

Canada's Contemporary Press System: Shifting Industries, Formal Inquiries, and Journalistic
Employment

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the state of journalism in Canada with a focus on the quantity and quality of journalistic work. I find that journalism is not in crisis so much as a major and wrenching period of transformation. The Canadian press system is presently in a moment of change characterized by an array of different media players, shifting industry trends and a federal government inquiry. Amidst all the turmoil, data from Statistics Canada suggests there are more jobs in the field than there was prior to the emergence of the Internet. Further, my personal interviews reveal that newswriters understand the role of the journalist as one that is being dramatically changed alongside the entire press system. However, to what end these changes point is not at all clear. Accordingly, the federal government and the CRTC play a crucial role in shaping the evolution of the Canadian journalistic environment.

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List of Terms

Bell Canada Enterprises	BCE
Bureau of Labor Statistics	BLS
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation	CBC
Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission	CRTC
Canadian Media Concentration Research Project	CMCRP
Canadian Media Fund	CMF
Canadian Newspaper Association	CAN
Canadian Pacific Railway	CPR
Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada	CEP
Communications Monitoring Report	CMR
Concentration Ratio	CR
Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia	COSCO
Chief Executive Officer	CEO
Crisis of Journalism	COJ
Direct to Home Satellite	DTH
Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization	EBITDA
Friends of Canadian Broadcasting	FRIENDS
Future of News	FON
Independent Local News Fund	ILNF
Internet Protocol Television	IPTV
Innovation, Science and Economic Development	ISED
Internet Service Provider	ISP
International Typographical Union	ITU
Labour Force Survey	LFS
Local Programming Improvement Fund	LPIF
Local News Fund	LNF
Manitoba Telecom Services	MTS
Member of Parliament	MP
National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians	NABET
National Household Survey	NHS
National Occupational Classification	NOC
over-the-top	OTT
Public Interest Advocacy Centre	PIAC
Public Policy Forum	PPF
Progressive Conservative	PC
Public Relations	PR
Small Market Local Production Fund	SMLPF
United States of America	USA
Vice President	VP
World War I	WWI

Research Participants

Andrew Foote (casual contract journalist at the CBC)

Chloe Fédio (casual contract journalist at the CBC)

Alistair Steele (digital copy editor at the CBC)

Carl Neustaedter (former deputy editor at the *Ottawa Citizen*)

Drake Fenton (city editor at the *Ottawa Citizen*)

Melanie Coulson (former senior editor at the *Ottawa Citizen*)

BJ Siekierski (journalist at *iPolitics*)

Amanda Connelly (journalist at *iPolitics*)

Kelsey Johnson (journalist at *iPolitics*)

1. Introduction: Whither Journalism?

I think 100 years from now we'll talk about the great media disruption like they talk about the Gutenberg press. We're in the middle of it. It's hard to take a step back and look at it.

– Melanie Coulson, former Senior Editor at the Ottawa Citizen

(M. Coulson, personal communication, March 31, 2016)

The past decade has featured a range of regulatory check-ups on the media orchestrated by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and the Government of Canada (CRTC, 2015a; CRTC, 2015b; CRTC, 2016a; Parliament of Canada, 2006; Parliament of Canada, 2016). Meanwhile, several industry leaders in Canadian journalism have requested financial subsidies from the government in response to falling advertising revenues and fragmenting audiences (Pedwell, 2016) while many working in the field have described the challenges characterizing their work in detail, repeatedly and with a growing sense of urgency (Cohen, 2011; Cohen, 2012). These inquiries, proceedings and requests reveal multiple things. For one, there is a broadly shared understanding that media in Canada are in difficult times. In addition, there is a recognition that policies and regulations in Canada are being outpaced by new technologies, new platforms and increasingly large media organizations. Finally, and of concern to this thesis, it tells us that journalism in Canada, an industry inextricably tied in many complex ways to the media ecosystem, is in trouble.

Analysts roundly acknowledge that the Internet has significantly disrupted traditional print and broadcast media's advertising-driven business model. In 2003, for example, US newspaper ad revenue was USD \$44.9 billion where in 2014, it was USD \$16.4 billion. Advertising revenues toppled by nearly half between 2006 and 2009, falling from USD \$46.6 billion to USD \$24.8 billion (Pew, 2015, p. 27). Although the decline came later, Canadian

newspaper advertising revenues have too suffered. The Canadian Media Concentration Research Project (CMCRP) (2015) suggests advertising revenues dropped from CD \$2.6 billion in 2004 to near CD \$1.4 billion in 2014 with the sharpest decline, outside of the Great Recession in 2008, between 2012 and 2014. While analysts in Canada are of a general consensus that falling advertising revenues are a crucial part of the present state of journalism, their focus is split between what other factors primarily contributed to the existing state of the system, the seriousness of the state of journalism itself, and what measures are best adopted to preserve and enhance its future.

Many researchers are focused on the technological explanations that account for the present state of journalism (Ahlers, 2006; Bruns, 2008; Boczkowski & Ferris, 2005; Larsson, 2009; O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008). These researchers highlight how the emergence and development of the Internet has played a role in transforming newsroom practices and the labour of journalists who have novel responsibilities in the newsroom and a slew of new digital tools (Deuze, 2009; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009; Singer, 2010; Spyridou et al., 2013; Reddern & Witschge, 2009). Some emphasize how the Internet has prompted new relationships between journalists and their sources, particularly public relations (PR) workers (Larsson, 2009). Other researchers are concerned about the increasingly mobile and fragmented news audience who can access journalistic content for a fraction of the cost of traditional print or cable subscriptions (Mythen, 2009; O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008). A few suggest traditional news firms are relying on outdated business models predicated on an industrial logic that does not apply in the digital age (Bruns, 2008).

While some highlight the role of technological innovations in the state of journalism, others are focused on the economic elements of the present press system. These analysts direct

their research toward the decisions and relationships of media firms, the government and regulators (Edge, 2011a; Edge, 2014; McChesney, 2003; McChesney, 2012; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Winseck, 2010). Some posit that the consolidation of news media groups and the broader economic crisis since 2008 have exacerbated journalism's often self-inflicted financial wounds. In this view, the financialization of the media, and the excessive profit motive of news firms are key contributors to the crisis of the present press system (Almiron, 2010; Edge, 2011a; Edge 2014; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Winseck, 2010). Many contend that a history of weak regulation in Canada has intensified the excess profit motive of news firms (Edge, 2011a; Skinner, Compton, & Gasher, 2005; Winseck, 2010).

Researchers are not only divided over whether the current press system is in a state of crisis, but what to do about it if, indeed, that is the case. Some suggest that “this is a crisis of the greatest possible magnitude” (Almiron, 2010; Alterman, 2008; McChesney, 2012, p. 683; Meyer, 2006; Starr, 2009). The current news media landscape, according to these researchers, is in disarray as traditional news groups falter, audiences are increasingly fragmented, local news declines, and advertising revenues plummet (McChesney & Nichols, 2010, p. 105). In the meantime, PR workers and communication experts have come to vastly outnumber journalists meaning those paid reporters who are still employed have fewer resources to properly interrogate ‘the spin’ now being produced and disseminated on an unprecedented scale while new forms of online journalism fall short of filling the gap left by declining traditional news firms (McChesney & Nichols, 2010, p. 105). The solution, to some, are government interventions in the news market, public funding and progressive policy shifts (McChesney & Nichols, 2010, p. 221).

Others; however, examine the potential for emerging Internet-centric forms of networked journalism to fill the void left by incumbent news firms. These scholars tell us that it is the

conventional business model, and not journalism itself, that is in crisis (Beckett, 2008; Benkler, 2006; Benkler, 2011; Gorman, 2015; Johnson, 2009; Van Der Haak, Parks & Castells, 2012).

Benkler (2006) suggests the Internet has the *potential* to foster increasingly democratic, diverse, autonomous and participatory forms of journalism in an economy based on an exchange of information and “a communications environment built on cheap processors with high computation capacities” (p. 3). He argues that we are in the midst of a shift from a mass media dominated public sphere predicated on a one-way, hub-and-spoke structure to a networked public sphere, and from an industrial information economy to a networked information economy (Benkler, 2006, p. 179). Similarly, others see the potential of a networked journalism where the journalist is a node whose work is motivated by network practice, relying on professional and unprofessional sources and feedback within the network to collect, analyse and distribute information (Van Der Haak, Parks & Castells, 2012). Networked journalism then is an opportunity for a new form of journalism where society can benefit from a plethora of information and its meaningful interpretation (Van Der Haak, Parks & Castells, 2012, p. 2927).

However, Benkler (2006) and others are careful to note, openness and diversity are not deterministic consequences of the emergence of these new processes. Indeed, gatekeepers and bottlenecks both within, and in gaining access to, the network can “create threats to the autonomy of individuals in that environment” which may warrant policy interventions to support diverse *access* to network communications (p. 147). Moreover, traditional news organizations will not take these changes lying down; emerging social practices and political decisions must not try to regulate this new information economy in a way that protects traditional news firms (Benkler, 2006, p. 380; Gorman, 2015, p. 263). Accordingly, researchers who hold these views are less inclined towards public funding toward traditional news firms, instead suggesting any

subsidies be directed toward emerging digital native news firms (Gorman, 2015) – or to wait and let these news forms of journalism develop (Benkler, 2011).

Caught up in this cacophony of far-reaching policy, industry and strategic changes, are those working on the frontlines of the news industry: journalists. Many journalists and newswriters who were interviewed for this thesis had stark words for the progress, or lack thereof, that institutions have made so far in response to these challenges. Drake Fenton, city editor of the *Ottawa Citizen*, said “no one knows what they’re doing, in terms of companies. There’s no clear path forward and there’s no media organization that has found a way to succeed, except maybe the *New York Times*” (D. Fenton, personal communication, March 5, 2016).

iPolitics reporter Kelsey Johnson quipped:

[t]he journalism industry is re-defining itself. They’re trying to restructure themselves and trying to make money. I think for the biggest newsrooms that’s the biggest challenge. Somebody told me the other day, ‘since last January we’ve lost 600 reporters in the past year’. That’s probably just in print; for every reporter you lose, you lose all of the stories they were writing. (K. Johnson, personal communication, March 10, 2016)

Johnson’s observation about the sharp increase of journalistic job loss is one I heard time and again in my interviews for this thesis, and one that is threaded through recent news coverage. Canada’s journalistic organizations, or so it goes, are undergoing a purging as an increasing number of reporters are being forced out of jobs into government, communications work, or other fields entirely.

This narrative, however, is seemingly at odds with data from Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey (LFS), a monthly self reported survey which measures the current state of the

Canadian labour market. The figures from Statistics Canada tell us that the number of journalists in Canada has fluctuated over time but, ultimately, has risen in the past three decades. Crucially, this is also the same period in which the Internet arose to prominence – the mid 1990s and onwards. In 1987, there were 9,559 journalists employed in Canada, according to the Statistics Canada data; by 2016, that number had swelled to 14,094 journalists employed, the highest level recorded in the 30 years of data covered by Statistics Canada’s LFS and analyzed in this thesis. The number of journalists reached an all time low during this period in 1998, when there were just 6,149 journalists working in Canada. Comparatively, in 1998 fixed broadband penetration (per 100 capita) was at 0.46, in contrast to a fixed broadband penetration rate of 35.79 and a mobile-broadband subscription penetration rate of 54.58 in 2015 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2015).

How do we make sense of these cross-cutting observations, between the steady flow of news and personal accounts of journalism being in crisis, on the one hand, and the prospects for renewal that some speak of, even if wistfully, and then those Statistics Canada numbers showing there’s never been more journalists than now, on the other hand? The core purpose of this thesis is to examine such questions within an overall examination of the state of journalism in Canada in 2016. It does so by raising and addressing a few questions, for example: What are the defining characteristics of journalism in Canada today? How many journalists are there in Canada, permanent or otherwise? To what extent have full-time journalists’ jobs been converted into contract positions? How do newswriters understand the role of the journalist within the Canadian press system in 2016? How do they view the future of the industry?

An understanding of the quantity of journalists working their trade as these broad structural changes sweep across the landscape is crucial to a robust examination of journalism in Canada.

There is no one clear road to success in today's news environment and, amongst other things, these structural transformations are changing the number of journalists employed in Canada, the nature of their work, and how newswriters view the role of the journalist within the press system. This thesis charts these changes, with a particular eye on how these changes are altering newswriters' perceptions of the future of the industry.

My research finds that journalism in Canada is not in crisis, it is in a moment of wrenching transformation. Journalism in Canada is finding its bearings in a rapidly evolving media ecology populated by an array of different media players including traditional news firms adapting to the emergence of recent technologies and newer, smaller digital native news firms, shifting industry trends, and formal inquiry from the Government of Canada. Journalists fall amid these changes and although popular parlance would indicate that there is a great decline in the number of journalistic positions, data from Statistics Canada in fact suggests there are more jobs in this field than there was prior to the Internet. Yet, these jobs are indeed different with significantly more journalists working in impermanent positions than in pre-Internet days. In the meantime, my personal interviews reveal that newswriters understand the role of the journalist in the broader Canadian news environment as one that is in transformation alongside the entire press system. However, transformation toward *a more robust journalistic environment* is not necessarily the result of these changes. The Government of Canada and the CRTC play a crucial role in shaping the evolution of the Canadian press system.

Researching the vast transformations that are reshaping the state of journalism in Canada and quantitative accounts of the number of journalists employed in Canada is critically important for at least two reasons. For one, robust journalism is crucial to a functioning democracy. For all the technological, societal and structural changes that journalism has endured and embraced, its

key purpose is to provide citizens with a public good: “the information they need to be free and self-governing” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 17). Journalism helps citizens create a shared and open discourse, serves as a check to balance operations of power, gives voices to those who do not have their own, amplifies conversations of the public interest and nourishes a concerned and interested citizenry (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 17).

Secondly, while a bounty of work exists from what is commonly termed the ‘future of news’ (FON) crowd on the ‘crisis of journalism’ (COJ) (Alterman, 2008; McChesney, 2012; Starr, 2009) there is less research that addresses journalistic employment in Canada alongside these transformations (Cohen, 2011; Cohen, 2012; McKercher, 2002). Similarly, research on workers commonly grouped under the creative and knowledge industries has largely focused on studies of labourers in the arts, design and entertainment sectors (Conor, Gill, & Taylor, 2015; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011) while journalistic work has garnered less spotlight. Vincent Mosco and Catherine McKercher, however, have produced many valuable insights on workers employed in the knowledge industries, including journalists (McKercher, 2002; Mosco & McKercher, 2007; Mosco & McKercher, 2008). Nicole Cohen has also written on the precarity underpinning freelance journalistic work in Canada (Cohen, 2011; Cohen, 2012). Yet, while this work is extremely important and has done much to broaden the scholarship in this area, a robust examination of *quantitative accounts of journalists* employed in the industry is still lacking. This thesis aims to fill this gap by providing a firm account of the quantity and quality of journalistic work in Canada, and an understanding of how journalists and others newswriters understand the changing role of the journalist within the broader Canadian press system.

1.1 Historical Review: Concentration, Consolidation, Regulation, and Policy

This section provides a short historical review of three important facets of the Canadian media environment with a focus on the press industry and the emergence of the professional journalist: 1. concentration in the Canadian media industries, 2. regulatory review of the Canadian media system, and 3. formal inquiry into the state of the media in Canada from the Government of Canada. Three important themes emerge from this discussion. First, journalism is inextricably tied to the media ecosystem in Canada. Secondly, policy debates that colour contemporary conversations about the media in Canada aren't often new – they reflect debates that have animated discussion about the Canadian media since at least the late nineteenth century. Thirdly, the Government of Canada has long had a role in actively shaping the structures of the media environment in Canada.

The early history of media in Canada was shaped by early threads of media concentration and consolidation in the newspaper industries (Babe, 1990; Skinner & Gasher, 2006; Sotiron, 1997). Skinner and Gasher (2005) point out that “newspaper markets are sometimes characterized as natural monopolies because of the economic advantages producers glean from economies of scale” (p. 57). However, history shows that the current state of the newspaper industry in Canada is not natural at all – it was created through a series of financial and political decisions throughout the nineteenth century to the present day.

Just as the Internet offers a low cost of production to its users in 2016, starting a newspaper in the nineteenth century was also a relatively inexpensive endeavour. Indeed, newspapers then did not require high levels of capital expenditures, all that was needed was “a handful of type, a printer and a ‘slashing’ writer”, a skilled and persuasive writer who could debate the paper’s political adversaries (Sotiron, 1997, p. 4). Social transformations such as rising literacy rates as well as urbanization played a part in broadening newspapers markets

(Skinner & Gasher, 2005, p. 58). Meanwhile, during the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, politicians and other non-journalists were overtly involved in newspaper patronage through strategic takeovers just prior to major elections, direct sponsorship of papers by political parties, and the awarding of government advertising contracts and large scale subscriptions (Sotiron, 1997, p. 108). These trends continued, Sotiron (1997) reports, “[w]ell-heeled party backers were largely responsible for the creation of new papers or takeovers of established ones from the 1890s on” (p. 108). These investments were reflected in newspapers’ content which was, until the early twentieth century, for the most part, completely and unapologetically politically biased (Johnston, 2006, p. 17).

However, Sotiron (1997) tells us that, by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century, an overtly partisan press was no longer the case - financial interests had replaced political concerns and the contemporary character of the press had taken hold (p. 4). The commercialization of Canada’s press reflected the country’s growing industrialism and the saturation of newspaper markets. Newspapers were increasingly regarded as an investment by entrepreneurs looking to expand their business holdings (Sotiron, 1997, p. 23). As profits grew, the industrialization of the press was mirrored in technological innovations like transoceanic telegraph lines, photography, more efficient printing presses and delivery vehicles which allowed newspapers to reach greater circulation numbers than ever before (Sotiron, 1997, p. 6; Skinner & Gasher, 2005, p. 58). Consequently, capital expenditures rose enormously and newspapers publishers learned to attract a broad swath of the public to maintain the advertising revenues necessary to support their enterprises (Sotiron, 1997, p. 23). Alongside higher capital costs and a weakened economy due to the onset of WWI, rising readership saturation also required news firms to look for new strategies to remain profitable (Sotiron, 1997, p. 25). Increasingly,

economies of scale became a central facet of the press system as firms with greater circulation numbers could reduce their production costs per unit (Skinner & Gasher, 2005, p. 57). This time was also marked by the emergence of many of the mainstays of contemporary journalism: daily newspaper publications, a growing reliance on advertising revenue and full-time journalistic work (Gorman, 2015, p. 29).

The occupation of the professional journalist emerged alongside the commercialization of the industry. Before this, news organizations were largely run by a single editor and a few unpaid contributors. This ‘new’ period was marked by the development of many mainstays of contemporary journalistic writing: the inverted pyramid, interviewing, objectivity, a focus on ‘facts’, and writing with an active voice (Gorman, 2015, p. 29). Schudson (2003) suggests the professionalization of the journalist, and the corresponding ideals of the occupation, acted as a counterweight to the growing commercial nature of the industry (p. 70). As I saw reflected in my personal interviews found in Chapter 6, and as scholars have warned, many of the pressures put on professional journalists during this period still exist today; “organizations [...] are designed to exploit journalists’ feelings that their work is a ‘sacred calling’ by claiming a public service mandate that allowed publishers to submerge their profit motive within an appeal to their newswriters sense of duty” (Gorman, 2015, p. 36).

The 1970s and 1980s were marked by three formal reviews from the federal government: the Davey Committee, the Bryce Commission and the Kent Commission. With 1970 came the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, commonly referred to as the Davey Committee, and the publication of the first government report on media concentration in Canada. The consolidation of newspaper markets in small cities was complete at this point and the concentration of ownership of these larger firms was well underway (Samarajiva, 1983, p. 125).

The report outlined the risk of concentrated newspaper ownership in Canada and called for the establishment of a Press Ownership Review Board, the advancement of a publications development loan fund, and the establishment of local and national press councils (Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, 1970, n.p.). The Board's mandate was clear in its aim: "all transactions that increase concentration of ownership in the press are undesirable and contrary to the public interest – unless shown to be otherwise" (Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, 1970, n.p.). At the crux of the report was a concern for public policy: "The prudent state must recognize that, at some point, *enough is enough*. If the trend towards ownership concentration is allowed to continue unabated, sooner or later it must reach the point where it collides with the public interest" (emphasis mine, Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, 1970, n.p.). Notwithstanding, the Government of Canada took no action to fulfill the Davey's Commission's recommendations (Keshen & MacAskill, 1999, p. 315).

