to consider the development of another school of thought: that of the subjective journalist. From the early 1900s forward, conflict between “objectivists” and “subjectivists” marked the journalism world, as genres of reportage diversified and developed approaches of their own (Ward, 2004). As time passed, journalism that fell into the “subjective” category tended to approach the nature of the work from a different epistemological perspective. Perhaps one of the most recognizable forms of subjective reporting to come out of the mid-20th century period was that of “literary journalism”, the ancestor of narrative journalism (which will be discussed later in this report). Literary journalists (like Tom Wolfe, an

exemplary practitioner of the genre) sought to draw together reporting and key aspects of fictional writing. This was a complete departure from the traditional objective norms of journalism, which firmly asserted that no “colour” should be added to reportage. The literary form of reporting of that time was referred to as “The New Journalism” - this in itself gives a vivid impression of the purposeful distancing from perceived journalistic norms that was taking place within this practice.

It can be argued that purposefully subjective reporting in the tradition of literary journalism exists in a different philosophical realm than objective reporting, even if there may be some overlap in terms of the practical process of reporting (interviews, etc.). Subjective reporting constitutes a deeper rejection of pre-existing norms than Ward’s pragmatic objectivity, which still operates within an objective conceptual framework. Tom Wolfe outlined four key structures to define the New Journalism: “third-person perspective, scene-by-scene construction, extensive dialogue, and recording of status-life symbols” (Wolfe, 1973, in Kallan, 1979, p.54). It’s clear from these standards that the priorities of objective journalism do not necessarily apply to the subjective journalist’s approach to storybuilding. Truth and art blend in explorative forms in literary journalism, and the resulting work is inherently emotional and designed to create vivid impressions more than summarizing facts. The modern narrative journalism does not necessarily abide by Wolfe’s four standards, but the creative mentality they represent still exists across narrative media. In fact, the literary journalism tradition allows space for journalists to engage with the medium as enmeshed into the reporting itself (an idea that hearkens back to the communications theory world, particularly in the “medium is the message” teachings of Marshall McLuhan (Kallan, 2003)).

Literary journalism, along with radio documentary and later forms of narrative journalism, seeks to work outside of commonly accepted expectations for both art and reporting. Employing subjective philosophy in the practical work of doing journalism helps to further serve this purpose. In research as a whole, the idea of subjectivity is an important point of consideration. Any work that involves conducting interviews has the potential to create the uneven power dynamic of the interviewer and the subject. Historically, researchers or journalists held the power of story creation, and the people they interviewed were relegated to the position of the “passive” subject. Gubrium and Holstein (2012) describe the concept of passive subjectivity vividly: “...respondents are envisioned as being vessels of answers to whom interviewers direct their questions” (p. 9). This style of question-asking can have the unfortunate consequence of relegating human beings into two-dimensional data sources. In terms of interviewing for narrative journalism, the practice of “active subjectivity” serves the style well. In this approach to in-depth interviewing, both interviewers and interviewees are granted storytelling agency. The subject is empowered as a source of the narrative, instead of just a source of information for the reporter – indeed, they are “‘always already’ a storyteller” (Gubrium and Holstein, 2012, p. 10).

Critiques of Subjectivity in Journalism

Subjectivity in reporting drew a number of critiques as it evolved, many of which have to do with the loss of structure associated with subjective work. Ward (2004) explains that subjectivity became a topic of debate in journalism in the 20th century as reporters and members of the public alike were questioning the ability of the press to actually achieve the ideals of traditional objectivity. But without some kind of standardised, external framework, determining

all other practical aspects of journalism becomes very difficult. This lack of structure can be taken as a strength in some respects, and it was and is by practitioners of subjective reporting; freeing work from a pre-set structure also frees it from the biases and limiting belief sets of the traditional paradigm. But as a reporter, it is also important to appear credible to one's public; operating within a fully subjective, free-form framework that is not held to any standard of "factuality" will likely not serve a journalists' reputation well.

Other critiques of subjectivity are recognized even within the community of researchers and reporters who utilize it. Working in a subjective mindset requires one to accept that nothing is a true "cure-all" - prioritizing a subjective framework is not appropriate for all situations, and it is not a be-all-end-all solution. Gubrium and Holstein (2012), while discussing active subjectivity and narrative practice in research, liken it to playing jazz music: it's a process of improvisation and innovation, and sometimes works best when incorporated with other techniques. In terms of journalism, there are types of reporting that do not work well as literary/narrative pieces. Some kinds of journalism simply need to be neutral representations of facts. Examples of this include daily news briefings from officials giving statements on public health or other legislative topics, or updates on election proceedings. In addition, in the current system, many types of news reportage need to be delivered quickly and efficiently. Taking the time to add colour, creative prose, and immersive description makes the literary journalism process inherently slower, something that is directly contrary to the quick turnarounds required in the mainstream "newsroom" (whether physical or digital). Whether practicing slower journalism allows room for more ethical and thoughtful reporting is an important discussion in journalism studies - but in the current situation, the fact is that slow work often cannot keep up.

This is a major reason why subjective styles of journalism are best suited to particular genres and media (like radio and podcasting, discussed later in this report).

