Editorial

Readers: Implicit, Explicit, Gendered

Recent debates about social media, opinion silos, and tribal politics have made little mention of readers, except at best implicitly. As this issue shows, however, readers and readership studies are omnipresent elements in the current understanding of media messaging—especially, as will be seen below, since readers often act as stand-ins for the public interest.

For their study "Negotiating What Constitutes Depression: Focus Group Conversations in Response to Viewing Direct-to-Consumer Advertisements for Antidepressants," **Christine Babineau, Linda McMullen,** and **Pamela Downe** of the University of Saskatchewan undertook focus groups with 26 female participants to evaluate the messaging of direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising of three leading antidepressants. Although only two countries, the United States and New Zealand, allow DTC advertising of drugs, women in Canada experience a spillover exposure effect. Previous research has tended to rely more on surveys and questionnaires. The present researchers considered that semi-structured focus group work would provide a more nuanced understanding of how women negotiate the presentation of depression in DTC advertising.

Using a social constructivist model that emphasized wording and sentence structure as well as the consequences of word use, the researchers found that the women used the discursive research space in which to reclaim normal, and to reclaim depression, but did so cautiously, in a way that introduced ambiguity into their own claims. For instance, the participants questioned the advertisements' presentation of depression, finding it inconsistent with their own experience. Participants also tended to trivialize or downplay the ads' construction of depression, claiming the ads showed something less serious than actual depression. In this way the women created counterclaims of their own that presented depression as uncommon and serious. This construction, however, introduced a note of ambiguity into the participants' own claims: for example, using a first-person account that left the narrative open to competing claims. If the women in this study tended to appear as skeptical viewers of the ads, would they interact differently when faced with other ads?

Alex Luscombe, Kevin Walby, and **Randy K. Lippert,** criminologists at the University of Winnipeg, probe online readers' comments as little studied sources of insight into public opinion in their article "Online Readers' Comments as Popular Culture." In recent years, and over controversial news stories, media outlets such as the CBC and Sun Media have cut off online discussion by readers. The authors argue here that these sites serve as proxies for public opinion. To make their case, they look at the issue of paid duty policing. This is the paid use of public police by private cor-

porations or businesses to "moonlight" at sporting or other events and locales such as malls, night clubs, movie shoots, festivals, et cetera. In recent years, paid duty policing has become increasingly central in sociology and criminology, in part given the rise of private security in the U.S. and the questions this raises over the legitimate use of policing. At the same time, the increased presence of online readers' comments has not only enlarged the interactivity of the news media, it has also blurred the question of what constitutes news, particularly within theories of the public sphere.

While initially focused on Toronto and the use of paid duty policing by the Toronto Police Service, the authors broadened their coverage to six different news sources across Canada. They tracked down 1,946 unique online comments and coded these. They found 11 dominant themes among readers' comments, but surprisingly, the economics of paid-duty policy was predominant, over themes such as free market versus state monopoly, professionalism, or corruption. "Economics," they found, dealt mainly with issues of police pay and costs. If the authors' analysis makes an empirical contribution to the limited criminological literature about paid duty policing, it does so by revealing the complexity of public opinions about paid duty in several Canadian cities. The authors also raise troubling questions about issues including the rule of law, workers' rights (to unionize and be unrestricted from selling their labour), and the public/private divide that, at least discursively, largely defines liberal democratic rule in Canada.

Natalie Doyle Oldfield, a corporate consultant, and **Alla Kushniryk,** a communications scholar at Mount Saint Vincent University, examine the issue of organizational trust based on the views of senior corporate executives in their article "Building and Protecting Organizational Trust with External Publics." Trust is in crisis around the world, a recent survey found. And perhaps nowhere is this more the case than in organizations, and especially in their relations with external publics such as customers, industry associations, suppliers, and the community. In the present study, Oldfield and Kushniryk conducted qualitative interviews with 10 leading Canadian business executives. Using grounded theory, the authors found that successful organizations operate with organizational values or a code of conduct that embrace trust. Cascading from organizational values is a combination of behaviours, characteristics, and competencies, along with activities, interactions, and communication practices that engender trust with external publics.

The findings revealed that the responsibility for creating trust is dichotomous. It is the senior staff's and, ultimately, the CEO's responsibility to set the tone, the strategy, and the operational parameters that create trust, while its execution lies with the frontline people. The study found that the biggest change in trust research in the last decade is whom people listen to in an organization. It is no longer the CEO. People listen to their colleagues and their peers. Nowadays, it is important for organizations to recognize that everyone in the organization has a role to play in building and protecting trust. In the process of building and protecting trust, leaders and key employees play a critical role. In addition to values, organizations must possess and demonstrate competencies and capabilities to create a culture for trust to be fostered. When these foundational elements are in place, specific activities, interactions, behaviours, and methods

of communicating contribute to building and protecting trust. These elements, activities, and interactions align with the cognitive, behavioural, and emotional dimensions of trust. The resulting behaviours, actions, and communications are called principles for building and protecting trust. The authors go on to enumerate and discuss the eight principles for building trust.