News firms were initially cautious in the years following the Davey Committee, Samarajiva (1983) writes: "the closures, acquisitions and mergers started at a slow pace, and did not create too much pressure on the politicians to act [...] [b]ut the tempo picked up in 1980" (p. 125). Nonetheless, 1978 marked the "Report of the Royal Commission on Corporate Concentration" (the Bryce Commission) and the Kent Commission, known formally as the Royal Commission on Newspapers, followed in 1981 to quell increasing concern over media ownership concentration in Canada as newspapers closed in Montreal, Quebec City, Winnipeg and Ottawa (the latter two on the same day). The Kent Commission similarly called for public policy solutions through a series of recommendations including the break-up of regional monopolies that exceeded defined circulation measures, the creation of a regulatory panel to administer and monitor ownership standards and tax incentives designed to increase news content. The position

on media concentration laid out in the document was clear: “[i]ndustrial conglomerates produce poor newspapers” (Royal Commission on Newspapers, n.p.). In contrast to the Davey Committee, which largely called for preventive measures, the Kent Commission called for government action to force media conglomerates to *divest* assets. Nonetheless, neither of the reports’ recommendations were meaningfully implemented and the Government of Canada showed little interest in media concentration for the next twenty years (Winseck, 2011a, p. 3).

While formal inquiry into the state of the media and the press faded from the Government of Canada’s consciousness, the 1990s ushered in a new business strategy for news firms: convergence. Winseck (1998) writes that industry and government intent have long pushed and legislated against the possibility of media convergence in Canada and other Western nations. However, in the late twentieth century, policy focused on encouraging network infrastructure in Canada, and a renewed interest in the concept from key industry groups, shows a shift toward the practice (pp. 342-343). Reforms laying out the measures telecommunication service providers would need to meet to acquire broadcasting as well as cable licenses, amongst other policy shifts, reflected the turn in mood at the federal government, with the CRTC following close in tow (Winseck, 1998, p. 345).

Although convergence was already a reality in the twentieth century, and had been for several years, the most overt government support for convergence was when the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, Bev Oda, recognized convergence as “an essential business strategy for media organizations to stay competitive in a highly competitive and diverse marketplace” (Canadian Heritage, 2006, p. 14). All the while, convergence was touted by many media owners for its capacity to harness the forces of the Internet to cut costs by “by sharing

content across media, by selling advertising on multiple ‘platforms’, and through the ‘synergy’ of having one journalist cover a story for multiple outlets” (Edge, 2011a, p. 1267).

Accordingly, during the last decade of the twentieth century and into the first decade of the twenty-first, a slew of Canadian media companies with interests in journalism changed hands through mergers and acquisitions all underpinned by strategies of convergence. In the years just preceding the turn of the century Bell Canada Enterprises (BCE) acquired Canada’s largest private television network CTV before going on to partner with *The Globe and Mail*, in a jointly owned venture called Bell Globemedia. The French-language newspaper giant Quebecor purchased the Sun Media newspaper chain in 1998, and then proceeded to pick up the largest cable firm in the province, Videotron, as well as the French television network TVA, both in 2000 (Edge, 2011a, p. 1268). Canwest Global Communications took over the Southam newspaper chain (including the *National Post*), just two years after having acquired the Global Television network - Canada’s second English-language commercial TV network (Edge, 2011a, p. 1268; Winseck, 2010, p. 376). After a short lull, another shopping spree in the Canadian media between the years of 2004 and 2007 included BCE’s ownership reduction of Bell Globemedia to 20%, selling off the remaining 80% to Thomson Newspapers, Torstar and the Ontario Teachers Pension Plan (Edge, 2011a). Quebecor bought the mid-size newspaper chain Osprey Media while a joint venture between Canwest and Goldman Sachs picked up Alliance Atlantis, one of the largest pay and specialty TV service providers in Canada and a significant player in film distribution (Winseck, 2010, p. 376).

That the path to convergence was not going to be as easy to hoe as some had imagined quickly became apparent. Media firms struggled to sell joint advertising across multiple platforms and compete with the content posted free online, labour strife was widespread, and

there were major frictions across media as industry leaders realized that labour and content in different media industries was less transferable than they had otherwise anticipated (Edge, 2011a). In Canada, media firms that had taken on enormous debt loads to acquire enterprises in other media sectors had difficulties paying down their commitments (Edge, 2011a, p. 1267). With the economic recession of the late 2000s this all came to the fore as a series of poor business decisions and the bloated debt it was carrying because of its rash of acquisitions over the decade - Southam, Global TV, Alliance Atlantis - and precisely as Internet advertising was taking off but the economy crashing, Canwest was forced into bankruptcy. Meanwhile CTVglobemedia (formerly Bell Globemedia) suffered major financial losses. Exceptionally, Quebecor Media, due to its diversification into telecommunications and broadcasting, fared comparatively well during the economic downturn (Edge, 2011b).

Today, many news firms in Canada are still trying to leverage their profits by expanding their reach into new holdings. Winseck (2015a) suggests this new wave of consolidation spans 2010 to 2015. This upsurge included Canwest's bankruptcy at the turn of the decade, BCE's return to broadcasting with its purchase of CTV in 2011 and faltering, but eventually successful, bid for Astral Media in 2013 (Winseck, 2015a). Most recently came the Competition Bureau's approval of Postmedia's acquisition of the Sun newspaper chain from Quebecor in 2015/2016, a deal that included six daily newspapers, 27 smaller daily newspapers as well as 140 community weekly papers which quickly resulted in newsroom mergers in several major daily papers across Canada (Competition Bureau, 2015).

As was the case with Postmedia's recent acquisition, nearly all these recent transactions have been justified on the grounds that their larger scale will allow them to be more efficient, better able to compete with bigger global rivals, and to fund the changes taking place as society,

and the media, 'go digital'. Getting bigger will also open new avenues of expansion and boost revenues (Baluja, 2014; Flavelle, 2014). Well-resourced media organizations may bear a necessary evil in the battle against new media giants and aggregators such as Google and Facebook, or so many would say (Flavelle, 2014; Canadian Press, 2016c).

1.2 Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized into a series of chapters that focus on the role of the individual journalist in the broader Canadian press system. The first third of this project focuses on history, method, theory and the relevant scholarly literature. The second third of this project lays out the key players and industry characteristics of Canada's contemporary journalistic environment, as well as recent inquiry from the Government of Canada and the CRTC into the state of journalism, and the media, in Canada. The final third of this project examines quantitative accounts of journalistic employment in Canada and newswriters' self-reflections on the role of the journalist within today's, and tomorrow's, press. My thesis concludes with five recommendations for further action.

Chapter 2 "On Method" follow this chapter with a description of my methodology which is composed of a literature review, document review, a quantitative analysis, and personal interviews with nine newswriters in Ottawa. It places emphasis on the interview process and lays out some of the scholarly literature on the practice, and the challenges of this method. Finally, this chapter describes the core tenets of my theoretical framework: the political economy of communication (PEC) where I highlight some of the core theorists of this approach including Vincent Mosco, Herbert Schiller, Noam Chomsky, Ed Herman, Robert McChesney, Dwayne Winseck and Catherine McKercher.

Chapter 3 “The State of Journalism, What Accounts for it, and What to do About it” sketches out the robust conversation at play in the FON circles. I provide an overview and evaluation of the core technological and economical explanations employed to account for the present state of journalism. I also map out the positions of those scholars who suggest journalism is in the midst of a full-blown crisis (Almiron, 2010; McChesney and Nichols, 2009) against those who tell us it’s not journalism that’s in crisis but rather the business model on which it has traditionally relied (Benkler, 2006; Benkler, 2011; Shirky, 2011). I pay attention to the implications of these broader structural changes on the role of the journalist, and I evaluate some of the proposals put forth to best support the future of journalism. Finally, I lay out my own viewpoint: the state of journalism is primarily an issue of economics. Moreover, journalism is not in crisis, it is in transformation. Further, the best approach to sustain journalism, alongside other recommendations that are developed in this thesis, is to encourage the development of novel digital native forms of journalism.

Chapter 4 “Today’s Press System in Canada” hones in on Canada’s present press system. The first third maps out five critical clusters of journalistic entities that coexist in the Canadian media landscape. These groups are characterized by an array of different characteristics including strategies of horizontal integration, vertical integration, a shift from traditional journalistic values, and various capital structures. Critically, this section also lays out the precarious position of the public broadcaster, the CBC. The second third of this chapter examines the revenue and state media concentration in Canada’s news media sectors (print, radio, television and Internet advertising) to discuss their varying states of prominence and stability. The final third evaluates the renewed formal and regulatory interest in Canadian media and the press from both the Government of Canada and the CRTC.

Chapter 5 “Human Consequences: Quantitative Accounts of Journalistic Employment” examines recent hiring and layoffs in journalism based on media reports, organized labour’s counts, and data from Statistics Canada’s LFS. I evaluate the statistics I ascertained from Statistics Canada which show that the number of journalists has fluctuated, and ultimately risen, in the last thirty years although there are significantly more journalists working in impermanent positions today. I discuss the difficulties of understanding the role of the journalist amidst shifting employment trends, and alongside a clear understanding of the employment numbers. Further, I describe the tensions between journalism and other sectors like PR that have greater stability and a similar skill set but very different mandates.

The final chapter in the body of this thesis (Chapter 6: “Case Study: Newswriters’ Self Reflections”) is primarily constructed on the body of knowledge I developed from my personal interviews with nine newswriters in Ottawa, Ontario. I look at their experiences on the frontlines of an industry undergoing enormous change. I discuss how they define and classify the role of the journalist in the digital age, and outline what they paint as the future of the industry. Ultimately, I suggest that my personal interviews reveal that newswriters understand the role of the journalist as one that is in transformation alongside the broader press system in Canada.

My conclusion ties the knot on these discussions with five recommendations for further action. Firstly, recommendations and policy measures from the Government of Canada should encourage novel forms of digital journalism rather than support traditional news organizations and vertically integrated media conglomerates. Secondly, the Government of Canada should financially support a robust public broadcaster. Thirdly, Statistics Canada should revise the classification of journalist in the LFS to better account for the changes to the meaning and responsibilities of the role. Fourthly, the CRTC should encourage structural separation between

the provision of Internet services and wholesale access to network infrastructure. Finally, the CRTC should act against violations of net neutrality between Internet service provisions and content.

1.3 Conclusion

This chapter has set the stage for my thesis and my contribution to the fields of Journalism and Communication and has honed in on my concern for the state of journalism and quantitative accounts of journalistic employment in Canada. It has provided a short history of the evolution of the press system in Canada with a focus on some of the processes that characterize its existence today: media concentration and consolidation, regulatory review, and formal inquiry, all alongside the development of the professional journalist. This chapter has also helped establish the central argument of this thesis: journalism is not in crisis so much as a major and wrenching period of transformation. The role of the journalist is a central component of this argument and my personal interviews, and the data I've gathered from Statistics Canada reveal several important findings: there are more employed journalists in Canada than popular parlance would tell us, but these journalists are working in increasingly impermanent positions. In the meantime, newswriters understand the role of the journalist as one that is similarly in transformation underneath the broader ongoing structural changes of the entire Canadian press system.

2. On Method

The research method for this thesis consists of four parts: a literature review, a document analysis based on primary and secondary documentation, several quantitative analyses and personal interviews. My quantitative assessments include a revenue analysis, an examination of the state of media concentration in Canadian news media and a statistical analysis. My statistical analysis is focused on the Labour Force Survey's (LFS) counts of the number of journalists and PR workers employed in Canada. The LFS defines journalists as workers who "research, investigate, interpret, and communicate news and public affairs through newspapers, television, radio and other media. [They] are employed by radio and television networks and stations, newspapers and magazines" (Statistics Canada, 2016c). Notably, the LFS is a self-reported survey which asks participants to identify their *primary* occupation. I address the methodological concerns of the LFS in Chapter 5.

The following section describes the process and value of personal interviews. It lays out the benefits, challenges, and technical concerns of the practice and describes my own process, and how I avoided these pitfalls. The second section of this chapter lays out the theoretical framework I adopt for this project: the political economy of communication.

2.1 Case Study: Newswriters in Ottawa

Throughout my thesis, and for the most part in Chapter 6, "Newswriters' Self Reflections", I weave understandings and experiences from journalists currently or recently working at the various media organizations that have significant operations in the city of Ottawa, Ontario: the daily newspaper the *Ottawa Citizen*, the Canadian digital native platform *iPolitics* and the Ottawa branch of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). I selected these three outlets because they are all prominent news organizations in the city and each represents a key

aspect of the news media ecology: the country's largest English-language newspaper firm, a niche digital native news firm and the public broadcaster,

I focus my case study on Ottawa for two reasons: (1) as the nation's capital, Ottawa holds ample resources for this project and (2) as a resident of this city, I have ready access to the resources I need to conduct the research for this study, and to take advantage of my professional and personal networks to access to research participants. Indeed, Ottawa is rich with individuals with journalistic expertise and work experience. The city has three daily print newspapers: *Ottawa Citizen*, *Ottawa Sun* and *Metro Ottawa*. It has eight weekly and monthly papers: *Ottawa Business Journal*, *Capital Xtra*, *Epoch Times*, *Forever Young*, *Hill Times*, *The Leveller*, *Peace and Environment News* (bi-monthly) and *UpFront*, four College and University papers: *Charlatan* (Carleton University), *The Fulcrum* (University of Ottawa, English language), *La Rotonde* (University of Ottawa, French language) and *Algonquin Times* (Algonquin College) as well as a host of community papers. There are three radio stations whose operations are focused on the news: the CBC, CFRA and 1310 News and three College and University stations with news offerings: CKCU FM 93.1 (Carleton University), CHUO 89.1 FM (University of Ottawa), CKDJ 107.9 FM (Algonquin College). CBC and CTV each offer local television news programming.

Ottawa is also a hub for many trade unions and professional associations which work with and support journalists employed in both freelance and contract positions including a branch of the Canadian Media Guild, the Professional Writers' Association of Canada, the Canadian Association of Journalists and Unifor. As the capital of the nation, Ottawa also houses some of the most reputable journalists in the country including Kady O'Malley (*Ottawa Citizen*),

Rosemary Barton (CBC), Terry Milewski (CBC), Julie Van Dusen (CBC), Althia Raj (*Huffington Post*), Craig Oliver (CTV) and David Akin (*National Post*).

There are several government agencies within, or very close to Ottawa, as well. Statistics Canada is found within the city and has rich data sets on the media industries and the occupation of journalism that help shed light on the prevailing trends of the landscape. The CRTC is just across the Ottawa River in Gatineau, Quebec while Service Canada, which provides employment information and projections to Canadians, is found in the heart of the city. There are also four prominent colleges and universities in Ottawa which offer an array of communication and journalism programs. In June 2014, the University of Ottawa announced it would be working with Algonquin College and la Cite Collegiale to offer a rebranded bilingual digital journalism program (University of Ottawa, 2013). Carleton University's School of Journalism and Communication has many scholars who have rich and extensive experience working in and of studying journalism. Amongst them is Dr. Christopher Waddell, formerly employed as national editor for *The Globe and Mail*, senior producer with CBC's *The National* and *Sunday Report* and parliamentary bureau chief for CBC television news. Waddell is currently associate professor and the previous director of Carleton's School of Journalism and Communication, publisher of the Canadian Journalism Project J-Source and works with *iPolitics* as an associate editor.

Several scholars who reside in the city have done much work surrounding the state of journalism and the labour of its workers. Dr. Catherine McKercher and Dr. Vincent Mosco have made many advances in the research surrounding the changes to the labour of knowledge workers (Mosco, Huws, & McKercher, 2010; Mosco & McKercher, 2007; Mosco & McKercher, 2008). Dr. Dwayne Winseck is the country's lead researcher on the state of media concentration in Canada and has produced great insights into the political economies of media (Winseck, 2010;

Winseck & Jin, 2011; Winseck, 2016a). Access and proximity to these individuals, media groups, trade unions and organizational bodies were very important to the success of this thesis.

2.2 This Project's Approach: Recruitment, Analysis and Technical Concerns

Structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews are three common ways to categorize the interview process (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). My case study employed one-on-one semi-structured in-depth interviews in-person and/or over the phone. I conducted these interviews with nine participants who are currently or have recently been (within the last five years) employed in the newsrooms of either the CBC, the *Ottawa Citizen* or at *iPolitics*. I selected these participants because of their journalistic experience and for their insights on the role of the journalist in Canada. I also wanted to hear their reflections on the future of the industry, and the evolving role of the journalist within it.

Semi-structured interviews are typically designed around a series of open-ended queries and are scheduled in advance at a time and space outside of the interviewee's regular routine (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). Within this practice, it is very important the interviewer quickly develops a rapport with the research participant (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). This process entails "trust and a respect for the interviewee and the information he or she shares. It is also the means of establishing a safe and comfortable environment for sharing the interviewee's personal experiences and attitudes" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 316).

The recruitment and selection process is an important aspect of this method. In my case study, I employed snowball sampling to recruit participants. Snowball sampling is the practice by which research participants share contact information of potential other participants to the researcher. This is often an iterative process whereby new participants refer the researcher to

further connections (Noy, 2007, p. 30). In my initial recruitment, I reached out to potential participants through my professional networks at Carleton University and the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC). As a Masters of Arts student in Communication at Carleton University's School of Journalism and Communication, I work closely with many journalism students and faculty members. In addition, while working in the field of sport administration with the CPC, I had the opportunity to liaise with many journalists based in Ottawa.

The newswriters I interviewed consented to my naming them in this thesis. While I think the decision to ask my research participants to interview on the record allowed a more robust qualitative assessment, there are certainly pros and cons to this decision. On the one hand, given that many newswriters are known to be involved citizens in their respective community, naming my participants may have provided my committee members with more context on the newswriters' personal narratives and insight into their individual experiences. On the other hand, anonymity would likely have allowed my research participants to speak more candidly on any adverse characteristics of their workplace. That said, I am very appreciative of the openness and frankness that my research participants employed when speaking on their experiences in the field and understandings of the future of journalism. The nine individuals I interviewed for this thesis are as follows:

- Andrew Foote (casual contract journalist at CBC)
- Chloe Fédio (casual contract journalist at CBC)
- Alistair Steele (digital copy editor at CBC)
- Carl Neustaedter (former deputy editor at the *Ottawa Citizen*)¹

¹ Now the Director of Communications at the Public Policy Form.

- Drake Fenton (city editor at the *Ottawa Citizen*)
- Melanie Coulson (former senior editor at the *Ottawa Citizen*)²
- BJ Siekierski (journalist at *iPolitics*)
- Amanda Connelly (journalist at *iPolitics*)
- Kelsey Johnson (journalist at *iPolitics*)

In the practice of qualitative interviews, data analysis refers to the “systematic and essentially taxonomic process of sorting and classifying the data that [has] been collected” (Green et al., 2007, p. 546). Important parts of this examination are data immersion, coding, the creation of categories and the naming of themes that have been identified as important parts of this process (Green et al., 2007, p. 546). Immersion in the data refers to the ways the researcher fully enters the research process through practices such as careful observation during the interviews and the re-reading of transcripts during data analysis; data immersion “lays the foundation for connecting disjointed elements into a clearer picture of the issue being investigated”. The coding of interviewees’ responses requires the reader to make judgments about the transcripts and to appropriate tag and catalogue the data (Green et al., 2007, pp. 547-548). The creation of categories concerns the ways the researcher decides to connect the codes while theme identification terms how a researcher moves from description and classification, to an interpretation of the collected data (Green et al., 2007, pp. 548-549).

Careful data analysis played an important role in the quality and meaning of my findings. To that end, I took steps to ensure that I was aware and familiar with the interview environments that I helped create. In addition, I transcribed my data as soon as possible after each interview. I

² Now the Director of Content and Engagement at Canada 2020.

did this for two reasons (1) by transcribing my audio recording soon after the interview, I had the conversation fresh in my mind, allowed me to notice any inconsistencies in word choice or phrasing within the recording and (2) I provided myself with ample time to review, re-listen and re-read the data. Prior to beginning my research, I developed a process of coding based on a tagging system related to a distinct set of items; categories were created by connecting codes through a system that I determined before data collection. Finally, I drew on the theoretical framework of the political economy of communication to draw conclusions and determine themes surrounding my findings.