An important point for this research is the question of ethics within a subjective framework. Historically, ethical standards of reporting were determined and upheld from an objective standpoint, in line with the traditional standards described above (Ward, 2004). If reporting did not meet those (supposedly) clearly-defined standards, it could easily be discounted as unethical. Of course, as reporters attempted to put those rules to practice, it was discovered that concepts like “neutrality” and “bias” were much harder to clearly define and uphold in the increasingly complex and nuanced public sphere. But even so, determining ethical standards in reporting is much easier from an objective standpoint.

Even Ward’s pragmatic objectivity, which challenges many of the traditional assumptions of ethics, makes it possible to determine an ethical code for journalistic practice. He advocates for a system of ethics that believes in imperfection and experimentation as part of the process, but still functions on rational externalized beliefs and social consensus (Ward, 2019). According to him, ethics cannot function on a subjective system - if the journalist is operating based simply on what they believe or feel in that moment, there can be no wider understanding of the fairness of their practice. This is a crucial point for subjectivists to consider, particularly in journalism, which is philosophically tied to an idea of serving the highest public good (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001).

In terms of interviewing itself, Gubrium and Holsten (2014) also present some ethical questions around the idea of “active subjectivity”. This system, which transforms interviewing into less of a data-collection project and more a narrative process, seeks to reduce the uneven power relationship of interviewer and subject by affording the subject more agency in the

process. However, there will always be decisions made by the interviewer (or journalist) that can potentially skew the balance, or affect the final product. As the interviewer/reporter, constant evaluation and re-evaluation needs to take place in order to ensure that the narrative project proceeds in an ethical manner, and contact with the interview subjects should extend beyond the interview itself in order to ensure a more meaningful relationship with the subjects. This project makes use of the concept of active subjectivity, interpreting it in a journalistic context. Details of how this was conducted and reflections on the process are found later in this report.

Introducing Narrative Journalism and its Function in Practice

In-depth interviewing forms an important part of the process of storytelling or narrative journalism, a field of journalistic practice that this project seeks to expand upon. Narrative journalism, once regarded as a style of reporting that was too lengthy and in-depth for the modern, Internet-savvy audience (Lassila-Merisalo, 2014), has experienced something of a renaissance in recent years thanks to longer, more creatively-written articles and engagement with the digital world in innovative ways. Indeed, more than one argument has been made for a return to narrative and investigative journalism in the hopes of “saving” journalism as a profession from short, “efficiency”-focused reporting that can be (and is) easily automated (Neveu, 2014).

Narrative journalism (mentioned above) has a variety of definitions, popularly believed to branch out from the New Journalism of the 1960s (Lindgren, 2016). It is largely regarded as a “hybrid genre” (as described by van Krieken and Sanders, 2017, p.1366). As literary journalist Tom Wolfe described it, narrative journalism is “journalism that would read like a novel or a short story” (Lassila-Merisalo, 2014, p. 2). In terms of technical style, it incorporates elements of

narrative structure into reporting. Journalists may employ more emotional language, establish more of a “plotline” than would be found in other styles of reporting, write from different points of view, or be more creative with sentence structure and word use.

Perhaps more important for this project, however, is the philosophy behind much of the research on narrative journalism. Regarding journalistic stories as just that, “stories”, rather than “news”, relates the practice of journalism to the ancient human traditions of myth and storytelling. This grounds journalism as part of a vast history of folk tales and “social narratives” (van Krieken and Sanders, 2017, p. 1366) and allows researchers and journalists alike to find meaning in the repeating patterns and story archetypes found across history as they appear in reporting. Analyzing existing journalism as additions to the pantheon of myths and legends that shape human history reveals that, just the same as fictional writing, journalists do have a tendency to structure their writing using traditional character archetypes and plotlines (featuring a hero, an antihero, a trickster character, etc.). There is good reason for this - these are common tropes that allow humans to understand themselves and their societies, and have done so for millennia. From this perspective, understanding journalism as narrative, as another form of storytelling for human connection, seems natural and an effective way to analyze and critique the stories we as journalists choose to tell (and those we don’t (van Krieken and Sanders, 2017)).

Narrative journalism has drawn criticism over its history for being too slow a process to be relevant in the rapidly-changing news cycle; it has also been critiqued as “too literary” or not hard-hitting enough to be regarded as journalism (van Krieken and Sanders, 2017). However, it persists as an alternative to short-form reporting, especially flourishing on platforms that do not seek to serve the 24-hour news cycle. Long-form multimedia articles, which feature deeply narrative plotlines and a blend of technologies tailored to our deeply online society, are one

example of this. The world of audio reporting, discussed in more depth later in this report, is another.

Further Critiques of Narrativity in Reporting

This report has briefly mentioned several times the major critiques of narrativity in reporting - the major detractors that are chiefly discussed surrounding slowness, being “too literary”, and the perceived loss of credibility that could come with a more narrative practice are enduring ones. All of these are directly related to the current dominant journalistic paradigm (one that is perhaps undergoing a major shift due to the increasing digitization of reporting (Ward, 2019)). It can be argued that none of these three criticisms is in itself a flaw, especially when taking into account the framework of journalism as storytelling. It is arguably the nature of subjective practice that the strengths and weaknesses of this framework are all too often the same. Whether or not narrative practice is effective at portraying a deeply impactful story that connects readers to a truth in a more powerful way depends entirely on the factors and decisions made in the process of story creation.