Turning to a different kind of organizational problem, **Kyle Conway** (University of Ottawa) reviews the problematic history of the multiplicitous idea of "multicultural" in the Broadcasting Act (1991). Backed by a host of analyses in the decades since it was enacted, he finds that the key issue is one of representation, namely of the lack of visible minorities at every level of the Canadian broadcasting industries. Beginning at the production level, lack of visibility translates into content. But Conway goes on to take issue with the idea of multicultural itself. The term "multicultural" means too many things to too many people to be implemented as straightforward policy, he argues. It is 1) a demographic reality characterized by diversity, 2) a set of philosophies about how to manage that diversity, and 3) a series of policies that put these philosophies into practice. In a contribution to nuanced, contextualized policy formation, Conway then looks again at the House of Commons debates on Bill C-40 that became the 1991 Broadcasting Act. He finds that the debates took the form of competing and contradictory syllogisms on the model of "on the one hand/on the other."

In a Research in Brief, **Karen Grandy** of Saint Mary's University looks at the implied reader of *Canadian Business* magazine, which has targeted senior managers and executives since the 1920s. Although originally a narratological concept in literary theory, the implied reader has been teased out of more recent non-fiction writing such as newspaper editorials, personal finance magazines, and corporate annual reports.

Here Grandy asks whether the implied reader of *Canadian Business* is gendered and exclusive of women, as claimed in the magazine in a November 2013 letters to the editor debate. To answer this question, the study examined article subjects, illustrative photographs, and textual signals of the implied reader in all the style and fashion articles (43 in total) published in the magazine over five years, 2010 to 2014. The articles were all found in the advice and how-to section of the magazine. Style/fashion articles were chosen both because that was the type of piece that prompted the letters to the editor debate and also because the implied reader is often prominently signalled in advice articles. Furthermore, because fashion remains a major signifier for expressing and regulating gender, any gendering of the implied reader should be most evident in such articles. The study found that 75 percent of the articles analyzed (35/43) implied a male reader. Gandy concludes that this research matters since it sheds light on who is addressed and so who is invited to speak and who is excluded from the cultural community of readership.

In another Research in Brief, **John Willinsky** of Stanford University proposes a recent study of Canadian journals as a relatively detailed financial model of how the average Canadian subscription journal might move to open access without suffering a loss of the revenue that sustains it. His study also introduces the capacity of such a model to include existing open access journals, given that they may already account, by the rough approximation that *Ulrich's Global Serial Directory* provides, for perhaps

35 percent of some 700 Canadian peer-reviewed journals. The study sets out how a subscription journal can be converted to open access by building on the cooperative spirit that libraries are exhibiting in their support for open access. It is intended to demonstrate the different ways in which current journal revenue and library expense levels can be preserved, at least as a starting point. The calculations presented here are based on average revenues and expenses for a sample of 69 Canadian journals. Any sample is bound to be inadequate in predicting what a given set of Canadian journals and libraries might face in considering the formation of such an entity. Those interested and intrigued by the possibilities can begin with their own figures, while one advantage, and challenge initially, of this cooperative model will be learning to work with a more transparent publishing economy. In Willinsky's view, it will involve a process of deliberation, planning, calculation, and application that will not end.

In "National Dreams and Neoliberal Nightmares: The Dismantling of Canadian Heritage's Periodical Assistance Programs, 1989–2015," **Patricia Elliott** of the University of Regina tracks the dramatic, near-total collapse of support for Canadian-produced and distributed magazines since the 1990s. With unprecedented Access to Information documentation that only somewhat offsets the refusal of Canadian Heritage officials to be interviewed, Elliott retells and updates a familiar story of external pressures, translated into shifting linguistic priorities, and policy pusillanimity. A close study of program history reveals that aid to Canadian periodicals presented a soft target for the globalizing trade instruments of international capital—a target poorly defended by successive national governments that had absorbed neoliberalism's transformation of "culture" into "cultural industries." The election of a Conservative government in 2006 merely served to accelerate wheels already in motion, leaving Canadian publishers to stand alone against U.S. market domination. At the same time, new inducements to align editorial content with government objectives were introduced, accompanied by stronger direct political control over funding recommendations, as revealed by the researcher's Access to Information requests. These trends disproportionately affected smaller non-profit magazines, many of them vocal critics of the same economic model that sought an end to substantive media development assistance in Canada.