There are a few technical concerns within the interview practice. These concerns may arise during the recording of the interviews, the transcribing of the interviews and the use of software programs to manage data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p.318). There are several ways to record interviews either through transcription or recording devices. In the case of the latter, testing the device before the interview is imperative as well as “having extra batteries and a back-up recorder on hand [...] [r]ecorded data should be carefully guarded and generally destroyed after transcription or once analysis is complete” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 318). The transcription of the interviews should be treated with great care as speakers may inadvertently misuse words, omit ideas or talk in run-on sentences. The emergence of computers capable of storing and editing transcribed documents must also be considered. Although computers can store vast amounts of data systemically and efficiently while software can permit flexible revisions, “the experience, discipline and expertise of research teams remain the essential ingredients for excellence in qualitative research analysis” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 318).

Considering these concerns, I had a robust plan to address potential pitfalls or challenges in the interview process. I recorded my in-person interviews with a mobile phone in a quiet environment where I had the opportunity to test the device beforehand. In my phone interviews, I recorded the conversations with my mobile phone. I tested the recording with the participant prior to beginning the interview questions. To ensure I fairly captured my participants' words, tone and intent, I transcribed my interviews later while listening to the recordings. I included notes on any pauses between the questions and responses as well as throughout the participant's response. I also transcribed any deviation in the interviewee's tone of voice. Interviews are a valuable methodology in this study which helped provide much fodder and depth to this thesis.

2.3 Theoretical Framework: The Political Economy of Communication

This section provides an overview of the theoretical approach I adopt for this thesis: the political economy of communication. I lay out the predominant understanding of this theoretical framework as constitutive of a single field that emerged during the latter half of the 20th century (McChesney, 1996; Mosco, 1996) as well as the emerging view that the political economy of communication holds a richer and broader history with threads dating back to the late 19th century (Winseck, 2011). Finally, I explain how the political economy of communication squares well with the aim of my thesis by providing a lens to examine the media structures, political organizations, and other structural forces at play in the Canadian media landscape and the perspectives and reflections of newswriters employed under these broader systems.

The traditional view of the political economy of communication is closely linked to the writings of Karl Marx and often adopts a generally unified view of the media industries. Mosco (1996), for example, states that the political economy of communication is premised on the notion that "communication is a social process of exchange whose product is the mark or

embodiment of a social relationship” (p. 72). This view suggests that the political economy of communication came to the fore in the 1960s with a concern for the way processes of communication are influenced through the relationship of the state, business and other structural powers and works to locate these processes in broader understandings of globalization, capitalization and labour (McChesney, 2010, p. x). Additionally, scholars adopting this framework adhere to the belief that both political economy and communication “refer to processes which defer, but which are also multiply determined by shared social and cultural practices” (Mosco, 1996, p. 72).

While the approach flourished in the 1960s and 1970s, many suggest the political economy of communication struggled to find its footing against the emergence of new digital technologies and neoliberalism in the 1980s (McChesney, 2010, p. x). Neoliberalism, which developed under Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan, refers to an economic system where profit-making is central and where the competitive individual trumps any form of society (McChesney, 2010, p. x). In short, “neoliberalism is capitalism with the gloves off” (McChesney, 2010, p. x). This time was characterized by a focus from scholars of the political economy of communication on how structures and policies influence content as well as an emphasis on historical topics. The fall of neoliberalism, McChesney (2010) writes, has hailed a return to issues like financialization, capitalism in crisis, and the promotion of a democratic social order (p. xi).

However, diverging from the traditional history of the political economy of communication outlined above, others suggest that the theoretical approach has a deeper backstory with a multiplicity of perspectives including conservative and liberal neoclassical economics, radical media political economy, institutional political economy and the cultural

industries school (Winseck, 2011, p. 3). Those who explicate these diverse streams are of the view that traditional Marxist approaches often rely too heavily on a singular and unified view of the media (Winseck, 2011, p. 3). These critics suggest that referring to the media industry as a singular entity blurs the multiplicity of elements inside the system, develops a dichotomy between culture and communication that masks the reality that culture has developed within a capitalist economy since the industrial revolution, holds excessive cynicism towards technological innovation and assumes that the industrialization of culture found in capitalism has been entirely realized (Miege, 1989, pp. 10-11). In short, the Marxist approach often hides the details, complexities and instabilities of capitalism and the interactions of everyday people within the system (Winseck, 2011, p. 4).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to do justice to the various brands of the political economy of communication mentioned above, accordingly, the following section outlines the way *I* adopt the political economy of communication in this thesis: as a tool to economically and systemically analyse the media industries. To do this, I follow in the lines of Noam (2009) and Winseck (2011) who call for objective, systemic and meticulous research on the media industries, and concise classification and categorization processes that designate between and amongst different elements of the media. Both scholars have taken this tack in their research on the state of media concentration internationally (Noam, 2009) and in Canada (Winseck, 2011; Winseck 2016a) to meaningful and important ends. Noam, for one, finds that while digitization plays a part in lowering barriers to entry to new players, the Internet is not immune to media concentration. Indeed, various elements of the Internet (such as search engines, ISPs and web browsers) show high, and increasing, levels of concentration (Noam, 2009, p. 33-39; 290-293). Winseck (2011) determines that, while there are risks to a diverse media ecology, “incumbents in

the media and telecoms industries have not been able to simply graft the internet and digital media onto their existing operations” (p. 46). Winseck (2011) and Noam (2009) demonstrate that the media industries are exceptionally intricate and complex and, accordingly, should be treated and measured as such. Moreover, they tell us, governments, regulators, and users plays a crucial part in how these processes play out (Winseck, 2011). In sum, what scholars of this approach often find is, I believe, critical to understanding the workings of the media industries in Canada, and the best way forward: “Ultimately, whether the future of the media is bright or bleak will largely turn on *us and politics*” (emphasis mine, Winseck, 2011, p. 20).

The political economy of communication is characterized by several key objects of analysis, three of which are of interest to this thesis: ownership, the relationship between the state and communication businesses, and labour (Mosco, 1996, p. 85). While these concepts are characteristic of all brands of the approach, the assumptions and ideas about how to think about these notions differs amongst political economic theorists. The following section reviews some of the key analytical tools that I draw on from the political economic tradition, and the contributions of significant scholars who work in it, including Noam Chomsky, Robert McChesney, Eli Noam, Dwayne Winseck, David Hesmondhalgh, Catherine Mckercher and Nichole Cohen. Further, it explains how I approach these objects of analysis in my thesis.

One of the defining themes of the political economy of communication is ownership. Notions about ownership are often tied to ideas about the public interest, and what sort of ownership best suits it. The two core debates oscillate between discussions of public versus private ownership and foreign versus domestic ownership (Allison, 2002, p. 6). In Canada, these tensions have been central to many different inquiries and, and are an indelible part of communications legislation, notably the *Telecommunications Act* (1993) and the *Broadcasting*

Act (1991), and incidentally in the *Income Tax Act* via measures that promote the Canadian ownership of newspapers. The Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting (the Aird Commission) of 1929 called for a publicly funded radio broadcast system in Canada – a medium that had previously been conceived as a privately-owned enterprise (Gasher, 1998). The Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (the Massey Commission) sought to dissuade Canadian dependence on American cultural products and ownership. The 1968 *Broadcasting Act* was of the view that the Canadian broadcasting system was a single entity composed of both private and public ownership structures (Parliament of Canada, 2011).

As I mentioned earlier, ownership, and specifically ownership concentration, has also coloured work across the industries of communication including concentration of the press (Herman & Chomsky, 1988) and the media industries in their entire (Noam 2009; Winseck, 2010). However, as they scholars know too well, an evaluation of ownership concentration in the media industries is a challenging task because market structures differ across industries, time and space. Accordingly, before an assessment is made, appropriate measurement tools that illuminate the complexities and details of a given market are crucial to understanding how a market functions and how it fares against other benchmarks – either commercial, historical or temporal. Following this understanding, my analysis of media concentration in Canada news media (Chapter 4) employs two commercial measures: total industry revenues and a concentration measure called CR4 as well as a historical comparison against data from the last thirty years. I discuss the rationale behind these concentration measurements, as well as their shortcomings, in Chapter 4.

Scholars of the political economy of communication have spilt much ink outlining the relationship of the state and communication businesses. PEC scholars have spent a great deal of effort “documenting the growth in wealth and power of the cultural industries and their links with political and business allies” (Hesmondhagl, 2009, p. 35). This theme has also been at the center of several debates as scholars contest the degree of integration between capital and the state which has provoked an array of positions on the autonomy of the state (Mosco, 1996, p. 92). According to Mosco (1996), these debates “reflect a fundamental problem facing government in advanced capitalism: the state has to promote the interests of capital even as it appears to be the independent arbiter of the wider social or public interest” (p. 92).

Governments and regulatory bodies in Canada play many important roles in the media landscape. As I discuss in Chapter 4, recent regulatory examinations, proceedings and inquiries from the Government of Canada and the CRTC have played an active part in shaping the future of media and the press in Canada. The Competition Bureau is an independent law enforcement agency that also plays a role in trying to promote competitive markets in Canada. It has the power to approve or challenge mergers and acquisitions that could reduce competition in relevant markets. Statistics Canada is also very important in this mix because, while not a regulator - at least in the conventional sense of the term - it systematically collects and publishes data on the communication and media industries, including on the journalism profession. For this thesis, Statistics Canada data helped me determine the number, class and type of journalists employed in Canada in the past thirty years. Reliable data is a critical component of informed public opinion and smart policy.

Another consideration that has taken great precedence in the political economy of communication is a focus on labour. Scholars who look at labour from a political economic

perspective often highlight the role of organized labour and its efforts to preserve the broader needs of frontline workers. With respect to research on the press in Canada, Dr. Catherine McKercher (2002) has produced seminal work chronicling the corporate and technological convergence that has characterized the North American newspaper industries since the 1960s alongside the diverging labour movements in Canada, as well as the United States. Indeed, newswriters have not quieted since McKercher's (2002) discussion as unions and workers marshal picket lines calling for greater security, sustainability and fair labour conditions. In the meantime, Cohen (2011; 2012) has produced much valuable work surrounding the organization of freelance workers, a party of journalists largely ignored until now. Likewise, Gorman (2004) methodically lays out a case study of the emergence and development of media giant Quebecor, and the labour conditions of the workers it employs.

This thesis is interested in labour as well. Its concern for labour is focused on both quantitative and qualitative accounts of journalistic employment in Canada. As I discuss in Chapter 5, a picture of how many journalists are, and have been, employed in Canada during the emergence and development of the Internet is sorely lacking. Given the breadth of recent Federal inquiry and regulatory review about the media industries in Canada, and the scope of the public debate on these issues, a firm understanding of these realities is crucial to smart decision making. I supplement these quantitative accounts with a presentation of how nine newswriters I interviewed view the role of the journalist within the larger Canadian media landscape, and the future of the industry. Chapter 6, my discussion of my personal interviews with nine newswriters in Ottawa, lays out some of the anxieties, tensions and hopes these workers have about the role of the journalist and the future of the industry.

2.4 Conclusion

This section has described the tools and methods I use in my research and considers the technical concerns that play a part in my approach. It has also laid out my theoretical framework, the political economy of communication, which offers much guidance toward an examination of the broader operations of state and corporate power underpinning the press in Canada, and how journalists fit in, and reflect, these systems.

3. The State of Journalism, What Accounts for it, and What to do About it

While researchers in Canada generally agree that falling advertising revenues are a key component of the current state of journalism, their focus is divided between what other factors primarily contributed to the present state of the press system, the gravity of the state of journalism itself, and how best to move forward. This chapter is a literature review of the two prevailing groups of explanations surrounding the contributing factors behind the present state of journalism: the first view emphasizes technological, namely the impact of the Internet, while the second focuses on economical explanations, with a keen eye on how years of mergers and acquisitions, neglect, problematic business models, high levels of debt and the fact that news and journalism are public goods, in both an economic and normative sense, have contributed to the woes afflicting journalism. In this review, I lay out and evaluate some of the key technological explanations which highlight how new communication technologies have played a role in changing processes of news production, the labour of journalists, and news consumption (Ahlers, 2006; Boczkowski & Ferris, 2005; Bruns, 2008; O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008). Then, I examine and contrast some of the core economic explanations which emphasize how news firms are operating in particularly turbulent economic times, are increasingly financialized, are relying on outdated business models, and have historically adopted an excessive profit motive (Almiron, 2010; Edge, 2014; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Winseck, 2010). Analysts are also split in terms of how they understand the present state of journalism, and what to do about it. This literature review also discusses the two predominant viewpoints on the current press system: that journalism is in crisis (Almiron, 2010; McChesney & Nichols, 2010) and that journalism in the throes of a gut-wrenching transformation but will likely come out the other side for the better, once all is said and done (Benkler, 2006; Shirky, 2011). I contrast some of the core

understandings of these positions, and discuss a few of their proposed solutions including government intervention in the market, targeted subsidies, and simply waiting to see how it all plays out.

In this literature review, I discuss how I largely view the present state of journalism as an issue of economics. This is supported by my theoretical approach, the political economy of communication, and, in my view, accounts for tensions that existed in the press system prior to the emergence of the Internet. As well, this literature review begins to account for my view of the state of journalism as an industry in transformation rather than crisis. As I discuss in greater detail in the following chapters, shifting industry trends, recent formal inquiry, and emerging journalism players reflect an industry that is finding its footing in an evolving environment. Moreover, data from Statistics Canada suggests that, contrary to popular belief, there are more journalists working in Canada in 2016 than there has been in the past thirty years. Further, my conversations with newswriters reveal that the role of the journalist is undergoing a transformation alongside the industry.

This chapter is an important section of my thesis because it lays out the core ideas surrounding the present press system, as well as the central arguments concerning what decisions shaped it, and where it stands today. Importantly, it also establishes the contradictions and gaps in the literature and maps the positions and viewpoints I adopt in this thesis. Thus, it sets the stage for the chapters that follow and informs Chapter 4's evaluation of the press system in Canada.

3.1 Technological Explanations

Much of the research that views the present press system as an issue of technology underscores how the emergence of the Internet has significantly altered news production

practices (Ahlers, 2006; Boczkowski & Ferris, 2005; Bruns, 2008; Meyer, 2009; O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008). Boczkowski and Ferris (2005) highlight the difficulties that traditional news organizations' face as Internet news moves "from being a secondary endeavor at the periphery of the company's content production process, to turning into the very axis around which this production should rotate, to becoming integrated with the print and broadcasts units" (p. 45). The integration of print and broadcast newsrooms with their online counterparts was characterized, at times, by tense dynamics and friction between newswriters (Boczkowski & Ferris, 2005, p. 41). This literature highlights news firms' loyalty to the norms and values of print and broadcast media, suggesting it has limited their transition to digital media. Indeed, O'Sullivan and Heinonen (2008) find that the field of journalism has been slow to "abandon its conventional organisational and professional levels, even in the 'Age of the Net', when overall communication patterns in society are being re-shaped" (p. 368). These scholars suggest that the industry is unwilling to let go of the values and norms that have traditionally characterized and legitimized journalism, and that these need to be let go of before progress can be made anew.

They also focus on the role technological innovation has played in the transformation of journalistic labour (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009; Reddern & Witschge, 2009; Singer, 2010; Spyridou et al., 2013). This body of work often highlights how the Internet has given journalists more responsibilities, required them to learn new skills and adhere to novel norms. For example, Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2009) posit that some journalists find themselves in a liminal space as they balance novel forms of content creation online with a distrust of the Internet as an information source (p. 563). Spyridou et al. (2013) found that many journalists were split between a positive attitude toward the impact of new digital technologies on research and the dissemination of news and a negative perception toward the Internet's capacity to improve

journalistic transparency and accountability (p. 93). Singer (2010) suggests that new digital technologies present novel ethical dilemmas for journalists: “[t]hey cannot continue to do their jobs without economic resources, yet some attractive options for bolstering those resources jeopardize their independence” (p. 97). Singer (2010) cautions that journalists must find ways to retain their ethical principles to survive and thrive in the digital age (p. 97). Redden and Witschge (2009) point out that while the Internet provides journalists with a wealth of information, tighter deadlines can provoke the borrowing and replication of content. While this research sheds light on some of the real challenges and opportunities of employment in contemporary newswork, they do not often include what journalists themselves think. Part of my contribution is the use of personal interviews to help address this gap.

Researchers have highlighted how the use of the Internet has also involved the audience in novel, and potentially tenuous, ways (Mythen, 2009; O’Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008). Mythen (2009) points out that citizen journalism can be limited by a lack of editorial oversight and informational credibility (p. 51). A study based on interviews with newspaper editors revealed that some newswriters disapproved of the practice of citizen journalism on theoretical or practical grounds. Many editors rejected the practice by making “a clear distinction between professionally trained journalists and everyone else, and they see journalism as the business of professionals only” (Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasora, 2010, p. 169). O’Sullivan and Heinonen (2008) suggest that new ‘unprofessional’ forms of journalism that have proliferated online such as citizen and open source journalism are often seen as competitors to the mainstream press (p. 359). This body of work does well to point to emerging forms of online journalism; however, scholars of this view often neglect to note that while traditional news firms in Canada and

elsewhere are making less revenues than they have in the past – many still have healthy net incomes (Winseck, 2010; Edge, 2014).

Some research has been directed toward the ways new communication technologies have been used to facilitate new, and more collaborative, communicative spaces between PR professionals and journalists (Larsson, 2009). Where journalists and PR professionals previously operated as two distinct spheres, they are now intertwined in one large communication space (Larsson, 2009, p. 140). Discussing results from a study involving interviews with 64 PR professionals and news workers, Larsson (2009) suggests that the Internet has facilitated an overwhelming stream of information and spin to the news desk “and there is a risk journalists will get caught up in and thereby decrease their ability to control the news agenda (p. 135). This research reflects some of the insights I garnered from my personal interviews on the topic of the complex relationships between journalists and PR workers. However, this study does not underscore the changing number of workers employed in these fields, and the potential for, and implications of, newswriters moving from work in journalism to communication. As I discuss in Chapter 5, Statistics Canada data shows us that the number of PR workers in Canada has vastly increased in recent years while journalistic numbers have indeed risen, but ultimately remained relatively similar to thirty years ago.

Some researchers claim that traditional news firms have relied, and continue to rely, on outdated and inflexible business models (Bruns, 2008; Meyer, 2009; Picard, 2001; Picard, 2002). Bruns (2008) suggests that traditional print and broadcast news are predicated on an obsolete “industrial logic which is founded on the twin assumptions that their means of production are expensive and concentrated in the hands of a small number of major operators, and that access to their channels of distribution is tightly policed and therefore scarce” (p. 173). This logic is no

longer applicable in times where multimedia content can be organized, produced and disseminated at a fraction of the cost. Thus, Bruns (2008) explains, traditional news firms face competition both from digital native news firms and collaborative citizen journalism efforts (p. 173). Meyer (2009) puts forth that the inherent conservatism of the print industry has made their business model less innovative (p. 49). As well, Meyer (2009) states “[t]he pressures to harvest their market position by squeezing out [...] historic margins in the short term have made them inflexible” (p. 49).

Others point out how the Internet has changed the way people digest the news (Peters, 2012; Plaesu, Drumea, Paun, Parlea-Buzatu & Lazaroiu, 2011; Schudson, 2010; Wolf & Schnauber, 2015). Peters (2012) suggests that contemporary news is produced to create mobile consumption spaces, to adjust to the speed of the digital era and to provide an array of channels to news consumers (p. 695). Wolf and Schnauber (2015) state that mobile devices are used to consume news in multi-optional and flexible ways. These scholars suggest that the role of mobile devices with broadband connectivity in the ‘information repertoire’ is characterized by constant connectivity, portability and a sensitivity to context. These capacities allow users to access news and information at any time and from any place, encouraging new and innovative forms of journalism, but presenting challenges to traditional forms as well (Wolf & Schnauber, 2015, p. 763). Other scholars express concern for the Internet’s capacity to ‘unbundle’ the news and fragment audiences as consumers have the capacity to pick and choose individual news items rather than purchasing a bundle of news (Plaesu et al., 2011, p. 319). This too, some posit, means that audiences will select news that supports their own values rather than staying informed on a wide range of issues, thereby raising the issue of ‘filter bubbles’ (Lowrey & Gade, 2011, p. 24).