This echoes the earlier discussion of ethics, and the difficulties of achieving ethical standards from within this system. Narrative journalism can be framed and discussed with respect to ethics as a slippery slope of sorts. Emotionality is at the forefront of narrative work, and as such, there is a risk that other valuable aspects of reportage may be abandoned in favour of increased emotional impact (van Krieken and Sanders, 2017). Where is the line between fact and fiction? If that line does not matter, how then are we to determine what is acceptable? Debates also take place on the artistic merit of narrative journalism, as it is often regarded as “higher quality” in terms of artistic expression than other forms of reporting. Art it may be, but how does art interact with truth? This is where the idea of “genre-blending” that outlines this

project is a useful analytical tool. Further discussion of genre-blending as it pertains to narrative journalism and subjective research as a whole is found later in this report.

Theoretical Context: Sound Theory and “Genre-Blending”

Review of the Significance of Sound for Narrative Storytelling

This project is theoretically grounded in part in Michel Chion’s (1999) concept of the power and agency of the acousmatic disembodied voice. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, Chion’s analysis of acousmatic sound emphasizes the specific power of recorded sound, particularly sound without a visible source. Acousmatic sound exists within its own liminal space, where it can seem to be omnipresent and omniscient. According to him, hearing occupies a unique position among the human senses. It is often classed as less significant than sight, and yet for many hearing is the first sense to form, developing before birth. As such, the subtle yet precise ways in which sound influences us begin to shape us even before we begin to rely on our other senses.

Chion cites Pierre Schaeffer as having uncovered the term “acousmatic” and beginning its use as a descriptive term for a certain mode of listening that did not exist prior to recorded sound. Acousmatic listening in our era is what we as the audience are practicing when we listen to the radio, or when we speak on the phone. The lack of the visual counterpart to what the listener hears changes the relationship between sound and receiver. Chion calls the disembodied voice the *acousmêtre* - a being imbued with “magical” powers (1999), perhaps even with omniscience.

Chion’s analysis is more to do with film sound than with the acousmatic voices making up the radio sphere, but this notion can inform the production of an audio piece. It also

emphasizes the need to critically examine questions around ethics and agency when producing recorded audio work (as mentioned above), where the voices heard will necessarily be acousmatic.

The power of the recorded voice to tell stories in experimental ways has been a key philosophical foundation over the history of radio as a storytelling medium. Over the course of its development as a core communications platform, radio has been home to a plethora of styles of recorded work, ranging from straightforward news broadcasts to highly dramatized fictional audio plays and syndicated shows. This is a world dedicated to highlighting the emotional power and intimacy of the recorded human voice and applying it in as many ways as possible. Andrew Crisell (2004) makes the interesting point that radio is necessarily a space of imagination, even when the material being delivered is factual in nature. This relates well to Chion's concept of the magical attributes of the *acousmètre*, and serves to help expand both the theoretical and practical boundaries of journalistic practice in this medium.

Within the richly varied world of radio practice, there is a genre where more traditional journalism and creative sound design are allowed and encouraged to exist: the radio documentary. Hendy (2009) writes about the interesting juxtapositions present in the act of aural documentary-making. It is a medium that inherently plays in several communicative spaces: on the one hand, radio documentaries are upheld as factual and accurate works of journalism, and on the other, they are also expected to be deeply creative and even experimental in their production. Over the history of the genre (particularly from the 1960s onwards), a key component of radio documentary is that the way the sound is captured and treated is just as important as the words being spoken and recorded (Madsen, 2005). The foundations laid here allowed for the radio/audio documentary genre to grow as a space that is accessible to listeners

(via radio as a mass medium, and later via time-shifted audio technologies) as well as one that is disruptive and experimental in nature. The use of soundscape and music to enhance non-fiction storytelling is often played with here, as is the role and performance of the journalist or narrator voice - narrative radio work like this can even allow for “atypical” representations of a narrator, whether through voice types and vocal performances that fall outside the norm, or by allowing narrators to play a greater range of roles in the story (Loviglio, 2007). This history, particularly that of the “oral history” style of radio documentary (which focuses on first-person narratives and long-form sound craftsmanship (McHugh, 2012)), contribute to the sonic context of this research.

As with every other communication medium, the audio world had to contend with a number of significant changes with the advent of the Internet era. The term “podcast” came into use around 2004 (Madsen and Potts, 2010), and since then podcasting has grown from a simple way to host archived radio episodes online to a richly varied (and increasingly better-researched) universe of content with its own internal structures and content styles.