In her article "Rethinking the Cutural Icon: Its Use and Function in Popular Culture," **Emily Truman**, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Calgary, argues that the cultural icon has been under-theorized in Communication Studies. Using the bibliographic methodology of "the scoping review," Truman distinguishes three main uses of the icon: in academic study (art history, semiotics); as a religious symbol; and as a representative cultural symbol. It is the latter category that interests her most. Her ambitious and wide-ranging study offers a unique theorization of the *cultural icon* specifically as a valuable concept that performs specialized cultural work in twenty-first-century North American popular culture by representing cultural anxieties, and thus illuminating the tensions between different articulations of collective cultural values. The study addresses a notable gap in cultural icon research in two ways. First, it identifies the existing landscape of research on cultural icons by collecting examples and mapping out the use of icons by category. Second, this information in itself performs a number of functions: it identifies places in which the term "cultural icon" is

in use, it highlights the breadth of that use, and it suggests implicit categories (e.g., person, place, thing) that organize this area of study. These observations suggest that iconic study is a prevalent phenomenon that is subject to exercises of list making.

In his contribution "News as Hazardous Waste: Postmedia, the Competition Bureau, and the Supreme Court of Canada," **Marc Edge** of the University of Malta argues that behind the Competition Bureau's 2015 decision to allow Postmedia to purchase the newspapers of Sun Media and so merge the country's two largest newspaper chains lay an earlier decision by the Supreme Court that received little comment. Timing of the Tervita ruling, in a case involving a hazardous waste landfill monopoly in northern British Columbia, could not have been worse for press ownership concentration in Canada. By interpreting the Competition Act in a way that put the Competition Bureau at a disadvantage in preventing monopolies, the Tervita ruling may have contributed to a further increase in the country's level of media ownership concentration, which was already among the world's highest, and may also facilitate future such increases. It explicitly endowed the country's news media, which play a vital role in cultural and political affairs, with the same status as any other business in Canada, such as hazardous waste removal. As Edge argues, the so-called "efficiencies defence" in the Competition Act is the weak link in whatever regulatory protection exists against increased press ownership concentration in Canada. By considering only advertising revenues and not the information needs of Canadians, efficiencies gained in news gathering may be used to justify even more mergers and acquisitions of news media companies. This ironically may lead to news media companies becoming increasingly efficient by providing Canadians with fewer and fewer sources of news.

Felan Parker (University of Toronto) and **Jennifer Jenson** (York University), in their article "Canadian Indie Games Between the Global and the Local," situate the Canadian independent digital gaming industry in Canada within the larger cultural economy of gaming. Data for the article was collected during the Critically Mapping Indie Games in Canada study conducted between September 2014 and August 2015. It examined the geographic distribution of indie gaming in Canada: the activities, interactions, and relationships it constitutes, and how Canadian indie gaming is situated in North American and global gaming culture. It attempted to move beyond the common focus on well-known hubs of activity and macro-level political economic studies to examine specific contexts, including more marginal locations. This resulted in 34 semi-structured in-person and online interviews with indie game developers across the country—mostly from smaller teams (one to six members), both professional (full-time or part-time, commercial or artistic) and amateur or aspiring. This research on Canadian game developers, community organizers, and others involved in indie games suggests that contemporary cultural producers locate their identities and communities at the intersection of the global and the local, with only occasional recourse to the national, usually in highly specific, often pragmatic contexts. The study reveals how blurry the boundaries between seemingly discrete categories can become in practice, as well as the material and symbolic functions boundaries served for individual actors trying to make sense of their role in the larger world of game production, distribution, and consumption. If the construction of identities and communities is fundamentally

about marking difference and exclusion, the discursive and material processes by which these blurry boundaries are constructed, maintained, and contested speak volumes about the contemporary realities of independent cultural production, in Canada and around the world.

And to wrap up the issue, **Mylynn Felt,** a Vanier Scholar at the University of Calgary, looks at the media portrayal of cyberbullying in her article "News Portrayals of Cyberbullying as the Product of Unstable Teen Technological Culture." The study takes a constructionist approach to the examination of cyberbullying. This stance recognizes that an understanding of cyberbullying develops through the shared meaning established through everyday usage. For example, peer aggression delivered through media is not revolutionary. Nevertheless, the application of the term "cyberbullying" is common enough to easily distinguish it from harassment through passing notes or other older forms of media. The distinction between what is currently considered cyberbullying and what is often termed bullying is socially constructed. The meaning of the term is dynamic and evolves in a manner reflecting common use. While attention to the issue has progressed internationally, this progression has been largely driven by public discourse generated from news coverage of teen deaths. This is certainly the case in Canada.

To analyze the construction of cyberbullying, Felt's study conducts a frame analysis of media coverage of four teen suicides associated with peer computer-mediated harassment. This analysis focuses on news coverage of the deaths of Jamie Hubley, Amanda Todd, Rehtaeh Parsons, and Todd Loik. Analysis reveals a dominant frame of cyberbullying as a social problem in public discourse mediated through mainstream media. This dominant frame tends to shift focus from individual accountability to unstable teen technological culture. The oversimplification of complicated cases effectively frames cyberbullying as a social problem, but fails to convey the complexities of each case or the full nature of cyberbullying.

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