3.2 Economic Explanations

Analysts who highlight the economic explanations behind the present tumultuous state of journalism focus their research on the relationships of key players and structures in the media economy including news firms, policymakers and regulators (Almiron, 2010; Edge, 2011a; Edge, 2014; McChesney, 2003; McChesney, 2008; McChesney, 2012; Winseck, 2010). These researchers are not only concerned with the present business decisions of news firms before the digital era, but also consider earlier economic conditions and business practices. Trew (2016) cautions that “[c]orporate profits are the main purpose of [journalism’s] business model, with the ability to set the public agenda a nice concession prize for owners, and public interest journalism a distant afterthought to CEOs and shareholders” (p. 3). Indeed, scholars concerned with the economic situation point out that technological accounts of the present state of the press often ignore economic tensions that, in many cases, existed in this industry far before the emergence of the Internet (McChesney, 2008, p. 72).

Many scholars highlight the extent that turbulent economic times and trends in recent years have contributed to the present state of journalism in Canada. To them, the bursting of the dot-com bubble at the beginning of the twentieth century and the Great Recession of 2008 are key components that gave rise to the tumultuous economic context that characterizes today’s press. This environment has exacerbated existing, and often self-inflicted, financial difficulties in the news systems contributing to increasing difficulties to pay off debt, all of which has been compounded by the steep reduction in advertising revenues (Kirchhoff 2009; Nielsen, Esser, & Levy, 2010; Schudson, 2010). Nielsen, Esser and Levy (2010) suggest that while the rapid changes characterizing journalism do not take the same form in every nation, issues of economics including cyclical financial downturns and the “internationalization of parts of corporate media ownership” are at the forefront of North America’s press predicament (p. 385).

Turbulent economic times coupled with recent economic trends like financialization, the centrality of financial strategy in all facets of the economy, has aggravated the present state of the press system (Almiron, 2010; Winseck, 2010). From a political economic perspective, financialization, Almiron (2010) states, represents the final step in a process of failed social potential which has exacerbated tensions within the press system itself by pushing private interests even further to the fore (p. 11; p. 178).

Some academics attribute the present state of the press system, in part, to the failures of one business strategy: convergence (Edge, 2014; Regan Shade, 2005; Winseck, 2010). As I discussed in Chapter 1, convergence, the integration (either vertical, horizontal, or diagonal) of other enterprises into a single firm became prominent in the last decade of the twentieth century but was followed by a wave of de-convergence in the twenty-first century as many transactions yielded disappointing results for shareholders (Edge, 2014, p. 71; Jin, 2012b, p. 764). Analysts suggest that these processes crippled the stability of the media ecosystem in Canada as organizations opted for high-risk and short-term gain in lieu of long-term growth, sustainable investment and innovation (Edge, 2011a; Edge, 2014; Winseck, 2010). As Canadian media scholar Marc Edge (2014) observes, this has all made for “an ugly spectacle in Canada” (p. 228).

Analysts have also pointed out how a history of weak regulation in Canada in response to media convergence and diversification intensified these problems (Edge, 2011a; Regan Shade, 2005; Skinner, Compton, & Gasher, 2005). Edge (2011) highlights the CRTC’s 2008 decision on cross-ownership of Canadian media as an exemplar; the policy prohibited firms’ ownership in three media which, “because no Canadian company owned outlets in all three media, [effectively] endorsed the status quo” (p. 1271). These analyses do well to underscore the role of regulation in Canadian media, and the press in Canada. However, there is less research on this

topic in the last decade. This gap coincides with a renewed focus and involvement from regulatory bodies and the Canadian government in journalism and related media issues including the Competition Bureau's 2015 approval of Postmedia's acquisition of the Sun newspaper chain and the current Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage's proceedings concerning local news and media concentration. I hope to contribute toward filling this gap throughout this thesis, and in particular in "Chapter 4: Today's Press System in Canada".

Finally, and loudly, researchers suggest the state of the press system has been exacerbated through the *excessive profit motive* of news firms (Downie & Kaiser, 2002; McChesney, 2003; McChesney, 2012; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Gorman, 2015). With no mincing of words, Downie and Kaiser (2002) state that "[m]ost newspapers have shrunk their reporting staffs, along with the space they devote to news to increase their owners' profits" (p. 9). With respect to news content, expensive and investigative news casts are often put aside for celebrity and entertainment features which come at a much lower cost to the producer (Downie and Kaiser, 2010, p. 10). McChesney (2012) also argues that while the development of the Internet contributed to the state of today's press system, its influence accelerated existing economic problems. In his words, "[t]o some extent the crisis exploded as it did because the Internet destroyed the traditional business model by giving advertisers far superior ways to reach their prospective consumers" (emphasis mine, McChesney, 2012, p. 685). McChesney (2008) cautions newsroom cutbacks are nothing new and went on long before the challenges that characterize today's press; "good journalism costs money, so it is always tempting to water down the fare" (p. 73). In short, the situation commercial news firms found themselves in recently "wasn't murder; it was suicide" (as quoted in Gorman, 2015, p. xiii).

McChesney (2003), one of the strongest advocates of the ‘excess profit motive’ explanation, posits that the emergence and development of professional journalism is one incarnation of this driver. Professional journalism, the notion of the objective press, came to fruition in the 1920s as publishers realized “that they needed to have their journalism appear neutral and unbiased [...] or their businesses would be far less profitable. They would sacrifice their explicit political power to lock in their economic position” (McChesney, 2003, p. 302). McChesney (2003) states there are three biases inherent to professional journalism. For one, state documentation and important public figures stand as the foundation of legitimate news allowing those with political power to give voice, or silence, issues of the day. Secondly, professional journalism avoids contextualization as the provision of a complete context tends to commit the journalist to some sort of partisan position. Thirdly, professional journalism has a propensity to sneak in the corporate and political values and ideologies of its owners and advertisers (McChesney, 2003, pp. 303-305). The paradoxical nature of professional journalism against journalism as a public good will feature as an ongoing theme of this thesis, particularly in Chapter 4.

3.3 Journalism in Crisis

Unsurprisingly, there are a slew of analysts who tell us that journalism is in the midst of a full-fledged crisis. Crisis is characterized by uncertainty, disruption, urgency and immediacy, and has been defined as a moment where established processes no longer function as planned, and where a continued dependence on them may exacerbate matters (Zelizer, 2015, p. 890). This section lays out some of the perceived consequences of this crisis on news firms, news content, journalists and consumers (Almiron, 2010; Jones, 2009) and how some scholars suggest these

issues can be remedied – in some cases, through progressive policy and public funding (McChesney, 2003; McChesney & Nichols, 2010).

McChesney and Nichols (2010) suggest journalism has been in a pronounced crisis for at least two decades although it's only become publicly apparent with the recent downturn in corporate profits (p. 30). This crisis has been fostered by the economic tensions of commercial journalism which has facilitated closer scrutiny on government rather than corporations, policies that benefit higher income rather than the lower income citizens, and little coverage of corporate malfeasance (McChesney, 2003, p. 305). McChesney (2003) states, "the reliance on official sources gives the news a very conventional and mainstream feel, and does not necessarily lead to a rigorous examination of the major issues" (p. 303). He suggests the biases of professional journalism also contribute to the prevalence of the public relations sector. Thus, "[b]y providing slick press releases, paid-for 'experts', ostensibly neutral-sounding but bogus citizen groups, and canned news events, crafty PR agents have been able to shape the news to suit the interests of their mostly corporate clientele" (McChesney, 2003, p. 304). Together, these occurrences have worked to produce a journalism that, instead of inciting its citizens to civic engagement, encourages apathy and ignorance (McChesney, 2003, p. 304).

Almiron (2010) suggests the press system's ongoing tension between idealistic values and the dominant powers of the day indicates that it has only ever been in crisis (p. 10). However, the financialization of the media has ushered us into an even more acute phase of this crisis: a post-corporate media era where financial capital is central (Almiron, 2010, p. 10). Financialization has several potential consequences for news firms, journalistic content and journalists (Almiron, 2010, p. 160). For news firms, Almiron (2010) suggests, financialization leads to a propensity towards concentration of surviving news firms, more instability and

financial risk, deviation from the firm's central focus into other activities like financial markets, and a greater distance from public service aims (pp. 161-164). Financialization also poses risks to news content as news firms portray a tendency to defend economic-financial orthodoxy, financialize journalistic messages and omit critical evaluations of the financial system (Almiron, 2010, pp. 165-168). Finally, financialization can impact journalistic labour as reporters are censored or self-censored on matters of finance and the economy, as financial logics place increasing pressure on journalists, and as journalists lack the opportunity to develop the critical skills and tools needed to properly report on the economy (Almiron, 2010, pp. 169-174).

In contrast to Almiron (2010) who suggests the financialization of the media is at the root of the current phase of the journalistic crisis, Jones (2009) cautions that the heart of the journalistic crisis lies in the deterioration of accountability journalism and a 'crisis of leadership and morale' in newsrooms. Jones (2009) suggests that 85% to 95% of "accountability news" content comes from print news which has historically been financially supported by an advertising driven business model providing it supplemental resources for costly, robust and investigative news coverage. Television, radio and the web, Jones (2009) states, are primarily distribution systems (p. 4). Meanwhile, journalists are increasingly dissatisfied in their work as "they feel they are on a treadmill of mediocrity, asked only to provide a quota of 'content' that will fill the news columns at the lowest cost" (p. 19).

Jones (2009) is of the view that while digital native news firms have contributed to contemporary journalism, print has historically been the greatest provider of robust news (p. 4). Jones (2009) underscores the importance of financially stable news firms: "A marginally profitable news organization is too weak to withstand the kind of punishment that comes from publishing news that makes powerful people mad" (p. 199). To him, the answer is commercial.

Robust journalism can only be saved by finding a business model that maintains serious news predicated on traditional journalistic values and focused on regional locales like cities and towns, whether that be in print or another medium (Jones, 2009, p. 200). Jones' book *Losing the News*, however, struggles to articulate a vision of what exactly that model may be: "I think the revenue solution is one that will solve itself, in the sense that it will be what it is. With an improved economy and an array of schemes to enhance revenues online [...] the nation's newspapers will find a new set point of operation viability and a new level of profit" (p. 213).

Radical scholars assert that the solution is interventionist policy reform and public subsidies. The loudest advocates of this approach are McChesney and Nichols who have produced much work on the topic (McChesney, 2003; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; McChesney, 2012). At the crux of this position are a few key ideas. Firstly, the notion that media systems are not natural; they are a product of overt policies, subsidies and decisions (McChesney, 2008, p. 77). In addition, subsidies in the form of monopoly licenses to private television and radio stations and spectrum to television stations, are nothing new to journalism (McChesney, 2008, p. 79). While McChesney speaks on the American case, this is applicable to the Canadian environment as well. News firms in Canada have benefited from indirect subsidies like public health and public education as well as direct subsidies through the *Income Tax Act*, funding for the public broadcaster and various forms of copyright legislation (Allen, 2006). Finally, emerging forms of Internet-centric journalism, while hopeful, are *not enough* to sustain robust journalism (McChesney & Nichols, 2010). What follows is a vision of journalism that relies on a North American tradition of the subsidized press where institutionalized news firms are central, and necessary.

3.4 Journalism in Transformation

Other analysts suggest that the challenges characterizing the contemporary press system are part of a broader process of social, economic and technological transformation. From this viewpoint, it is not journalism that is in crisis but business models within the industry (Benkler, 2011, p. 226; Shirky, 2011). In short, “[s]ociety doesn’t need newspapers. What we need is journalism” (Shirky, 2011, p. 43). To varying degrees, these scholars see the promise and potential of new emergent forms of journalism to replace traditional news media and sustain a robust press system. Curran (2010) outlines how these researchers broadly advance three core arguments in support of this position: The Internet is augmenting the quality of traditional media, the Internet is producing a plethora of web-based journalism, and old and new forms of journalism are coming together to shape a network (p. 467).

One manifestation of this view is networked journalism which has been described as “a diffused capacity to record information, share it, and distribute it” (Van Der Haak, Parks & Castells, 2012, p. 2926). A networked journalist, then, is a node that gathers, analyses and distributes information within the network. Their work is motivated by network practice, it relies on sources and feedback and the result of their labour may involve other networks of collaborators, both professional and unprofessional, although the product is usually single authorship (Van Der Haak, Parks & Castells, 2012, p. 2926). Van der Haak, Parks and Castells (2012) posit that networked journalism has great potential to thrive online where it is difficult for states and companies to censor content, where citizen journalists allow for a greater breadth of sources, and where new forms of journalism enable a multiplicity of news stories (p. 2934).

Benkler (2011) suggests the Internet is a communication medium that has fostered a shift toward a networked public sphere which has the potential to “provide the necessary fourth estate functions better than did the commercial, advertiser-supported industrial model of the twentieth

century” (p. 228). This information environment is composed of commercial, non-commercial, professional and non-professional models of journalism, news and information production, distribution and consumption. It is characterized by emerging forms of new production on the web and new online business structures that can compete with, and in some cases displace, incumbents (Benkler, 2006, p. 3; Benkler, 2011, p. 234). In his controversial essay, “Newspapers and Thinking the Unthinkable”, Clay Shirky (2011) espouses some threads of this position, albeit with a healthy dose of more uncertainty:

For the next few decades, journalism will be made up of overlapping special cases. Many of these models will rely on amateurs as writers. Many of these models will rely on sponsorship or grants instead of revenues [...] many of these models will fail. No one experiment is going to replace what we are now losing with the demise of news on paper, but over time, the collection of new experiments that do work might give us the journalism that we do need. (p. 44)

In contrast to McChesney and Nichols (2010) who make strong calls for the need for public funding and radical intervention to support robust journalism, scholars who adopt this viewpoint suggest that the best solution may simply be to ‘wait and see how it all shakes out’ (Benkler, 2011; Shirky, 2011). Benkler (2011) posits that the US political system has a poor history of governmental solutions alongside a weak regulator and strong incumbents (p. 234). While there may be a space for small scale targeted government funding directed toward online media, Benkler (2011) ultimately states that waiting may indeed be the best approach – particularly when we risk “throwing a lifeline to the incumbents” (p. 237).

Some; however, have questioned the claim that the web has facilitated a cooperative environment predicated on user-generated content suggesting that there is a lack of empirical

evidence to support the case (Fuchs, 2011, p. 201). Fuchs (2011) bluntly states claims of such nature “are uncritical and ideological. They celebrate capitalism and the capitalist character of the Internet but wrap these realities in new rhetoric, thereby constituting a form of false consciousness” (p. 218). Others have suggested that this view miscalculates the power of existing media firms and their capacity to extend their control on to the web (McChesney & Nichols, 2010, p. 81). In addition, McChesney & Nichols (2009) point out, the networked public sphere shows little concern for the realities of the digital divide which disproportionately impacts marginalized groups (p. 81). Indeed, the digital divide is still a reality in Canada particularly for those living in rural and remote Northern communities (CRTC, 2015b). Finally, McChesney and Nichols (2009) suggest this view ignores the problem of resources: “Why should we believe that eventually the Internet and market will generate the resources to have a strong full-time force of working journalists?” (p. 84).

While McChesney and Nichols (2009) assertions are compelling, this thesis ultimately subscribes to views aligned with Benkler’s (2011) vision of journalism within the networked public sphere. This perspective is a digital media system with two tiers, one encompassing large, incumbent media firms surrounded by new and smaller media players (Winseck, 2015a; Wu, 2010). I adopt this view because it incorporates a political economic focus alongside a picture of an emerging media system that reflects my view of Canada’s contemporary media, and journalistic, environment.

McChesney (2003; 2008; 2012) and Benkler (2011) share some key beliefs, for instance, an “insistence that core elements of the digital media ecology and Internet are no less prone to concentration than previous media” (Winseck, 2015a). However, and contrary to Fuch’s suggestion that scholars of Benkler’s (2011) view unconsciously glorify the capitalist character

of the Internet, Benkler's position critically adopts the view that media concentration, while a real concern, is not inevitable. Rather, such processes are influenced by the interactions of the state, markets, and technology (Winseck, 2015a). Further, Benkler (2006) contends that diversity is not determined in the networked public sphere. There are real risks to the openness of the network including gatekeepers and bottlenecks which can threaten the autonomy of the individual user (p. 147). I'll address this problem in greater detail, and the Canadian context, in Chapter 4. Finally, Benkler (2006) acknowledges that while the digital divide is an issue not to be ignored, the democratic effects of the Internet must be examined in comparison to the democratic effects of the mass media, and not society in its entirety (p. 237).

Indeed, as I discuss in the chapters that follow, there are many emerging journalistic enterprises in Canada like *iPolitics*, *National Observer*, *The Tyee* and *CANADALAND* that are emerging alongside larger, traditional news firms like Postmedia, Torstar and *The Globe and Mail*. These firms show potential for closing some of the gaps left by declining news firms. Nonetheless, I recognize that while incumbent news firms in Canada face many novel difficulties, they are extremely powerful and, for the most part, profitable enterprises who are not above asking the government to support their financial endeavours (Winseck, 2010; Edge, 2014). In May 2016, Postmedia CEO Paul Godfrey asked for government subsidies before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, stating: “[T]hreats from all comers—new digital operations, massive international players, and shifting advertising budgets—have wrought havoc on the cornerstone of our democracy, a free and independent press” (Parliament of Canada, 2016). This sort of ask isn't new. Indeed, it follows a long history of government support for incumbent news firms in Canada. Like Benkler (2011) then, I suggest we avoid providing further lifeblood to

incumbent news firm in Canada – it’s time to give new forms and models of journalism in Canada room to flourish.

3.5 Conclusion

Both the technological and the economic explanations of the present state of journalism are interrelated components of today’s press system. Technology, policy, the economy, and the government are all complex and diverse forces and it’s impossible to separate any one explanation from the other processes - that’s why we need a flexible, political economic approach to understanding the current state of affairs. Certainly, technological explanations highlight how newswriters, media owners and decision makers have used new media to change the norms, processes and revenues of the news media; the employment of new communication technologies has indeed played an integral part in the many transformations characterizing the contemporary press system. However, these explanations often fall prey to technological determinism by suggesting that technology inevitably affects or shapes news firms, newswork and news consumption in predictable ways.

Accordingly, for the purposes of this thesis, I approach the present state of journalism *primarily* as an issue of economics. I rely firstly on an economic approach because it squares well with my theoretical framework, the political economy of communication, which is an approach concerned with how processes of communication are shaped by the interactions of the state, business and other structural forces. Moreover, I also believe that the technological explanations largely overlook the ongoing economic tensions that have surrounded the press system far prior to the centrality of the Internet. In the words of McChesney and Nichols (2010), “[w]hat the Internet and the economic downturn have done is simply make the final push against an already tottering giant” (p. 30). *However*, that is not to say that a technological lens does not

have value, particularly within a discussion of the changing role of the journalist. For this reason, the final chapter in the body of my thesis (Chapter 6: Newswriters' Self Reflections) will, in part, examine the part new technologies play in the transformation of the journalist.

In line with Benkler's (2006) views, I approach journalism in Canada as a system that is undergoing processes of transformation rather than one in full-out crisis. Benkler (2006) suggests this transformation is part of a larger struggle over the 'institutional ecology' of the new digital landscape (p. 381). By 'institutional ecology', Benkler (2006) describes the range of ways that institutions' relationships to technology as well as cultural and social practice matter to human behavior. However, as Benkler (2006) acknowledges, and as I discuss in the following chapter, the battles characterizing the contemporary communication environment aren't new, they simply mirror another cycle within the history of communication reflected in "periods of relative stability, punctuated by [moments] of disequilibrium" (p. 381). We're in one of those moments.