Podcasting originated as a complement or extension to existing radio content, and although many popular podcasts are still produced by radio stations, the shows themselves have grown into their own genre. The technology itself allows for some major differences from mass-broadcasted radio. Podcasting is a *time-shifted* technology - audiences can listen to shows at any time, and replay them as much as they wish, making podcasts much more accessible than scheduled radio airings (McClung and Johnson, 2010). For some, having the freedom to listen to podcasts on the go and at their convenience makes podcasts more enjoyable than listening to the radio, or even reading written content (Weiner, 2014). Additionally, the fact that podcasts are largely designed to be listened to on headphones invites consideration for the increased intimacy

of sound in this format. Listener and host have a closer and more private relationship through the earbud, and all sound seems to be directed straight into the audience's ear (Madsen and Potts, 2010). This unique aural space has resulted in shifts in the production of podcasts and the performance of the host or narrator role.

In terms of production, podcasting serves a role as a disruptive technology. Podcasts can essentially be created and disseminated by anyone, with low production costs for relatively high-quality content (Graber, 2014). This effectively erases the amateur-professional hierarchy and ushers in a space where the "prosumer" (producer-consumer) reigns supreme (in theory, at least - in practice, there is still something to be said for the resources and time professional podcasters can dedicate to storybuilding and sound design). As the technology shifts, so too has the role played by the podcast host, whether they be a journalist, a comedian, or an expert in their field of choice. Vocal style and speech delivery differ from radio in the podcast world. Audiences looking for a performance of *authenticity* (Neumark, 2010) don't look for the hallmarks of the "radio journalist" in the voices of podcast hosts. Instead of authority, professional polish, and flawless grammar, they look for a looser, more conversational tone, a level of "amateurism" or perhaps simply of humanity that places the host on a more equal footing with their audience and encourages group communication (Graber, 2014).

Increases in sound intimacy and a more personal relationship with the host (whether it is genuine or performed) provide an excellent space for the radio documentary to grow and expand into the world of podcasting, and radio stations have moved their more narrative feature work to the podcast format successfully since podcasting began to pick up traction (Sellas, 2012). This, perhaps, is the medium that holds the future for the radio documentary, a practice which was once in danger of being repressed almost out of existence on broadcast radio stations. Personal

narrative journalism has evolved from the radio documentary tradition and found new forms of expression through podcasts, which allow for increased subjectivity on the part of the host or show creator and engage both the subjects of the story and the audience on a more empathetic and intimate level (Lindgren, 2016). When deciding on the medium of dissemination for this project - a work that hinges on subjectivity, narrative journalism, and the practice of creative sound design - podcasting was by far the most appropriate choice.

The Concept of Genre-Blending

One of the core concepts behind this work is the idea of what I am calling “genre-blending”: that is, the practice of intentionally creating projects that seek to reach beyond the margins of any one institution, be it academia, art, or the professional sphere. The importance of this kind of work is clear on a number of levels. The need for a “bending” of the traditional genres that define research is vital to the continued practice of effective scholarship; a different lens through which to analyze and validate knowledge and contributions to knowledge presents a method to avoid historical patterns of elitism and bias. Without seeking knowledge that currently exists outside of institutional boundaries, the so-called “knowledge pool” will cease to expand and increase in complexity; in fact, it would dry up in a sense, leaving researchers to work and re-work concepts built on the same inherently limited groundwork. This undermines not only the concept of academia itself, but also the practice of journalism at its core (which prioritizes serving the highest public good, acting as a “watchdog” for institutions in power, and giving a platform to those who are silenced (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001)).

One might think that finding academic theoretical backing for such a project may be difficult; however, there are a number of classic schools of thought that frame this kind of work

well. The broader overarching idea fueling this project is that of knowledge creation and expansion, drawing on the Heideggerian philosophy of the hermeneutic circle. In his essay *On the Origin of the History of Art*, Heidegger discusses the work of creating art as symbolic, and explores the cyclical nature of work and creation: “What art is should be inferable from the work. What the work of art is we can come to know only from the essence of art” (Heidegger, 1956, p. 144). The circle of researching this “work” in depth, critiquing the existing work, immersing oneself in the work and creating work of one’s own (which is then critiqued in turn) provides the framework for the structure of this project.

Additionally, Heidegger’s philosophy on the relationship between art and “truth” – perhaps the highest ideal of journalistic practice, as contested as the term may be – provides ample material for parallels to be drawn between art and journalism. It is a closely held belief that “journalism’s first obligation is to the truth” (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001, p.49). But debates over what, exactly, the truth is have historically divided the journalistic world. The boundaries of genre appear to blur substantially in the search for “truth” – Heidegger says “[t]ruth happens only by establishing itself in the strife and the free space opened up by truth itself” (p. 186), and concludes his essay with the claim that “art lets truth originate” (p. 202). These statements share the tone of the philosophy that drives journalists to report on stories that, in their view, need to be shared. These notions of “truth,” symbolism, and the essence of putting out tangible work exist across genre – this is the theoretical foundation that allows this project to explore the idea of genre-blending further.

In order to genre-blend the podcast section of this project, the show incorporates original music and soundscape. I visited Salt Spring Island a number of times over 2019 in order to record interviews and capture field recordings. These field recordings were mixed with an

original score (built using the Logic Pro X software) that was woven into the podcast episodes. The result is an immersive, creative audio documentary that builds individual stories into a broader narrative.