4. Today's Press System in Canada

The history of Canada's press system found in the introduction of this thesis reveals that the central driver behind its evolution is not technological change but clashes between governments, regulators and industry players as well as ideas about what journalism entails in a Canadian context and what structure the firms who produce it should take. With this history in mind, this chapter looks at today's press system in Canada. The first section lays out five critical groups of journalistic entities that coexist in the Canadian media landscape and some of their key characteristics including horizontal integration, strategies of change, and vertical integration, alongside deep cuts to the public broadcaster. The second section comments on the core features of contemporary journalism in Canada including varying states of revenue instability and concentration within different news media. The third section examines the recent formal inquiry into the state of Canadian media and the press from both the Government of Canada and the CRTC including, most recently, the proceedings conducted by the Department of Canadian Heritage under the direction of MP Hedy Fry, and the CRTC's regulatory review of local broadcasting. Together, these evaluations reveal that journalism in Canada is in the midst of a far-reaching transformation that involves emerging news players, evolving industry trends, and a federal government and regulator who are trying to find their footing in a rapidly changing media landscape. This assessment also identifies a few risks that could challenge a transformation toward an increasingly robust press system in Canada. These risks include the lobbying of the Government of Canada by large media firms, preferential regulatory policy for vertically-integrated media conglomerates, and potential government subsidies for traditional news firms.

This chapter is an important part of my thesis for at least two reasons. For one, Canadians are avid news consumers on varying media, and have affirmed that news content is important to

them. A recent study from Statistics Canada found that 60% of Canadians follow news or current affairs daily; however, this percentage is on the decline (Statistics Canada, 2016d). People's news habits are also changing. Increasingly, Canadians are opting for Internet news over traditional mass media such as newspapers, radio, and television (Goldstein, 2015). Secondly, this chapter explores the particularities of journalism in *Canada*. While much of the scholarly literature focused on contemporary journalism examines the state of the press in the United States, the Canadian media landscape is exceptional in many ways. It has a huge land mass but a very small population that is densely populated near its border with the United States. Those citizens that do live in rural and remote areas have poor broadband penetration even though Canada's fixed broadband penetration rates overall are amongst the highest of the G8 nations (Dobby, 2015a; Nordicity, 2016). Canada's only neighbor is a global media powerhouse and, accordingly, Canadian decision makers have historically had a keen interest in supporting Canadian-made content (Skinner & Gasher, 2005, p. 51). However, that's not to say Canada does not hold its own weight. In 2011, Canada had the eighth largest media economy in the world (Winseck, 2011a, p. 1). What's more, Canada has a significant French-speaking population which has its own taste in news and entertainment apart from its English-speaking counterparts (Edge, 2011b). Thus, this chapter also tries to differentiate the Canadian media environment from understandings of journalism in the United States, or the Western press system.

4.1 Players: Traditional Firms, Conglomerates, Tech, Digital Natives and Bloggers

There are five critical clusters of entities involved in journalistic activities in the Canadian media landscape. I sketch out these five groups, their core characteristics and their main players in this section. The CMCRP's infographic "Canada's Top Media, Internet & Telecom Companies by Market Share (2014)" (Figure 1 below) pictures three of the five groups:

(1) small or mid-size traditional news firms such as CBC, Postmedia, Torstar and *The Globe and Mail* (2) massive media conglomerates whose primary dealings are telecommunications such as BCE, Rogers, Quebecor and Shaw³ and (3) large global networking and technology companies such as Facebook and Google. There are two smaller groups, though nonetheless important, that are not pictured below. One is made up of digital native news firms such as *iPolitics*, *National Observer*, *Vice*, *Buzzfeed* and the *Huffington Post*. The other is composed of independent bloggers, public intellectuals and citizen journalists who illustrate novel forms of news production and distribution.

This discussion is crucial to this thesis because it maps out, defines and categorizes the different players in the Canadian press system. The main actors in contemporary journalism in Canada are difficult to pin down. There are many different oscillating industry players who operate across different media, vast geographies, and employ various structural formations inside a rapidly changing environment with evolving technologies, policies and norms. Further, understanding the press system in Canada is particularly challenging because the public's comprehension of this sector is largely based on content produced by the *industry itself*. Finally, there is the problem of measurement. There is a swath of different ways to measure and look at the media and the press system in Canada including consumption numbers, revenues, market shares, and earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA). This map shows the market shares of the top seventeen firms in the entire media economy in Canada based

³ Shaw was acquired by Corus in April 2016.

on revenue. Market shares of the total media economy are a useful measure because media industries in Canada are characterized by a high degree of cross-ownership; many media firms in Canada have holdings in more than one media. Accordingly, this map both guides this discussion and plots the state of concentration in Canada's entire media economy in recent years. Indeed, it shows that five telecommunications firms (BCE, Rogers, TELUS, Shaw and Quebecor) controlled 73.3% of the entire media economy in Canada in 2014. Experts tell us that "[w]hile there are important cross-cutting trends and areas where diversity rules, the evidence is clear: there are high levels of concentration within most sectors of the telecoms, media and Internet industries" in Canada (Winseck, 2015a).

This examination finds that there are new players of varying size and interest that have recently come to the fore of Canada's news environment alongside traditional news firms such as the CBC, Torstar, *The Globe and Mail* and Postmedia. Some of these entities hold extremely large market shares of the total Canadian media economy such as conglomerates BCE, Rogers, Shaw and Quebecor. Others capture a smaller share of the total media economy in Canada but operate on a global scale such as Google and Facebook. There are two clusters of journalistic entities that have emerged alongside the development of the Internet: 1. digital native news firms, and 2. bloggers, public intellectuals and citizen journalists. This exploration lays out the foundation for the following two components of this chapter which argue that the emergence of new forms of digital journalism is illustrative of the transformation of journalism in Canada. Moreover, these endeavours show promise and opportunity for a more robust Canadian press system.

The first cluster of news organizations on the CMCRP's map are small to medium-sized traditional news firms. They are often termed 'legacy' media because they predate the Internet and, accordingly, are now juggling digital endeavors alongside traditional news distribution methods such as print, radio and television (Nielsen, 2012, p. 960). Although their market shares based on revenue in the entire Canadian media system are relatively small (Postmedia held 0.9%, CBC 2.3%, Torstar 1.2%, and *The Globe and Mail* 0.3%), these firms are the dominant players in the Canadian news environment. Moreover, these companies are largely horizontally integrated and, secondarily, diagonally integrated. For example, Canada's largest newspaper chain Postmedia is horizontally integrated. It owns the nation-wide *National Post*, daily papers in Calgary, Edmonton, London, Montreal, Ottawa, Regina, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Windsor, and a host of smaller community papers (Postmedia, 2016). On the other hand, Torstar is both horizontally and diagonally integrated. It owns news producers Star Media Group and Metroland Media Group, as well as the digital media company Vertical Scope (Torstar, 2016).

The CBC is unique to its counterparts in this group. For one, the CBC is both publicly and commercially funded. The broadcaster supplements parliamentary appropriations from the federal government with commercial advertising on its television, secondary radio stations and web services, and subscriptions to its specialty services. Rather than print, the CBC's operations have historically encompassed broadcast media: radio, with the addition of television in 1952 (CBC/Radio-Canada, 2016). However, while the CBC's capital structure and its core distribution methods differ from other firms in this cluster, the CBC is similar in age, size, and focus. For example, the CBC is also grappling with the transition to digital technologies and its market share is relatively close in scale to the other main news sources in the Canadian media ecology: 2.3% of the entire Canadian media system. Moreover, a central aim of the CBC's operations is to

inform Canadians with high-quality news content at both a local and national level (CBC/Radio-Canada, 2014).

Although the current Liberal government's 2016/2017 budget awarded Canada's public broadcaster an additional \$675 million in funding over the next five years to offset the budget cuts of the last government (Abma, 2016), the CBC is still in a precarious position. The previous Progressive Conservative (PC) federal government played a part in this decline with the \$115 million reduction to the broadcaster's appropriations between 2012 to 2015, including the eradication of \$60 million annually that had been put toward investment in Canadian content (Library of Parliament, 2016, p. 9). However, the CBC has seen deep cuts to many different revenues sources over a longer period; parliamentary appropriations decreased from \$1,078 million in constant dollar values in the 1990/1991 fiscal year to \$650 million in the 2014/2015 fiscal year. In recent years, it has also faced the elimination of the Local Programming Improvement Fund (LPIF), a lowered allocation under the Canadian Media Fund (CMF), lost the broadcasting rights to hockey games in Canada and generated 'lower than expected' advertising revenues (Library of Parliament, 2016, p. 7). At the end of the 2014/2015 fiscal year, CBC's total revenues had decreased by 12% (\$22.5 million) in comparison to the year prior (Library of Parliament, 2016, p. 5). In April 2014, alongside the release of its digital strategy "A Space of Us All", the CBC announced plans to eliminate as many as 1,500 jobs over the following five years with some 144 of the positions cut by retirement and attrition (Szklarski, 2015).

The CBC is not the only news firm in Canada to announce digital strategies that have direct implications to journalists and other newswriters. Quantitative accounts of journalistic labour will feature the next chapter but for now it's important to note that all major news firms in Canada have initiated strategies of change predicated on rhetoric about the new forces at play in

the Canadian media landscape including technological advances, evolving audience habits and preferences, shifting demographics, a changing labour force, the evolution of the industry revenue model, public expectations and other competitive factors (CBC/Radio-Canada, 2014, pp. 6-8). These plans often focus on creating news firms focused on “simplicity, flexibility, scalability, and collaboration” (CBC/Radio-Canada, 2014, p. 11). Moreover, these strategies highlight news firms’ attention to a growing number of platforms including web, tablet, mobile and print. Finally, they outline new funding models looking to recover lost advertising through business models composed of online and traditional subscriptions, online and traditional advertising, sponsored content or paywalls (Cruikshank, 2015; Duffy, 2014). Indeed, Winseck (2015c) notes the predominance of online paywalls in the English-language press. Twenty-eight English daily newspapers have gone behind paywalls since 2012 (Winseck, 2015c).

Secondary to traditional news firms, telecommunications firms involved in journalistic activities like BCE (21.9%), Rogers (16.4%), Shaw (7.8%) and Quebecor (5.3%) are the next largest producers of news in Canada. Although these conglomerates’ primary dealings are in the provision of telecommunications services, they are important to this thesis because they have substantial stakes in a range of prominent journalistic sources in Canada and have significant market shares in Canada’s total media economy. For example, alongside a suite of telecommunications and broadcasting services, BCE has an array of content holdings including 28 broadcasting television stations CTV, CTV News, RDS, several specialty and pay TV services, and over 106 radio stations (BCE, 2015). In addition to operating the cable and mobile wireless company Videotron, Quebecor owns many content-based media outlets including the TVA Group, TVA Publishing Inc., the Journal de Montreal and the Journal de Quebec and, until very recently, the Sun newspaper chain (Quebecor, 2015).

Vertical integration is a key characteristic of these firms. Importantly, there have been at least three recorded instances at BCE where vertical integration has clashed with journalistic autonomy. In 2013, published emails revealed that Bell Media president Kevin Crull directed its subsidiary CTV News to provide coverage of a CRTC commissioned study that shone a favourable light on Canadian telecommunication providers (Winseck, 2013). That same year, a newsroom employee called out the stifling of negative news coverage of BCE CEO George Cope by company management (Winseck, 2015b). Later, Crull explicitly forbid CTV News to interview CRTC Chairman and CEO JP Blais after a regulatory decision that adversely impacted Bell's cable television services in 2015 (Bradshaw, 2015a).

Alongside traditional news firms and telecommunications firms with stakes in journalism, recent years have seen an increasing interest from global networking and tech giants in news aggregation. Accordingly, the third cluster of news firms includes firms such as Facebook (0.3%), Google (2.3%), Twitter, Instagram, Apple and Snapchat. Several these firms have recently initiated new ways to aggregate news for consumers which carry unique challenges and opportunities for news firms. Last year, Facebook launched Instant Articles which allows participating news firms to either sell ads to Facebook or embed their own. The move has garnered participation from an array of publications, amongst them *Maclean's*, *Le Journal de Montréal*, *The New York Times*, *BuzzFeed*, *The Guardian*, and *BBC News*. Snapchat Discover only allows users to view news in Snapchat stories which are replaced with new content after 24 hours (Gilbertson, 2016). Apple recently partnered with a select number of publishers including *Buzzfeed*, *Vox*, *Wired* and *The Economist* to launch the mobile application Apple News. The app offers an individualized stream of articles designed for mobile devices and allows users to edit the display of the content (Moon, 2016). However, news firms' recent interest in partnering with

news aggregators is by no means surprising. Indeed, social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat are where a growing number of Canadian news consumers access their news (Goldstein, 2015).

Outside of the CMCRP's map, there are two smaller, though highly relevant, clusters emerging in the Canadian news landscape. The first, and largest, is digital native news sites like *iPolitics*, *National Observer*, *The Tyee*, *BuzzFeed*, *VICE* and the *Huffington Post*. Digital native firms post-date the advent of the Internet and their foremost form of news production is on the Internet. They are often characterized by niche reporting at a national or regional level, as well as a variety of different business models. *iPolitics* offers daily content in the form of original analysis and reporting, as well as opinion and commentary, on Canadian politics and policy. It is supported by user subscriptions and advertising. *National Observer*, funded by donations, subscriptions and native advertising, highlights news and long form reporting on issues pertaining to climate and energy in the circles of politics, culture and economics. *The Tyee*, driven by advertising and reader contributions, focuses on highlighting news stories in British Columbia that are not oft covered by the mainstream press. *BuzzFeed* and the *Huffington Post*, while American in origin, both have operations in Canada and are funded by a mix of native and regular advertising. Secondly, voices like *CANADALAND*, independent bloggers such as Steve Faguy and Michael Geist, and citizen journalists are other examples of novel forms of online journalistic activities in Canada. These endeavours illustrate a shift away from traditional journalistic values such as objectivity and show an interest in niche subject areas like media policy and regulation, and federal politics.

This discussion has outlined the key players in the Canadian press system including traditional news firms, telecommunications firms involved in journalistic activities, global tech

firms, digital native firms and other online journalistic endeavours including bloggers, public intellectuals and citizen journalists. These entities operate across a range of traditional media and each exhibit their own set of characteristics. This exploration has constructed a foundation for the following two components of this chapter which contend that the development of novel forms of digital journalism alongside traditional news firms is illustrative of transformation in the Canadian press system. These endeavours show promise and opportunity for a more robust journalistic environment in Canada, in line with the possibilities outlined by scholars such as Yochai Benkler and Clay Shirky. For one, Internet news in Canada shows a propensity towards a greater diversity of voices than traditional news media. In addition, I argue that the recent formal inquiry from the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage into the state of the press and regulatory review into the state of the media illustrated in proceedings like the CRTC's review of local broadcasting present opportunities for the Government of Canada and the regulator to encourage the development of novel forms of digital journalism.

4.2 Industry Trends: Instability and Opportunity

This section lays out industry revenue trends and analyzes the levels of media concentration in the four central news media in Canada: print, television, radio, and the Internet. This exploration finds several trends illustrative of journalistic transformation in the Canadian press system. My analysis reveals change throughout the system; however, in some news media more than others. Print is undoubtedly seeing the greatest decline in revenue, while broadcast television and radio revenues remain stagnant. Internet advertising revenues are rising to the fore. Moreover, my analysis reveals that mass media such as print, radio and television exhibit medium to high levels of media concentration based on the concentration ratio (CR) 4 approach, as does Internet advertising. However, while no comprehensive dataset including the total

revenues made by Internet news firms in Canada exists, Internet news *consumption* trends reflect a diversity of voices. These findings show promise for the development of an increasingly robust Canadian press system. However, these trends also give us two things to consider carefully.

Firstly, the potential for gatekeeping power on a diversity of voices in Internet news, and secondly, and more worryingly, the risk of potential gatekeeping power on a diversity of access.

The measures I use for these analyses are total industry revenues and a concentration measure called CR4. Total industry revenues are a useful measure for this analysis because they reveal the overall commercial trends that characterize the news media. Moreover, the CR4 measure, which is composed of the market shares of the four largest firms in each market, is a valuable approach because it is a widely adopted, understood and employed tool within economic studies of concentration in a variety of industries (Noam 2009; Winseck, 2016a). Further, the CR4 approach reveals the degree of competition within an industry as well as a given sector's oligopolistic tendencies (Hannaford, 2007, p. 10). Researchers take different approaches to break down the CR4 measure. I use the following: concentration levels for the CR4 method range from: no oligopoly when the top 4 firms control 0% to 25% of the market, a loose oligopoly when they account for 25% to 50% of a market, a tight oligopoly when they control 50% to 90% of the market, a super tight oligopoly when they account 90% to 99% of the market and a monopoly when one firm controls 100% of the market.

However, there is some important information that total revenues and the CR4 ratio measures do not reveal. Total industry revenues, for one, do not illustrate the net income (total revenues minus total expenses), or profitability of an industry. This is important because, as I've mentioned earlier, many traditional news firms are still making a profit although their total revenues are declining (Winseck, 2010; Edge, 2014). Moreover, several traditional news firms

have been keen to request financial support if federal government subsidies on the basis that they are not making a profit (Pedwell, 2016). Secondly, while the CR4 ratio sheds light on the competitive tendencies of an industry, it provides little detail on the competitiveness of an industry and does not illustrate the respective market shares of the four largest firms. To alleviate this concern, my corresponding discussion lays out the relative market shares of the dominant media firms in several the markets examined in 2014.

It's worth noting that finding comparable and consistent data about the media industries in Canada, and the labour of workers in these industries, can be daunting. Wagman (2010) writes that to “undertake work in Canada on the cultural communication or telecommunications industries is to turn to the state for the evidence” (p. 624). This isn't entirely true but it does speak to the ‘problem of data’ in the study of communication. Aside from a few key resources like the CRTC's *Communications Monitoring Report (CMR)*, the CMCRP, Statistics Canada, and varying reports from the Government of Canada and a few private sector firms – there is little in the way of yearly monitoring and analysis on the media industries in Canada. I discuss this challenge in greater length in Chapter 5. Moreover, Edge (2014) describes the difficulties of discerning data from publicly shared media firms' annual reports. He notes that some media firms lack standardization, and are unresponsive to requests for clarification. Media conglomerates are also prone to lumping revenues together making it extremely challenging to discern revenues for a given medium (pp. 240-241). This section uses data from the CMCRP⁵

⁵ Source: the CMCRP's methodology can be found here: <http://www.cmcrp.org/methodology/>

(which draws on data from a range of public and private sources) to flesh out a picture of industry trends in the news media over the last thirty years. Despite the limitations noted above, the analysis does its best to identify gaps and address methodological concerns throughout the examination.

There are two methodological challenges worth noting right at the gate. The first is the difficulty of mapping Internet revenues or concentration levels against traditional mass media. Where traditional mass media such as newspapers, television and radio operate on a single plane, measuring Internet revenues is trickier. Internet revenues are multi-faceted and capital flows between an innumerable number of players. To name just a few approaches, a revenue model or assessment of media concentration could include revenues or market shares for retail Internet access, desktop browsers, mobile browsers, desktop operating systems, Internet advertising and Internet news, all of which are available through the CMCRP. For the purposes of my analysis, however, I employed Internet advertising. My rationale for Internet advertising is that advertising lies at the heart of the traditional mass media's business model, and is a central component of their declining revenues. Internet advertising, therefore, represents a good measure of where these funds could be shifting. The second methodological concern is the prevalence of news making in each industry. While newspapers are, for the most part, strictly news focused, radio and television broadcast both news and entertainment content. This point is crucial to acknowledge; however, because total revenues for these industries still provide some insights into the health of a given industry in its entirety.

Figure 2: News Media Industry Revenues (1984-2014) (Real CDN Millions)⁶

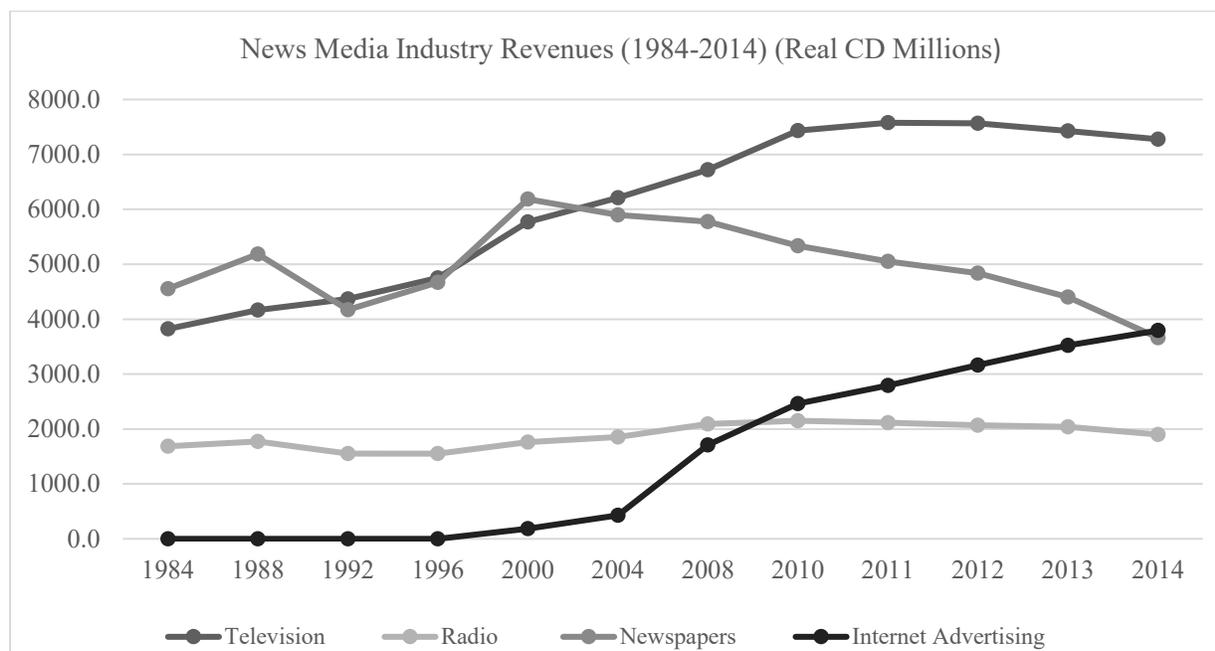


Figure 2 shows that, of the four news media examined, newspapers have seen their steepest decline in total revenues since the Great Recession of 2008. While print revenues fluctuated until then, they fell sharply from \$5.8 billion⁷ in 2008 to \$5.3 billion in 2010 and have continued declining until the last year examined, 2014, where revenues sat at \$3.8 billion. Radio revenues rose at a slower pace from \$1.7 billion in 1984 to \$2.1 billion in 2008. Since 2008, radio revenues have remained steady at around \$2 billion. Similarly, while rising steadily throughout the latter half of the 1980s, and the 1990s and 2000s, television revenues have remained stagnant from 2011 to 2014 hovering around \$7.4 billion. Finally, Internet advertising

⁶ Source: see the '2014 Media Economy' sheet in the Excel Workbook: <http://www.cmrp.org/media-industry-data/>

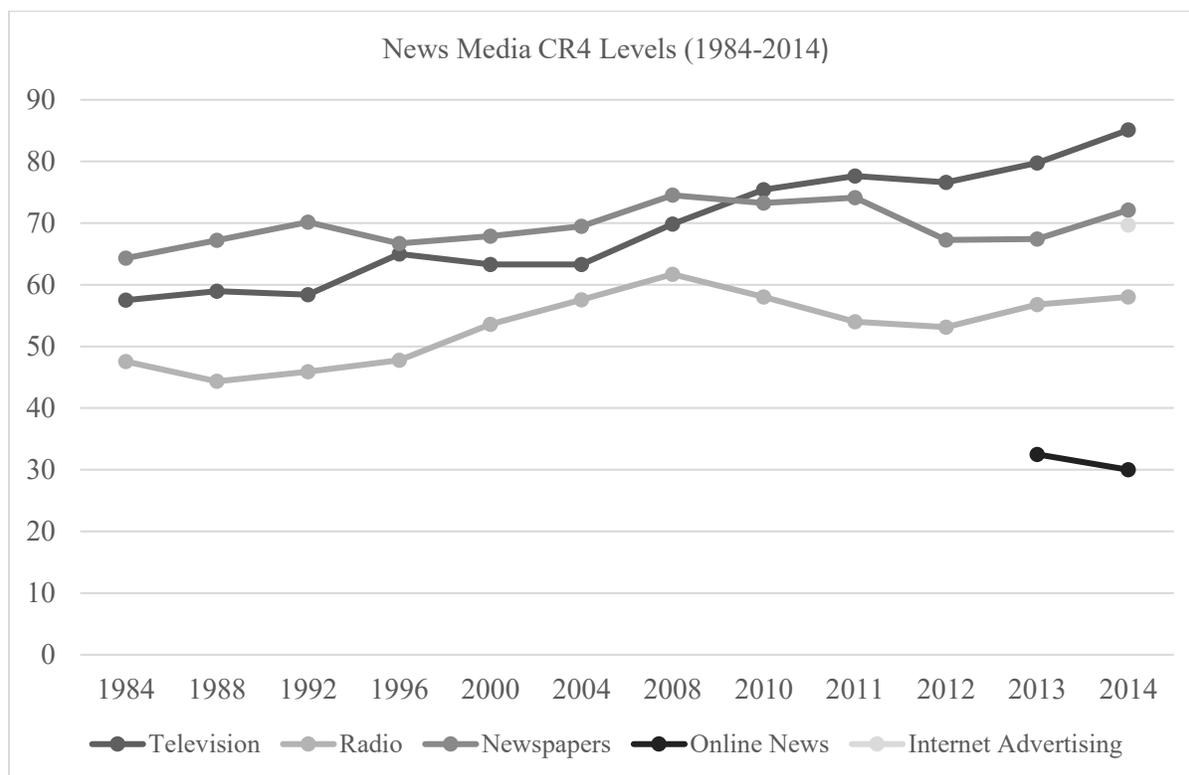
⁷ To maintain historical compatibility, I have opted for real dollars which means that the figures are adjusted for inflation.

revenues emerged on the scene in 2000 and grew quickly through the first decade and a half of the twenty first century. 2014 marks the first year Internet advertising revenues superseded print revenues at \$3.8 billion versus \$3.7 billion.

These trends show a decline in revenues to some traditional mass media (print), a stagnation in others (radio and television), and an increase in Internet advertising revenue. These shifts tell us a couple things. For one, revenues are falling or stagnating in traditional media that involve a high capital requirement predicated on expensive infrastructure, equipment, and resources (printing presses, for example) toward new media that require a much smaller amount of capital (the cost of starting a website and maintaining an Internet connection, for example, is small in comparison). In economic terms, the Internet lowers the barriers to new entrants. These trends also illustrate a transformation in the Canadian press system in “the move to a communications environment built on cheap processors with high computation capabilities, interconnected in a pervasive network” (Benkler, 2006, p. 3).

However, while these numbers reveal some insights about total industry revenues, they do not illustrate the number of firms, or their relative market share, in each given industry. Accordingly, Figure 3 below shows the total market shares of the top four firms in each market. There is only one data point for the CR4 levels of Internet advertising which I’ve included. Notwithstanding a lack of historical comparison in this industry, the data reveals some important insights about recent levels of concentration in these industries. What’s more, my discussion comments on some of the key firms in 2014 and their respective market shares in the markets examined.

Figure 3: News Media Industry CR4 Levels (1984-2014)⁸



According to the CR4 measure, Figure 3 illustrates that traditional mass media in 2014 were all tight oligopolies: radio at 58%, newspapers at 72% and television at 85%. The CMCRP data shows that the top four firms in the radio market in 2014 were BCE (21.8%), CBC (15.2%), Rogers (12%), and Shaw (9.1%). Newspapers market shares in 2014 showed three firms at the head of the pack: Torstar (23.4%), Quebecor (20.7%)⁹, Postmedia (18.4%) with Power Corp/Gesca/Unimedia trailing at 9.6%. Some re-occurring characteristic occur in television with

⁸ Source: see the '2014 Media Economy' sheet in the Excel Workbook: <http://www.cmcrp.org/media-industry-data/>

⁹ As I explore further on page 69, this percentage is prior to Quebecor's sale of the Sun newspaper chain to Postmedia in 2015

BCE (34%), Shaw (21.2%), CBC (19.6%), and Rogers (10.2%) being the top four players, and the market overall a very tight oligopoly. The data shows that Internet advertising *is also a tight oligopoly* with four firms taking 69.7% of the industries' total revenues. Indeed, in 2014, Google received 50%¹⁰ of the total Internet advertising market. Facebook followed with 14.1% of the market share and Torstar and Postmedia trail behind with 3.3% and 2.3%, respectively. Further, these industries, aside from Internet advertising where there is no comparable data, trended upwards between 2012 and 2014. Moreover, recent mergers and acquisitions have in some cases increased respective market shares for firms in a market. For example, experts suggest that Postmedia's 2015 acquisition of the Sun newspaper chain from Quebecor put nearly a third of the total market shares for newspapers in Canada in one firm's pocket (Bradshaw, 2014b).

While there is no publicly available dataset for the total revenues and market shares of Internet news firms, the CMCRP dataset includes two years of data for Internet news *consumption*. It should be noted that market shares based on revenues (supply) cannot be directly compared to measures of consumption (demand); however, these figures do provide some valuable insights about the diversity of voices in Internet news in comparison to the lack of diversity of ownership within other examined industries. Indeed, as I'll examine in greater detail in the following section, the CRTC (2008) recently equated the diversity of voices with the diversity of *separately owned* voices.

¹⁰ The Google revenue data is for all advertising revenue, including that which it receives on its own services and that it places for third parties.

The data illustrates that the top four news websites with the greatest number of page views in Canada accounted for 32.5% of the top twenty most visited news sites in Canada in 2013 and trended downwards to 30% in 2014. While some of the top firms in the market are extensions of traditional mass media firms, there are several digital native entities that are rising to the fore. The figures show that the CBC garnered 8.5% of the total page views of the Internet news industry in 2014, Canoe sat at 8.2%, the Weather Network took 7.1% and Postmedia followed at 6.0%. Notably, none of these firms surpassed one tenth of the total numbers of page views. Further, many digital native sites with offices in Canada sit within the top twenty most visited news websites including the Huffington Post (5.9%), BuzzFeed (3.1%) and Vice (2.2%). Importantly, each of these firms saw an increase to their percentage of total views between 2013 and 2014. Interestingly, there are also a few international news sources that have attracted similar page views in Canada such as the BBC (3.3%), the Daily Mail (2.65%), *The Guardian* (2.1%), and The New York Times (2.0%) - again, all of which are well-established traditional news sources.

These trends, as well as the growing number of journalists employed in Canada (the focus of the following chapter), show opportunity and potential for an increasingly robust press system in Canada. Yet, there are still a few concerns that are crucial to consider. Firstly, while Internet news exhibits a diversity of voices - there is still the question of revenues. As I discussed in the preceding section, new online journalistic activities are indeed adopting novel and innovative capital structures predicated on some combination of regular and/or native advertising, user subscriptions, donations, paywalls, and user subscriptions. However, the success of these models is difficult to quantitatively confirm; in contrast to traditional news firms

and vertically integrated conglomerates who are principally publicly traded, digital native news firms' revenues are largely unpublished. More research on this issue is warranted.

Secondly, the gatekeeping of *content* and gatekeeping of *access* present two core risks to the diversity of Internet news. Some scholars have hailed the emergence of the Internet as the end of journalistic gatekeeping suggesting the networked environment alleviates any control over what news citizens access (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). However, Ernst (2014) rightly identifies that “such conceptions of gatekeeping are limited [...] in that they emphasize the metaphorical meaning behind the idea of media gatekeepers as amounting to total control of the public’s access to news and information” (p. 31). In other words, this position does not account for the various nuanced ways media firms can influence what content users view and how, and at what price, they access it at all. In short, the shift from mass media to a networked public sphere has altered gatekeeping processes, not eradicated them.

The gatekeeping of content manifests in several different platforms, activities and regulations. For example, restrictive copyright regulations run the risk of limiting the fluidity of networked activities (Benkler, 2006, p. 279). Moreover, Hindman (2009) suggests that search engines function as gatekeepers by filtering audience traffic to largely concentrate around a relatively small number of sources in a power law distribution (p. 13). Further, Benkler (2006) notes that this specific concern with the online distribution of audience attention cannot and should not be solved by public policy (p. 243). As Benkler (2006) writes, while the Internet is not a utopia where every voice receives equitable attention, “we *are* seeing a newly shaped environment, where indeed few are read by many, but clusters of moderately read sites provide platforms for vastly greater numbers of speakers were heard in the mass-media environment” (emphasis mine, p. 242). In short, the networked public sphere lends itself to a *more* diverse

conversation than the historical alternative. Run side-by-side with the CMCRP data on Internet news, we can see that Benkler's ideas hold their weight in the Canadian news environment in recent years. Indeed, the most consumed Internet news sites include a range of traditional news firms with extensions in the online environment, digital native news firms with offices in Canada, and international news sites.

Secondarily, and arguably more importantly, there is the issue of *access* to broadband services. Access is of crucial importance because, as I've identified earlier in this thesis, a growing number of Canadians are consuming news on online platforms using a range of devices including mobile phones, laptop computers and tablets. Moreover, revenues in the media industries are shifting from traditional mass media such as radio, television and print toward networked technologies run on broadband services. This change is reflected in various digital strategies that traditional news firms have adopted in efforts to recur declining or stagnating advertising revenues in traditional media. Crucially though, addressing access to broadband services is imperative because telecommunications services are amongst the most concentrated of the Canadian media industries. In 2014, the CR4 level for fixed broadband Internet service providers (ISP) was in the tight oligopoly range at 58.7%. However, warranting greater concern, mobile wireless communication services (where an increasing number of Canadians access broadband services and news) had a CR4 level of 94.4% in 2014. This statistic coincides with recent findings that Canada has some of the highest prices for mobile wireless services in the G8 countries (Nordicity, 2016).

Benkler (2006) warns that "the risk of concentration in broadband access is that a small number of firms, sufficiently small to have economic power in the antitrust sense, will control the markets for the basic instrumentalities of Internet communications" (p. 240). Indeed, scholars

have rightly argued that the infrastructure of the Internet is prone to the same forces of consolidation that have acted to concentrate media that were initially open and free like the telephone, the radio, and the television (Wu, 2010). For example, Chapter 1 of this thesis pointed out the emergence of these consolidative processes in the early history of the newspaper industry in Canada as new technologies and shifting cultural practices changed the newspaper industry from one where it was relatively inexpensive to enter the industry, to a business predicated on economies of scale. Similarly, one could make the comparison that while starting a website on the Internet may be an inexpensive endeavour, the provision of Internet access requires a huge amount of upfront capital. That said, as we can see in my earlier discussion of Canadian news consumption online, all the widely consumed Internet news sites in Canada are established brands. Paying for a domain name may come at a low cost; however, gaining a wide viewership often requires significant capital.

A third issue links these two layers: net neutrality. Net neutrality, also termed common carriage and structural separation, is another matter that has deep historical roots in Canada's press system. Its advent was in 1910 when the national Board of Railway Commissioners, who governed telegraph and telephone rates beside regulating the railways, ruled that the flat rate system employed by the Canadian Pacific Telegraph Company "was discriminatory because the railway had given its news-selling business an unfair advantage over any competing news service that did not control its own telegraph lines" (Allen, 2006, p. 208). The result of the ruling was to force CP Telegraphs to offer all news services carriage at the same rates (Allen, 2006, p. 208). In today's news environment, Benkler (2006) suggests that net neutrality can be violated when:

owners of communications facilities [...] extract value from their users in ways that are more subtle than increasing price. In particular, they can make some sites and statements easier to reach and see – more prominently displayed on the screen, faster to load – and sell that relative ease to those who are willing to pay. (p. 240)

Thus, content providers who opt not to, or cannot, put up the cash to earn these favours are ‘systemically disadvantaged’. Considering issues of net neutrality is particularly important in Canada where vertical integration levels are very high. Accordingly, the federal government and the CRTC are at the crux of delivering diverse access options, and restraining violations of net neutrality, and other measures to support the transformation to an increasingly robust journalistic system in Canada. There is opportunity for these actions at CRTC proceedings this fall concerning differential pricing practices (CRTC, 2016b).

4.3 Federal Inquiry into the State of the Media and the Press in Canada

The number of recent formal inquiries and regulatory reviews into Canada’s media and press systems suggests that it is not just the structure of the players and markets that are transforming in the twenty-first century, but also the rules of the game. These inquiries are crucially important to a discussion of the present state of journalism in Canada for a couple reasons. For one, as I identified in the introduction to this thesis, the Government of Canada has a history of press subsidization and has played an important role in shaping the media structures, and the press, in Canada. Secondly, as aforementioned as well, journalism is inextricably tied to Canada’s entire media environment. Front and centre to that is the reality that Canada’s news environment is already highly concentrated, and largely composed of a few horizontally integrated traditional news firms and, secondarily, vertically integrated media conglomerates. Accordingly, the decisions that are made about these matters now are incredibly important and

will play a crucial role in shaping the evolution of the Canadian press system in the years and decades ahead. Consequently, I suggest that the Government of Canada and the CRTC should guide policy to encourage emerging forms of digital journalism rather than incumbent news firms and vertically integrated conglomerates with journalistic holdings.

The advent of recent regulatory review into the Canadian media were two reports in the mid-2000s. “Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting” came first in 2003 heralding in many heightened, and in some cases new, concerns: fragmenting audiences, qualms that the government structure of the time was ill equipped to address the coming challenges brought about by new technologies, and fears about cross-media ownership (Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, 2003, p. 3). Importantly, the report identified the need for coherent public policy on these matters: “[t]he potential problems with cross-media ownership are sufficiently severe that the time has come for the Federal Government to issue a clear and unequivocal policy on this matter” (Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, 2003, p. 613). While no ‘clear and unequivocal policy’ appeared in the following few years, the Government of Canada issued another report – this time focused on news media specifically. The “Final Report on the Canadian News Media” (2006) addressed four key problems facing news media in Canada: 1. a high degree of media concentration and cross ownership; 2. the mixed and confused mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada; 3. a lack of an open and transparent space for public discussion about media concentration and cross-ownership; and 4. barriers to entry for new players (Parliament of Canada, 2006, p. 9). At the crux of the report is the conclusion that although Canadians are generally well-served by traditional news outlets, media concentration has risen to a level far beyond the accepted rates of other nations. Coupled with a public broadcaster facing financial limitations and a mixed mandate, and with areas of Canada that are

lacking adequate access to either the CBC or private news organizations, the document again calls for policy mechanisms to maintain a robust news system: “public interest in healthy and vibrant news media is as important as the public interest in the rights and freedoms of individual citizens. It is time to recognize this interest and develop, in Canada, mechanisms similar to those in other developed democracies” (Parliament of Canada, 2006, p. 65).

The CRTC’s (2008) “Diversity of Voices” policy followed a couple of years later, marking the first adoption of parameters and thresholds surrounding media concentration in Canada. Importantly, the CRTC (2008) equated a diversity of voices with the number of editorial voices from distinct media organizations; “plurality within an element refers to the number of separately owned voices”. The CRTC’s decision reflected an important first step for the regulator. For one, it aligned Canada’s cross-ownership policies with other developed democracies. In its decision, the CRTC (2008) notes that nearly every other western country had set parameters around media cross-ownership. Secondly, although the decision in effect maintained the status quo in 2008, it has since been employed to examine proposed acquisitions and mergers in Canada’s media (Winseck, 2012). Thirdly, as Winseck (2012) notes, it offers, for the first time, coherent and measurable regulatory parameters to evaluate the Canadian media environment.

The ball kept rolling. In 2012 the Parliament of Canada published the report “Media Ownership and Convergence in Canada” which warned “[m]ore and more, recent changes in digital technology are blurring the once-clear dividing lines between products and services as telecommunications and broadcasting converge into a single communications entity” (Theckedath & Thomas, 2012, p. 1). The report sketched out the vast holdings of the country’s eight largest private sector media organizations and heeds, alongside the firms’ content holdings,

a number of them are dominating the Canadian wireless market while others are also key players in the broadband market (Theckedath & Thomas, 2012, pp. 2-3). In short and, with the increasing importance of the Internet, of critical note, “a handful of firms [have] potential gatekeeping power over the content Canadians wish to access” (Theckedath & Thomas, 2012, p. 3).