The nature of the work as a sound project itself is significant in terms of its theoretical framing - the history of audio work and the documentary in particular lends itself well to Heidegger's phenomenological arguments surrounding the relationship between art and the truth. The impressions left on the listener by an audio documentary are crafted out of the "real" (interviews, field recordings) and the "imagined" (edited soundscapes, music, and effects). In this intersection of art and reporting, there is a space for a re-interpretation of Heidegger's idea of truth as originated by art. The finished work feels more "true" (ie., authentic and emotionally impactful) with the addition of artistic elements. The unique space created by an audio work, where voice carries the narrative without any visual elements, makes the experience engaging for the audience in a particularly intimate way. The listener must practice "active listening", engaging their imagination and placing trust in the work to paint a "sonic image" of the story being told. The power of the voice as *acousmètre* (Chion, 1999) allows for greater depth and potential in the narrative.

The blending of sound design with unscripted interviews is in itself perhaps a form of "genre-blending", one that has existed in audio work for decades. But within this work, another form of experimentation is taking place that further explores the theoretical background of the project. The journalistic work within this project is also experimental in nature, much like the sound design that pulls the finished podcast series together. A traditional format of reporting sees the reporter structuring the experience of the interview and interview subjects remaining largely excluded from the creation process. The interview process in this project (described more in the

methodological overview section of this report) plays with subjectivity and interviewee engagement - questions were not pre-determined before the interviews began, and the interviewee led the conversation instead of vice versa. This is a tangible example of growing a new process after research and analysis of the existing body of work.

Another important aspect of the hermeneutic circle theory is the continued contribution to knowledge at the end of the “cycle”- creating new knowledge and adding it to the existing palimpsest inspires the beginning of a new circle of analysis and research. To bring this idea outside of the academic institution, perhaps a journalist or creator could consider how their work can contribute to the wider community. Could this cycle be perpetuated through community engagement and communication that lasts beyond the initial story? Would a call for more empathetic narratives from other journalists serve to create new circles?

Case Study for Genre-Blending: Existing Media Framing of Immigration and an Alternative Method of Coverage

To further illustrate the potential uses of “genre-blending” in academic and journalistic work, this project undertakes a thematic case study of a particular subject that is often subject to stereotype and negative framing in current news reporting: immigration and immigrants.

The topic of immigration is an immensely complex and multifaceted one, and all too often newsrooms and reporters are tasked with the impossible challenge of boiling it down into short and digestible articles for a wide public audience (Quinsaat, 2014). Immigrants currently occupy an ambiguous and often controversial position in the public eye in a number of countries - and the definition of the term “immigrant” is itself often ambiguous, lending itself to whichever group of people is currently grabbing headlines. The inner biases and motivations of news

producers can often be discerned through content analysis of their publications on this topic and term.

Research on the existing media framing of immigration picks up on a number of issues present in current and historical coverage of the topic. For the purposes of this case study, two major problematic areas provide fertile ground for analysis: the perpetuating of existing unequal power dynamics; and the use of broad “grouping” terminology to reduce individuals into masses of statistics, or worse, threatening incomers. Quinsaat (2014) notes that pitting “immigrants” (assumed to be people of colour) against “citizens” (assumed to be largely white) is an unfortunately common occurrence in mainstream reporting. This framing results in a power dynamic that completely disadvantages the immigrant populations being reported on, and places the assumed reader higher on the hierarchy, along with the “citizen” population. The racial implications of this framing are clear and equally as problematic - immigrants are often framed in terms of their origins (for example, “Haitian” or “Syrian”) to vastly prejudiced and negative effect (Lawlor and Tolley, 2017).

The second major issue that this project is assessing is the use of dehumanizing language that reduces human beings to numbers. This reporting choice illustrates the fact that prejudiced language can be quite subtle - overtly racist reporting is generally likely to be identified and criticized soon after publication, but more nuanced examples of harmful phrasing may pass under the radar in mainstream reporting. There are plentiful examples of the kind of ultimately harmful terminology used in reporting on immigrant groups - starting from the very use of the word “immigrant”, which has become effectively pejorative and devoid of empathy or individual connection. Immigrant groups arriving in America, Canada, and other countries are described in terms of invasive species, pests, or even catastrophic environmental events: “invasions” and

“floods” of “illegal aliens” (Quinsaat, 2014). Without even commenting on the consequences of characterizing these people as intentional criminals, these collective words reduce the ability of news consumers to feel empathy for fellow human beings, instead allowing room for generalized fear, mistrust and anger to grow.

As mentioned above, there are many more issues and ongoing discussion going on in the academic and professional journalistic spheres as to how to better frame immigration stories while still creating work that is accessible to a broad public. It’s clear that over-generalizing when dealing with topics such as this one is not the most effective tactic when it comes to accurate reporting that complies with the higher philosophical ideals of journalism (serving the public good, operating with a notion of conscience, etc., (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). How, then, can journalists report on sensitive issues in an accurate and empathetic fashion?