This all came to a head this spring as Liberal Member of Parliament (MP) Hedy Fry led a panel of MPs to examine the state of local news and media concentration. Importantly, these hearings took place shortly after public proceedings at the CRTC concerning Broadcasting Notice of Consultation 2015-41 (Review of the Policy Framework for Local and Community Television Programming) and before the CRTC’s official decision on the matter. Consequently, parties who participated in both sets of hearings used the latter as an opportunity to reiterate arguments concerning the pending decision. While the results of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage’s findings have not yet been published, transcripts from the public proceedings held during the months of April and May 2016 illustrate a couple of central ideas touted by large media firms that have long characterized the history of the press in Canada: asks for government subsidy to support existing industry structures, a distaste for government regulation, and the suggestion that scale is important for Canadian firms to provide robust news coverage in Canada and compete on the global stage. As I’ve mentioned earlier in this thesis, CEO of Postmedia, Paul Godfrey, used his opportunity before the panel to ask for government advertising and tax breaks in Postmedia-run newspapers: “I think what I’m trying to encourage is that our industry be *given incentives* so that we can carry out the same exploration to improve the way we do things to make it easier for us to compete against these behemoths in the States, such as Google, Facebook, and others” (emphasis mine, Parliament of Canada, 2016) . As for media

concentration, VP of Industry Relations, Pierre Rodrigue, at BCE suggested “[f]ar from being the problem, scale has allowed larger broadcasters to support their local television stations [...] we believe media concentration has been a positive for Canada” (Parliament of Canada, 2016).

Other publicly concerned intervening participants did well to highlight the opportunities presented by the efforts of the Standing Committee. Representatives of the consumer group the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) called for accountability from vertically integrated private broadcasters, suggesting any investment go towards small, independent, non-profit and emerging entities. They also identified the need for a robust public broadcaster in Canada. Dr. Dwayne Winseck of the CMCRP animated the importance of evaluating both the diversity of voices in content but also the diversity of access providers. To alleviate the problems of the existing high levels of concentration, and to encourage what he called the ‘green shoots’ of emerging online journalistic endeavours, Winseck called for the amalgamation of disparate content funds from industry hands into a single fund administered by an independent entity, for bold regulation that acts against concentrated media, and structural separation (Parliament of Canada, 2016). Indeed, members of the Standing Committee were receptive to ideas about supporting ‘green shoots’ and showed warranted criticism towards requests for public support to large private media firms given, amongst other reasons, foreign ownership, poor business decision-making, and, relatedly, the misuse of public funds (Parliament of Canada, 2016).

Recent formal inquiry is illustrative of broad transformations to the public policy surrounding the Canadian media industries, and the Canadian press system. These inquiries show promise for a federal government and regulator that act to encourage novel forms of digital journalism. However, not all recent decisions have lined up by this approach. Most recently, the

CRTC published their policy framework for local and community television based off public consultations held in January of 2016. The decision ultimately favoured vertically integrated firms by allowing them to reallocate funds from community television to local news broadcasts, laying out the CRTC's view that while new digital technologies show promise for producing a robust journalism in the future, "the evidence on the record of [the] proceedings indicates that online news services do not yet have the newsgathering resources and expertise to replace traditional local news sources" (CRTC, 2016c). While the CRTC's statement may hold some weight in the present press system, I am of the view that policy should encourage emerging digital native news firms rather than vertically integrated media conglomerates and, in other cases, traditional news firms.

Notwithstanding, recent regulatory review and formal inquiry show potential for a regulator and a federal government that are open to change, concerned about a diversity of voices, following international standards, and supporting competition through appropriate nonmarket measures. The inquiries I've laid out in this section illustrate the intensity and breadth of the renewed interest, as well as the opportunities they present. They also highlight the inextricability of journalism from the entire media system in Canada. Benkler (2006) expresses the complicated nature of media policy in the following terms, "the institutional ecology of information production and exchange is a complex one. It includes regulatory and policy elements that affect different industries, draw on various legal doctrines and traditions, and rely on diverse economic and political theories and practices" (p. 392). Accordingly, it's imperative that decision makers in Canada's media system consider the various components of the media system that are tied to the production and dissemination of journalistic content. Indeed, the decisions that are made today will play a crucial role in shaping the future of Canada's press

system. Moreover, it's not as though incumbent news firms and vertically integrated conglomerates will accept these changes without a fight. Requests for government subsidies, appeals to the Federal Court of Appeals, and lobbying of the Government of Canada indicates these efforts are already in full force (Dobby, 2015b). Perhaps ironically, these moves coincide with the 'rallying cry' from media firm owners to "[get] the government off our backs" (Hannaford, 2007, p. 89).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has sketched out the key organizational players in Canadian journalism: traditional news firms, telecommunications firms that have journalistic holdings, social media platforms and other leading Internet and tech companies, digital native news sites, and bloggers, public intellectuals and citizen journalists. It has given the reader a sense of how these five groups fit together and the traits that characterize each. What's more, it has identified some of the core characteristics of the Canadian news landscape in 2016: news media revenues in various states of stability, a declining public broadcaster, and strategies of change. Finally, I've examined recent Federal inquiry and regulatory review into the Canadian news landscape with a focus on the Standing Committee of Canadian Heritage's proceedings concerning local news and media concentration. This discussion begins to flesh out the argument that the Canadian media landscape is in a period of transformation amidst many expansive regulatory, industry and strategic changes, as well as new emerging players and voices in the news media. All the while, an exploration of recent formal inquiry points to a government and regulator that are trying to find their footing in a rapidly evolving media landscape. These changes, developments and evolutions suggests promise for emerging new forms of journalism that have the potential to contribute towards a robust journalistic system in Canada. However, the Government of Canada

and the CRTC have an important role to play amidst this process, and the decisions they make will be crucial to a robust press system in Canada. The following chapter comes to the crux of this thesis by examining data I received from Statistics Canada that shows, contrary to nearly every publicly available report of journalistic employment in Canada, the number of journalists employed in Canada is at its highest point in thirty years.

5. Human Consequences: Measuring and Cataloguing of Journalistic Work

Caught amid recent regulatory review about Canada's media and the press, industry upheaval, and strategies of changes, are journalists. Scholars in Canada have produced much valuable work concerning the labour strife, resistance, and unrest that has characterized journalistic labour in Canada. Some of this work is focused on specific industries, while other researchers point their gaze on types of journalistic employment such as contract, freelance and unionized work, evaluating the conditions of, and balance between, each (Cohen, 2011; Cohen, 2012). Some analysts hone in on moments of labour strife and resistance at specific news firms in Canada like Quebecor (Edge, 2011b; Gorman, 2004) and the CBC (Mosco & McKercher, 2005). Media reports highlight the prevalence of jobs cuts that seem to cut across the entire news industries. These anecdotes suggest that the number of journalistic positions are in a sharp decline as news firms opt for business models that are increasingly lean and nimble with a slimmer number of entrepreneurial workers.

Indeed, it's easy to see why these reports are so widespread in the public discussion about journalistic labour. For one, they're widely shared by experts and journalists. In a conversation with CBC's *The Current*, Dr. Romaine Smith-Fullerton, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Information Studies at Western University, suggested "we're losing those jobs in Canada. I think in the last seven or eight years, we've lost more than 10,000 journalism jobs" (CBC, 2016). A study developed by the Canada's Public Policy Forum (2016) suggested that "[t]here will undoubtedly be fewer journalistic voices, at least in the immediate future, because of the layoffs, closures and mergers that have still not run their course" (p. 25). Kelsey Johnson, a journalist from *iPolitics* who I interviewed for this thesis, said "I think you'll still have good reporters breaking good stories but you just won't have as many stories because you won't have as many

bodies. I mean if you think about it, if a reporter files two stories a day, that's ten stories a week. That, you're not getting anymore" (K. Johnson, personal communication, March 10, 2016).

A quick Google search will also reveal recent journalistic cuts at all traditional news firms in Canada. In April 2014, for example, CBC announced moves to eliminate 657 jobs over the following two years, including 334 full time positions in English Services and another 115 in news (CBC News, 2014). In March 2015, the public broadcaster announced it would cut another 244 over the following half year (Houpt, 2015). In September 2015, *La Presse* announced that it would be eliminating 158 jobs, with 56 temporary employees and 102 permanent staff let go (Montreal Gazette, 2015). In November 2015, Bell Media reported it would cut 380 employees including prominent personalities CTV news anchor Carol Ann Meehan, CTV Morning Live Ottawa's Lois Lee and Ottawa sports reporter Carolyn Waldo (CBC News, 2015). January 2016 marked the final editions of both the 149-year-old Guelph Mercury and Vancouver Island's 141-year-old Nanaimo Daily News (Perkel, 2016). The staff of the Halifax *Chronicle Herald*, Canada's largest Atlantic daily newspaper, have been on the picket lines for nearly a year as management seeks to "reduce wages, lengthen working hours, alter future pension benefits and lay off up to 18 workers" (Canadian Press, 2016). The severity and frequency of these reports beg a few questions that haven't been addressed in the academic literature: where are these journalists going? How many journalists are being hired? And how many are actually working in Canada in 2016?

This chapter addresses the data on journalistic labour in Canada that we do have based on numbers that I received from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Study (LFS), a monthly self reported survey which measures the current state of the Canadian labour market. The data covers the number, and type, of journalists employed in Canada over a thirty-year period from 1987 to

2016 as well as the number of PR specialists working in Canada during the same time. At first blush, the Statistics Canada data suggests things may not be as bad as media reports would tell us. Contrary to anecdotes and press reports, data from Statistics Canada reveals there are more journalists employed in Canada than there was before the emergence of the Internet. However, this work is indeed different. The data shows us that these workers are increasingly employed in impermanent and short term positions. What's more, the numbers illustrate a huge increase in workers employed within the PR sector. It's impossible to tell whether the *rising* number of journalists are employed at traditional news firms, vertically integrated telecommunications firms involved in journalistic activities, or new and evolving forms of independent and digital native forms of journalism, or just people who call themselves journalists - the LFS relies on self-identification (see below) - but who have never worked a day of their lives as a "real journalist". But what's a real journalist anyway? I digress. But the sheer number of reported cuts at the former two groups of firms raises the possibility that there are a lot more journalists working in novel forms of digital journalism, or that there are a lot of unemployed journalists who still call themselves journalists even though it's possible they'll never be paid a wage or salary to do journalism again in their lives. The chapter closes with a discussion of some of the drawbacks and challenges to the LFS's methodology.

5.1 Quantitative Accounts of Journalistic Employment in Canada

The numbers I received from Statistics Canada show that there are far more journalists employed in Canada than speculation would suggest. Indeed, the data indicates that journalistic employment in Canada remains relatively stable, suggesting job prospects within the field are fair. Figure 4 below reflects the number of individuals in Ontario who listed their primary occupation as a journalist between the years 1987 to 2016 in the LFS. In 1987, the number was

3,251, swelling to 4,989 by 2016. The number of journalists in Ontario was at its highest peak in 1989 at 6,203 and its lowest in 1998 at 2,311.

Figure 4: Number of Journalists Employed in Ontario (1987 - 2016)¹¹

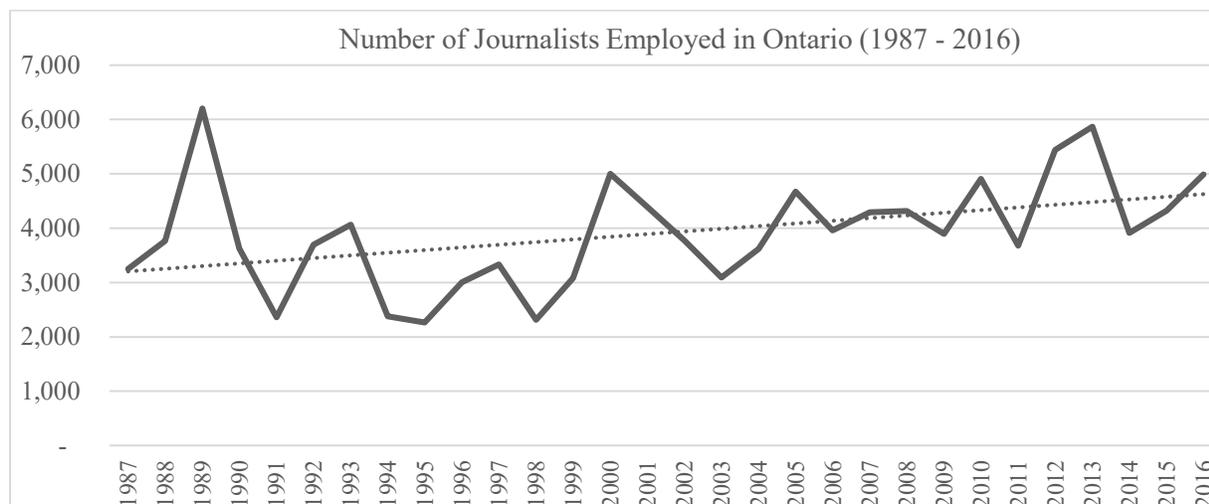


Figure 5 below shows that the number of journalists employed in Canada has fluctuated, but ultimately *risen* over the past thirty years. The data reveals that there were 9,559 journalists employed in Canada in 1987 and this number has increased by nearly half to 14,094 in 2016. The lowest ebb during this period was in 1998, when the total number of journalists in Canada had fallen to 6,149. The early 1990s had been tough years on account of the economic recession at that time, and its impact on newspapers showed. Things have improved ever since; however, at least in terms of the sheer number of journalists per Statistics Canada. There are more journalists employed in Canada today than there has been at any point in the past three decades - or to be a bit hyperbolic, ever!

¹¹ Source: email correspondence with Statistics Canada

Figure 5: Number of Journalists Employed in Canada (1987 - 2016)¹²



However, there is a fly in the ointment. Labour statistics indicate that while the number of individuals that identify their primary occupation as a journalist has not declined but, rather, those employed in permanent and long-term positions. Figure 6 below shows the number of journalists employed in permanent positions rather than those employed in casual roles between 1997 and 2016.

¹² Source: email correspondence with Statistics Canada

Figure 6: Journalistic Job Permanency (#) (1997 – 2016)¹³

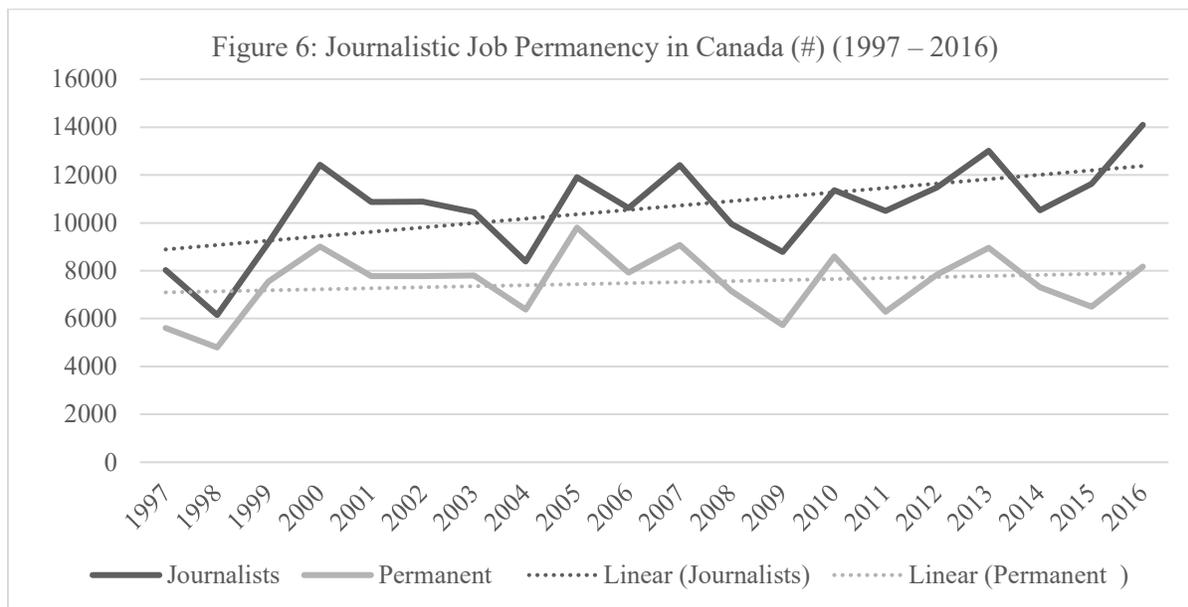


Figure 7 below shows the number of journalists in Canada employed by an organization rather than self-employed between 1987 and 2015.

¹³ Source: email correspondence with Statistics Canada

Figure 7: Journalistic Class of Worker in Canada (#) (1987 – 2016)¹⁴

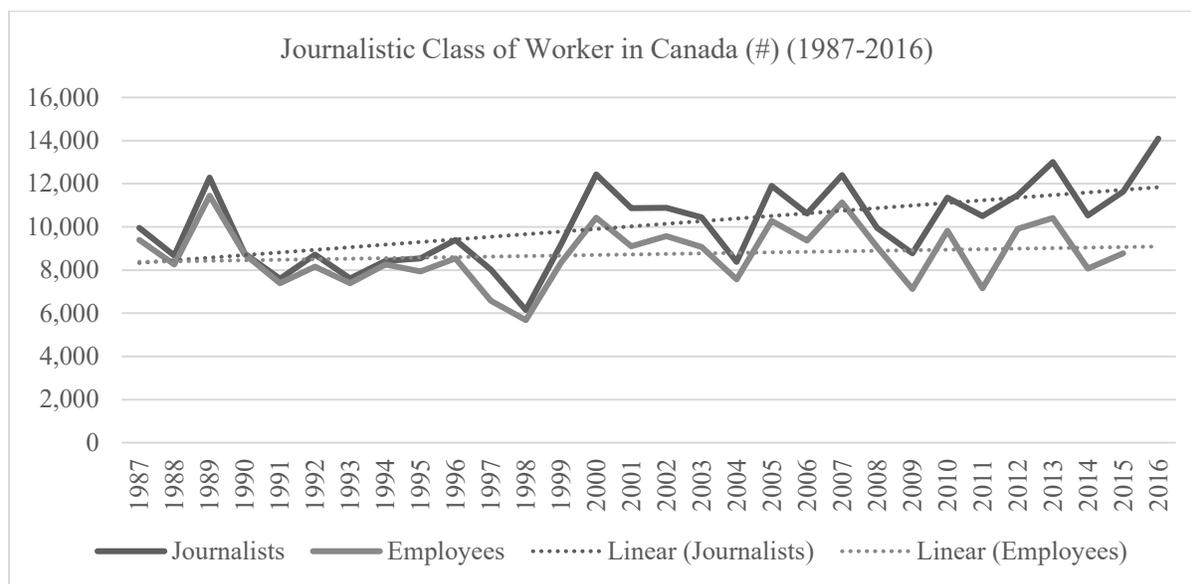


Figure 8 below shows the percentage of journalists employed in permanent positions between 1997 and 2016 and the percentage working for organizations between 1987 and 2015.