This work seeks to provide alternatives to the current media framing of immigration by experimenting with “genre-blending” in order to create storytelling that focuses on human emotion and empathy. By inviting the news consumer (in this case, the listener) into an intimate, immersive experience that places them on the same footing as the “subject” of the story, a space of person-to-person connection opens up. Using the tools discussed here to produce narrative-driven journalism and blend it with design choices that enhance the listening experience, this project combats the aforementioned dehumanizing “dataset” mentality. Instead of a “swarm” of anonymous numbers coming into one’s perceived home space, the listener has a number of individualized stories, where they hear the “subject”’s perspective in their own voice and words. On the side of the “subject”, there is also increased agency and connection with the audience than if they had simply been spoken about instead of spoken with. This particular method of storytelling also erases the “us and them” of producer and audience by allowing the journalist to

be a character in the story. Increased subjectivity on the part of the journalist results in a greater sense of authenticity in the finished product (especially when podcasting), but also serves to provide a more equal footing between interviewee, interviewer, and listener.

Reflections on Podcast Creation Process

Practical Reflections

In practical terms, building a podcast series based on the theoretical and practical toolkit outlined in this report was an interesting journalistic experiment with some definite benefits. Interviewing subjects with an idea of “active subjectivity” and of my own presence as a character in the narrative made the process of interviewing more of a conversation and less of a “question and answer” data-collecting session. I asked as few structural questions as possible when I spoke with my interviewees, instead following whichever stories came to mind for them, asking clarifying questions, and at times offering my own impressions of the narrative. This format changed the concept of storybuilding for the series - I did not have a picture of what the main narrative threads for the podcast would be until after I had completed all of my visits to Salt Spring Island and completed every interview and field recording. The story grew out of the stories I was told, paired with my own experiences and personal connection to the island, and as such, the agency of my interviewees was increased. I also continued my communication with my interviewees after completing the recorded interview - keeping in touch with them constituted both a personal ethical choice, and served to continue my connection with the story I was working on (in keeping with the tenets of the hermeneutic cycle in a way).

It is still important to note, however, that as the journalist and creator of the project, there is no way for me to be fully absolved of decision-making power. I still made the final editing and

creative decisions for this project, and that adds a layer of complication to the practical application of this framework. The sound design of the podcast was designed with an ear for the concept of “genre-blending” that I was working with, and I felt that incorporating the more “artistic” design choices with the journalistic work I was doing helped to deepen my connection to the story and also create a more immersive and emotive experience for the listener. I created a number of soundscapes for this project, blending field recordings I took of various locations around the island with original music and using these pieces to score the series. In places, I played with the importance of voice versus soundscape, allowing wild sound to rise and fall over the interview recordings as it would if one were listening to a speaker in an uncontrolled outdoor space (examples of this can be found around the 16-minute mark in Episode 3). I also focused on the descriptive/empathetic aspects of narrative practice while mixing the podcast episodes, attempting to create work that inspired vivid impressions in the “mind’s eye” of the listener. At times in each episode there are instances of “breaking the fourth wall” and speaking to the audience as if they were playing my narrative role along with me, which helped to further blend boundaries and make space for more complex sound. For example, in Episode 3, there is an interview at the 22-minute mark that takes place in a loud bar. In order to prepare the audience for a noisier soundscape without breaking narrative immersion, I invite the audience to lean across the table with me in order to hear my interviewee better. This is a creative way of implementing practical guidance into the narrative track, and it reinforces the intimate, subjective experience of narrator and listener. Blending artistic expression with journalistic storytelling made me take more time to be mindful with my work at every stage, from research to recording to mixing and mastering the audio pieces. I felt that this was very beneficial for the final product.

Overall, I felt that the process of story creation in this style was empathetic, ethical, and could be very effective for certain topics and genres of journalism. However, there are a few factors to consider before embarking on a project in this style. Allowing this much freedom and lack of structure during the interview process can easily result in a number of highly divergent narratives that may be exceedingly difficult for the journalist to present in a manner that is comprehensible and impactful for the listener. The journalist in this style is also purposefully avoiding “interrogating” or following incisive lines of questioning, as the aim of this subjective style of storybuilding is to allow stories to emerge in a more organic manner. While this is extremely useful when the goal is to allow a person to speak their own story in their own voice and words (something that is crucial when telling stories about marginalized groups), it would not be effective when doing more investigative work. In addition, I found that entering into a conversation with my interviewees without the usual interview structure made some of them slightly nervous, as they felt that they had more responsibility to provide “good” content. This was mitigated by further conversation - once they felt they had “got to know me” a little more, there was less trepidation. This is a great opportunity to exercise more subjective philosophy, but this style of interaction also requires constant re-evaluation on the part of the journalist to ensure that the work remains accurate and ethical (based on interactions with all interviewees and on the higher goals of the project itself).

Earlier in this report, the idea that many of the major drawbacks to narrative/subjective practice are the same as its major benefits. I found that to be true in practice as well as in theory. For the purposes of this project, I thought that the relative slowness of the creation process was extremely beneficial. I travelled to Salt Spring several times over the course of a year, taking recordings, personal notes, and re-evaluating my work each time. By the time I was putting

together the podcast episodes and soundscapes, I already had a year's worth of communication and reflection completed. I think this slowness and thoughtfulness comes through in the final work, and results in a better grasp of the bigger ideas I heard in the small stories I recorded. However, it's not always practical in the professional sphere to take that much time to work on a single project. I think it's very important to spend time in a space before reporting on it, in order to engage as much as possible and also in order to realize one's own place as an outside force and express more effectively how complex and wide-ranging all human stories truly are. But I also recognize that the slowness of this narrative process is not always practical, and this may serve to dissuade many storytellers from pursuing this route.

Reflections on Theory

As discussed above, the theoretical structure for this project is provided by the broader historical framework of hermeneutics and phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962), specifically relating research and innovative knowledge creation. The conceptual "hermeneutic circle" is continued by first completing rigorous research and critical review; then, knowledge creation that seeks to expand the current dialogue both completes one cycle and begins another. This cycle describes the intended outcomes of this project: both academic review, and a tangible project that will hopefully invite further critical thought. This approach to learning, traditionally used in fields like art history, also serves as another aspect of genre-blending with respect to this research.

Creating journalistic work that draws on a concept as deeply theoretical and philosophical as this may seem like a difficult combining of the abstract and the practical; however, I found that keeping the higher philosophical motivations of this project while working through the

practical aspects of recording and editing helped me to better analyze and reflect on the process. I considered the academic/theoretical work while doing the practical work; and I considered the practical process while structuring the academic theory. In this way, I found that working as part of a “circle” of knowledge and creation was a useful framework, and it encouraged me to think of how the work I was doing could serve to expand the “knowledge pool” in both the academic and journalistic world.

The earlier section of this report on sound theory introduced research on radio and podcasting as it pertains to this work. Podcasts grew parallel to broadcast radio and took on a shape and style of their own. Radio stations increasingly use podcasts as offshoots to their broadcast shows in order to increase reach, engage different audience demographics, and provide more specialized reporting on topics that may be too niche or “edgy” for the on-air cycle (Sellas, 2012). As mentioned earlier, podcasts, unlike radio, have the quality of “time-shifting” (McClung and Johnson, 2010). They can be listened to at any time that suits the listener. Additionally, the specific audio production and host performance style intrinsic to podcasting resembles the early days of radio documentary or the sonic experimentation found on co-op radio station shows more than mainstream broadcasts (Graber, 2014). The added intimacy of programs designed to be listened to via headphones or earbuds gives podcasts an additional sense of familiarity and closeness (Madsen and Potts, 2010) – the *acousmêtre* (Chion, 1999) of the podcast host enhances this via informal language and the curious tone of a likeable narrator rather than that of a formal, authoritative news host. While initial critiques of podcasts predicted an early demise for the genre, over ten years have passed since the first podcasts were integrated into Apple’s iTunes store, and there is no sign of the podcasting world declining yet – a significant testimony to the genre in the rapidly-changing worlds of technology, entertainment,

and news (Weiner, 2014). As mentioned above, the grassroots origins of the podcast and the inherently positive attitude towards empathetic storytelling have made it a fertile ground for narrative journalism. Narrative journalistic podcasts are often exceedingly popular. Public radio stations can find a space and a dedicated audience for the kind of detailed, long-term reporting that narrative journalism often demands, while still utilizing the unique emotionality of the human voice as a storytelling tool (Lindgren, 2016). Telling personal stories in an empathic and subjective way comes naturally to the inherently intimate sonic environment that the podcasting medium builds for the listener. The practicality of the podcast as a vehicle for narrative work and subjective storytelling suited this project well. Not only was I able to create this project with relatively little expense, I could complete every aspect of this work on my own, and the finished work would be easy to disseminate independently.

Future Impacts

Theoretical Implications

The future impacts of this work fall, again, into two levels of analysis: the theoretical/academic outcomes of this style of research, and the practical efficacy of this journalism style for reporting. In terms of theoretical implications, the overarching idea of “genre bending” behind this work is an important consideration for academic work beyond the field of journalism studies. Increased visibility and acceptance of work that does not fit neatly into the historical traditions of art, academia, or the professional sphere is necessary for the continued growth of knowledge, and in order for teachers and learners alike to recognize historical patterns of elitism and bias and work in ways that grow away from them. Much as the traditional standards for objectivity in journalism are being recognized as no longer able to meet the needs

of the modern public (Ward, 2004), those who seek to push the boundaries of research and learning should recognize that our traditional structures do not serve us as fully or as well as they once did, and, in fact, they are silencing voices and forms of education that do not fit the normative mold instead of meeting their supposed higher ideal of furthering knowledge. We occupy a space in history of increasingly blended boundaries, in terms of communication and storytelling and beyond. Accepting the need for constant re-evaluation, seeking perspectives outside of institutional boundaries, and recognizing the importance of interdisciplinary work are key steps to “keeping up” in some way with the rapidly changing and growing public sphere.

This work also has theoretical implications regarding the sonic studies perspectives that shaped it. The world of podcasting research is growing steadily more populated as the years go on and the genre continues to be a successful and sometimes lucrative path for audio storytellers. Podcasting is already being recognized as a space for narrative audio journalism to find a supportive listener base. This work suggests that podcasts have merit in this respect and also as a space for theoretical experimentation - not only are they an accessible and disruptive technology that allows for do-it-yourself production, but podcasting also allows for new theoretical storytelling frameworks to be tested. Podcasts are more than just an extension of radio narrative practice - they have grown storytelling styles of their own, and perhaps their own form of audio documentary practice that differs from radio productions. The idea of “genre-blending” fits well with podcasts in this respect.

Practical Outcomes

The journalistic framework laid out in this project, although not appropriate for all styles of reporting, could be extremely helpful when telling stories that traditionally do not fare well

with a traditional journalistic treatment. The case study topic chosen for this work was that of immigration. As explored above, this is a topic that has particularly significant consequences attached to the reporter's use of language and style of storytelling. Public opinion on immigration is contentious and filled with rhetoric that causes harm of all kinds to marginalized and often racialized communities, and this mindset is easily perpetuated by reportage that uses distant, dehumanizing language to describe immigrant groups. Here, the person-to-person style of the work done in this project serves to provide the listener with a direct, emotional connection to the "subject". Instead of an anonymous mass of people, there are a few recognizable voices, and stories of place and home that echo the deeper motivations and emotions of the listening public. This inspires empathy and feelings of human connection instead of the instinctive fear and self-protective instincts that can be brought to life by reading about "floods" of incoming immigrants, for example. Subjective, individual-focused reporting can be successful in this way across several different media genres, but choosing to use an audio format may serve to increase the intimacy and impact of the experience, as listeners will hear stories in the words and voices of those who are sharing their experiences.

Practicing subjectivity and placing the focus on storytelling in this way would be effective for reporting that involves engaging with other marginalized communities as well - in any space where it is crucial to deeply consider not only who we are speaking to or who we are speaking about, but who is actually doing the speaking. Allowing increased agency and conducting interview work from a subjective mindset could help reduce the systemic silencing that tends to happen when journalists report on LGBTQ+ stories, for example, or on those living below the poverty line. Letting individual narratives tell a larger societal story could even be employed to help make bigger issues comprehensible for the public. This is a difficult aspect of

journalism that has resulted in much debate, and, sadly, more than a few instances of ineffective and even harmful reporting. Reporting on massively complex issues, climate change for example, can skew towards either being too statistical, or fall into a fear-mongering flood of too much information. Both of these approaches tend to have the unfortunate side effect of paralysing the intended audience, who struggle to engage personally with masses of numbers or overwhelmingly apocalyptic articles (Marshall, 2014). Using a subjective, person-to-person approach, and reframing journalism as a practice of storytelling, could be a very effective tool here. The larger narrative is built out of individual stories, and the public can engage on an emotional and social level instead of trying to deeply connect to facts that seem far-removed.

Concluding Statement

This is a project that sought to explore and expand upon ideas in several realms, and as such, the potential outcomes and applications of this research can be considered on a number of levels. On the broadest, most philosophical plane, driving this work is the hope and the belief that teachers and learners on the whole will push beyond institutional limits to find knowledge, and that they will continue to be self-aware, critical, and considerate of the impacts of their work. Genre-blending as a concept is an argument for the value of liminal spaces, and a call to work in ways that allow stories to be told in ways they haven't before. Narrative journalism is a style of reporting that allows for greater inventiveness and subjectivity throughout the entirety of the process – a foundation that is well suited for the exploration of genre-blending in this project. The audio medium is a particularly special format for narrative journalism, and it has a long history as such. The increased intimacy of the audio format, principally, allows for a greater

emotional connection between listener, reporter, and story subject; additionally, the power and agency of the disembodied voice influences the impact of the storytelling.

The process of creating the audio work associated with this report taught me a number of things about putting subjectivity into practice. It is fair to argue that a subjective mindset is not effective in all cases with journalism, and that the ethics of subjective work are more difficult to define - but that does not mean that subjective reporting is not extremely useful in certain contexts, or that it is impossible to be subjective and ethical. The increased agency and “realness” of the interviewee in an open-ended, narrative interview context allows for much stronger emotional connection between journalist and interviewee, and between the public and the characters they meet in the final story (journalist included). Exploring the spaces where journalism and storytelling blend allows for empathetic bonds to be created in the tradition of oral folklore that stretches back across all of human history. It is important to keep the greater context of one’s work in mind in order to continue questioning and expanding the infamous “knowledge pool”; this style of journalistic thought allows us to situate journalism not just against its own history, but as a part of storytelling tradition as a whole.

There were a number of potential future outcomes for this research enumerated above, but perhaps one of the most important potential results of work like this is to hopefully make space for more research and journalistic work that asks similar (and more specific) questions. Making space for previously unheard voices to speak and be understood should be part of the ethics of the narrative journalist, and in the same vein, the modern researcher should not be afraid to expand their reach beyond the traditional standards of academia. In an era where notions of “truth” and “self” are increasingly questioned, aligning oneself with one’s work in a subjective manner is not only an exercise in research philosophy; it is a political statement.

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