¹⁴ Source: email correspondence with Statistics Canada

Figure 8: Journalistic Job Permanency and Class of Worker in Canada (%) (1987 - 2016)¹⁵

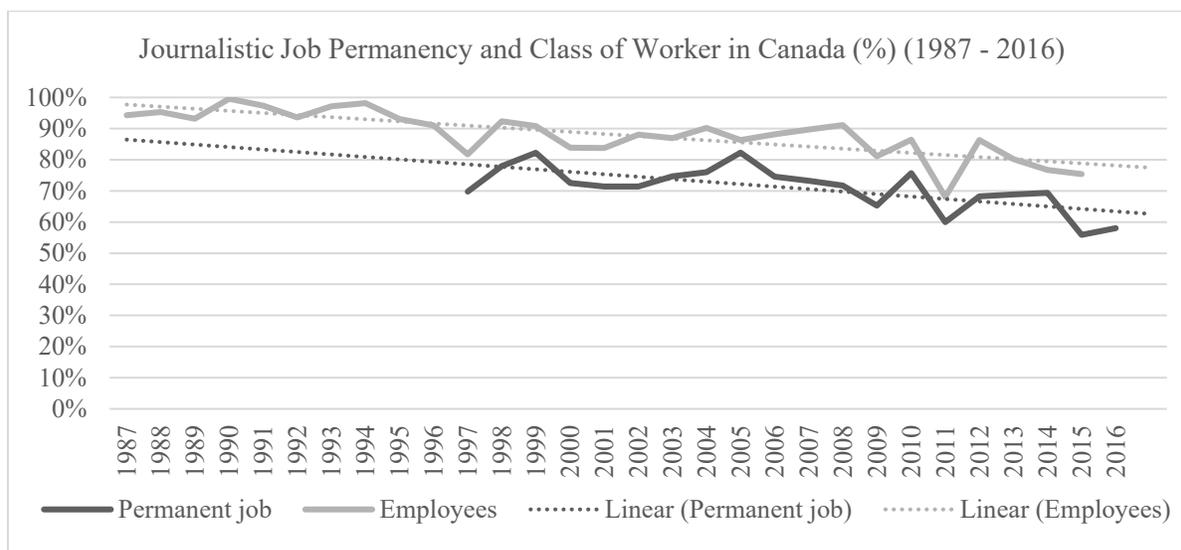
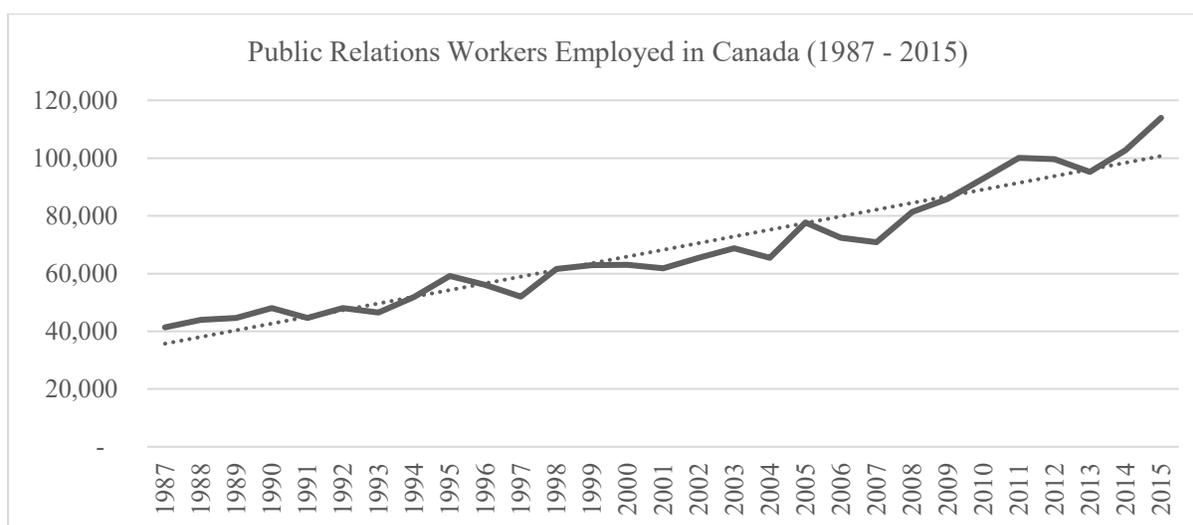


Figure 8 reveals that the percentage of permanent journalism jobs has been steadily declining. Roughly 70% of journalists had permanent positions in 1997 but only 58% in 2016. The percentage of journalists who are employed for an organization rather than self-employed has also trended downwards from 94.3% in 1987 to 75.4% in 2015. This data still paints a very different picture from the reported job losses routinely reported by media organizations and unions in Canada, and by the press accounts and by journalists themselves in casual conversations and my interviews. The case is not that there are fewer journalists in Canada but that there are fewer journalists employed in secure and permanent positions and fewer journalists working for news organizations. Rather, this data suggests, journalists in Canada are increasingly working in freelance, contract and casual conditions. Figure 9 below also shows that journalists

¹⁵ Source: email correspondence with Statistics Canada

are increasingly outnumbered by a rapidly rising influx of PR workers. In 1987, there were 41,382 PR workers employed in Canada. This has steadily risen to a peak of 113,943 in 2015 with close to 14,000 more workers employed in the sector in the last three years alone. Moreover, Figure 8 reveals that while PR workers outnumbered journalists by about 4 to 1 in 1987, they now outstrip journalists by nearly 8 to 1.

Figure 9: Public Relations Workers Employed in Canada (1987 - 2015)¹⁶



A comparison of Canadian data from the LFS against the closest equivalent figures from the Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS) in the US provides a greater level of depth to my analysis. Notably, the BLS occupational statistics prior to 1997 were not directly comparable so I've opted to include only the numbers of journalists and PR specialists from that year until their most recent published set of figures: 2015. I take a closer look at how the LFS categorizes journalistic

¹⁶ Source: email correspondence with Statistics Canada

work in the following section; however, for now it's important to note that the BLS and LFS classify both journalists (the BLS uses the term: reporters, correspondents, and news analysts) and public relations workers/specialists in a comparable manner.

Indeed, Figure 10 below reveals some diverging trends between journalistic work in Canada and the USA. In contrast to the Canadian figures, the number of journalists employed in the USA has steadily diminished in the years examined from 63,330 employed journalists in 1997 to 45,790 in 2015. The greatest slip was between the 57,000 journalistic jobs held in 2008 to 51,950 in 2009. The decline has since slowed; however, the BLS (2016) still suggests that the “employment of reporters, correspondents, and broadcast news analysts is projected to decline 9 percent from 2014 to 2024”. If this projection is correct, the USA will see a loss of roughly 3,300 journalistic positions in the industry over the next eight years. Where Canada and the USA do see similar trends is in a huge increase of PR workers. Figure 10 shows that work in this industry swelled steadily in the US between the years of 1997 to 2009 from 91,870 workers to 242,670 workers. Declines in the following three years have been partially negated by an increase from 201,280 PR specialists in 2012 to 218,910 in 2015. Further, while there were only 1.5 PR specialists to every journalist in 1997, the measure, which is significantly lower than a Canadian comparison, is now near 5 to 1.

Figure 10: Journalists and PR Specialists Employed in the USA (1997 – 2015)¹⁷



This data reveals a few important things about journalistic work in Canada, while leaving a few unanswered questions. Firstly, it shows that the clear majority of public claims about the number of journalists employed in Canada are misrepresentative. To put it bluntly, they exaggerate the losses. Secondly, an international comparison of quantitative accounts of journalistic employment illustrates that Canada certainly seems to be faring better than its southern neighbor. Thirdly, based on the vast number of reported layoffs at traditional news firms and vertically integrated media conglomerates with journalistic holdings, these figures

¹⁷ Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. See reference list.

could indicate a migration toward journalistic employment at emerging forms of digital journalism – or, on the other hand, that there are many laid off journalists still holding on.

However, while public rhetoric may be out of sync with reality, quantitative accounts of journalistic work in Canada clearly support the idea that concerns are entirely warranted. In line with research from Cohen (2011; 2012), these figures suggest that journalists and other media workers are often employed in precarious working conditions characterized by impermanency and freelance work. As McChesney and Nichols (2010) decry, journalists are being outnumbered by a rapidly increasing PR workforce. Moreover, this increase appears to be happening at a quicker pace in Canada than the USA. Although the LFS data doesn't tell us about where this large influx of PR workers came from, or where, exactly, they are working, my interviews, which are threaded through the next chapter, suggest that newswriters in 2016 have mixed feelings about working in the PR sector. Some contend that PR is a logical career move with an array of transferable skills while others worry that the shift could contest the legitimacy of their previous work in the field of journalism.

5.2 Perils and Pitfalls in Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey Data

While the data I received from Statistics Canada reveals some telling things about the number and class of journalists working in Canada during the past three decades, it also reveals some methodological concerns in the LFS's approach to data gathering. This section describes how I ascertained these numbers, comments on the availability of data about the media industries in Canada and evaluates the LFS's method and process. I find that quantitative accounts of journalistic labour in Canada have primarily focused on jobs lost rather than evaluations of jobs lost *and gained*. Moreover, while the LFS gives us a firm idea of the state of journalistic employment in Canada over the past thirty years, a review of the journalistic classification code

used by the survey would better reflect the realities of the role in 2016. I will discuss the components of this classification code in the following section.

As I hinted at earlier, many of the reported and commented upon accounts of journalistic labour in Canada are largely based on conjecture and anecdote. A key problem with such reports and anecdotes; however, is news firms are not required to publicize these numbers, and when they do, news firms don't always specify what type of worker is being cut during a layoff. Moreover, there is a dearth of academic research on journalistic labour in Canada (particularly research on quantitative accounts of journalistic labour) and organizations who do perform research on the topic usually have limited resources. In addition, while existing records highlight the number of journalists laid off, most do not account for journalists that have been hired.

One notable exception is a 2013 article by Chad Skelton in the *Vancouver Sun* which relied on data from the 2001 and 2006 census, as well as the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) to show that the number of journalists employed in Canada has remained relatively stable during the first decade of the twenty first century. Skelton tempers any firm assessment of the reasons behind these numbers, but he does lay out a few ideas that are closely aligned with how I understand the LFS figures. Firstly, Skelton suggests that some news media have greater economic difficulties than others. Specifically, print is undergoing the greatest decline in revenue while television revenues have remained relatively stable. Further, he writes, the Internet has opened new doors for digital native news firms focused on niche interests (Skelton, 2013). While anecdotal, Skelton's views line up with his experience in the field. He accepted a buy-out from the *Vancouver Sun* two years later (Skelton, 2015).

While a compelling article, the piece received little attention in contrast to two widely cited and circulated documents concerning the state of the journalistic workforce in Canada from

the Canadian Media Guild (CMG), a trade union representing 6,000 workers employed in the Canadian media. The two documents outline ‘preliminary’ numbers on job cuts in the Canadian broadcast and print industries between the years of 2008 and 2013. In the span of five years, the CMG (2013a; 2013b) reported job losses of about 10,000: 6,000 to those working in print, with another 3,700 in broadcast. The numbers were garnered from news articles which drew their information from corporate statements (CMG, 2013a; CMG, 2013b). While the CMG lists provide a useful snapshot of media workers laid off during this time, it has a few shortcomings - some of which it rightly identifies. For one, the CMG documents do not list any data regarding the number of employees hired between 2008 and 2013 giving its readers only a part of an already complicated story. On the broadcasting side, the CMG suggests they may be missing some data from Quebec, a fact which is particularly important given the lack of French news outlets in other provinces and territories (2013a). Importantly, both the CMG (2013a; 2013b) documents explicitly reflect on their efforts to gather robust data from Statistics Canada:

We reached out to Statistics Canada to see what information they have on job loss in the media industry; their response was that there would be ‘severe data suppression’ which they explained ‘occurs when there is insufficient sample to produce reliable estimates or for reasons of confidentiality’.

Indeed, collecting robust data from the Canadian Government about the media industries is a notoriously difficult task (Wagman, 2011; Winseck, 2011). It is also probably important to note that the numbers that I received for this thesis were received from a connection I established through my thesis supervisor, Dr. Dwayne Winseck. While Dr. Winseck has fostered relationships at Statistics Canada during his research concerning media concentration in Canada, these contacts were not easy to develop and took years of failed efforts, alongside similar

challenges with other government bodies. In 2011, for example, Winseck wrote about the difficulties of gathering data from the CRTC on the telecommunications and broadcasting sectors due to ‘primitive’ data storage, industry pressure under claims of corporate confidentiality, and the deliberate dispersing of analytical measures like revenues and market shares (p. 6). This is, of course, all topped off by the government’s on-again off-again relationship with the long form census.

These difficulties are troublesome given the important role Statistics Canada has, and the immense value of robust data in government, political and policy decision-making. Statistics Canada is Canada’s national statistical agency; it is mandated by the *Statistics Act* to “collect, compile, analyse, abstract and publish statistical information relating to the commercial, industrial, financial, social, economic and general activities and condition of the people of Canada” (Statistics Canada, 2016b). The body has two core duties: (1) to provide robust data about Canada’s economic and social systems both to develop and assess public programming and policy, and better public and private decision-making; (2) to promote sound statistical process through: common classification systems, provincial and territorial collaboration, data-sharing agreements, and joint research projects (Statistics Canada, 2016b).

Moreover, robust data collection is widely recognized as a vital part of policymaking in the media industries. Marc Edge (2014) puts it well when he says, “[n]othing is quite so helpful as a bit of hard data in sorting out media myths and getting to the bottom of a complex story” (p. 238). These concerns are especially relevant for those studying labour in the media industries. While qualitative assessments (which will feature Chapter 6) of journalistic employment provide incomparable insights into how newswriters and journalists think about their work, how they experience the changes that characterize their industry, and what working conditions colour their

daily lives, quantitative analyses provide a better understanding of an industry in its entirety. These numbers help researchers compare employment norms and employment figures across a given period and geography. Further, they provide decision makers insight into trends that may very well illustrate the future of the press system in Canada.

Within Statistics Canada, the LFS is a monthly survey based on self-reporting used to measure Canada's labour market implemented through Statistics Canada. Amongst other research uses, it is used to calculate the "national, provincial, territorial and regional employment and unemployment rates. The survey results are used to make *important decisions* regarding job creation, education and training, retirement pensions and income support" (emphasis mine, Statistics Canada, 2016a). The Government of Canada gathers statistics through the LFS and four other employment surveys on several different employment measures including the number of workers employed in an industry, class of worker, wage rates, union status, job permanency and workplace size. Regarding journalistic labour, this project honed in on the three measures found in the LFS: the number of employees working the industry, the class of worker, and job permanency. I opted to examine these measures for two reasons, one practical and one methodological. Practically, since I was not relying on information that was readily available online, I selected measures based on the amount of time and effort I assumed appropriate to ask from my contacts at Statistics Canada. Methodologically, I wanted to maintain a focus primarily on the *number* of journalists employed in the industry. This data lines up with my discussion of the state of journalism (rather than a focus largely on the working conditions of journalists) in Canada, and fills a gap in the existing literature.

The LFS' survey is predicated on the National Occupational Classification (NOC) system, Canada's authoritative resource on occupational information in Canada. The NOC

system is a “four-tiered hierarchical arrangement of occupational groups with successive levels of disaggregation” (Statistics Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2011, p. 1). In Canada, journalists are defined by the four-digit code: (5123) (Statistics Canada, 2016c).

- (5) occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport;
- (51) professional occupations in art and culture;
- (512) writing, translating and related communications professionals;
- (5123) journalists (Statistics Canada, 2016c).

The NOC defines journalists as workers who “research, investigate, interpret, and communicate news and public affairs through newspapers, television, radio and other media. [They] are employed by radio and television networks and stations, newspapers and magazines” (Statistics Canada, 2016c). Moreover, the NOC designates eighty-two roles under the code for journalism ranging from news analyst, fashion columnist, cyberjournalist, theatre critic to sports columnist. Exclusions to the classification include announcers and other broadcasters, editors, and photojournalists (Statistics Canada, 2016c).

While the LFS provides a clear sense of the state of journalistic employment in this project, the LFS’s methodology presents room for improvement. Of first concern is that while the LFS does survey a cross-sectional sample of over 98% of the total population of Canada, it does not sample low-density areas and persons living on reserves (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Given that a robust journalistic system in Canada would foster news production in all the country’s communities, it’s imperative the Statistics Canada collect representative data for these areas. Secondly, and of critical importance to this research, the LFS classification of a journalist has not been updated to account for new forms of digital journalism. The classification was modernised in 2006; however, *none of the descriptive aspects of the classification* changed aside from its identifier (from the code FO23 to the present 5123). As was the case in the 2001 LFS

and national census, journalists employed at firms who specialize in print and broadcast media have the option of selecting amongst titles such as newspaper reporter and broadcast journalist, respectively. However, there are fewer available titles available to LFS participants and national census respondents employed at digital native news firms or other online journalistic endeavours provide less clarity. Workers looking to identify themselves as a journalist at a digital native news firm are relegated to either cyberjournalist or cyberreporter (Statistics Canada, 2016c). These terms do not account for the various manifestations of journalistic activities on the Internet including citizen journalists, bloggers, various genre specific journalists at digital native news firms, and podcasters. A revision to these job titles, and the inclusion of a greater number of options that better represent news forms of journalistic work, is warranted. It's difficult to say whether these clarifications would have an immediate difference on counts of journalistic labour; however, they would undoubtedly provide more robust information to those studying the diverse activities and roles of journalists in Canada today.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has come to the crux of my argument: journalism in Canada is in transformation, not in crisis, at least in terms of the sheer number of people who call themselves journalists. There are more journalists employed in Canada today than in any year examined by this thesis. These figures contradict the public rhetoric surrounding journalistic employment in Canada and run contrary to journalistic employment in the USA which has trended downwards during the past two decades. Moreover, given the severity of reported cuts at traditional news firms and vertically integrated conglomerates in Canada, these numbers show promise for rising employment rates at digital native news firms and other forms of Internet journalism. However, quantitative accounts of journalistic employment in Canada are still due intense regard. The

figures also show that the number of PR workers in Canada is rapidly outpacing the number of journalists, and at a faster rate than their American counterparts. Moreover, the data reveals that journalists are increasingly employed in short term and impermanent jobs. Finally, the LFS presents several methodological concerns including a dearth of data in historically underrepresented areas of Canada and outdated classification codes for new forms of Internet journalism.

6. Case Study: Newswriters' Self Reflections

Discussions of journalistic work in the twenty first century are often predicated on rhetoric of exploitation, insecurity and anxiety. When speaking on the Huffington Post, *LA Times* columnist Tim Rutten (2011) said “to grasp its business model, though, you need to picture a galley rowed by slaves and commanded by pirates”. This language is overwrought; however, it does reveal something about public understandings of journalistic employment. Indeed, as I laid out in Chapter 5, journalistic work has changed. Numbers from Statistics Canada suggest there are more journalists employed in Canada than there was at any point in thirty years. However, these jobs are increasingly impermanent and outnumbered by an incredible increase of PR workers.

The final chapter of the body of this thesis dives head first into the nine in-depth interviews I conducted with newswriters employed, or recently employed, at three news firms with offices in Ottawa: *iPolitics*, the CBC and the *Ottawa Citizen*, throughout the months of March, April and May 2016. These conversations were characterized by passions, curiosities, and, ultimately, both optimism and uncertainty toward the many changes that characterize the role of the modern journalist. While these interviews revealed an array of insights and findings, I focus here on two key ideas that I saw time and again in my transcripts: the transformation of the journalistic role alongside new digital technologies and changing business models, and anxieties, peppered with hope, about the future of the field – and the place of journalists within it. Together, these ideas reveal that the role of the journalist is part of the transformation of contemporary journalism in Canada. New technologies and economic uncertainties play a part in this transformation both by providing opportunities, and evoking new anxieties and demands. However, alongside these changes, the newswriters I spoke with suggested that many of the

core tenets of the journalistic role and the principles that drive their work remain largely unchanged. This is not to say that journalists aren't immune to strife and struggle. To the contrary, as I've mentioned before, there is valuable scholarly research that has addressed the rich history of journalistic labour and resistance in Canada and these concerns are equally, if not more important, today (Cohen, 2011; Cohen 2012; Edge, 2011b; Gorman, 2004; Mosco & Mckercher, 2005).

6.1 The Evolving Role of the Journalist

The best of times is that there's all of these amazing tools we have to gather information and tell stories with. The worst of times is of course the lessening of the ability of all of these institutions to take advantage of all of them, and make them work and make them pay.

Carl Neustaedter (former deputy editor at the Ottawa Citizen)

(C. Neustaedter, personal communication, March 25, 2016)

Neustaedter's quote reveals many of the tensions that coloured how the newswriters I interviewed for this project understand the role of the journalist amidst new digital technologies and heightened economic distress. That is, the contemporary journalist exists in a transformative moment of great opportunity and promise, and struggle and uncertainty. This idea manifested itself in my interviews in a couple of ways. For one, digital technologies were often characterized both by their capacity to increase efficiencies *and* increase demands. Some newswriters described how new technologies could increase collaboration, productivity, and access to information in journalistic work. However, the same, and other, research participants showed concern for emerging ethical dilemmas, increasing workloads and the prevalence of immediacy in contemporary news making. Interestingly, many newswriters suggested that the distinctions between journalists' adeptness and ineptness to adaption were reflected in similar

divisions between how traditional news firms and digital native firms adapted to new technologies. Importantly, all the research participants interviewed suggested that many of the fundamental tenets of the journalistic role remained largely unchanged alongside these wide-ranging transformations.

Adaptation was an important theme in my conversations with newswriters in Ottawa. Many research participants described a spectrum between journalists who struggled to adopt new technologies in their work, and others who deftly made the adjustment. These poles were largely tied to age. Journalists who entered the industry during or after the emergence of digital technologies seemed to experience far fewer of the ‘growing pains’ that characterized the role of experienced journalists. Neustaedter describes this distinction in the following terms:

The transition is just that much harder. You’ve got people - at least you did ten years ago – who were not digital at all because they had come through the advent of the Internet and had to re-learn. It was a slow cultural change process, which I went through, which I led people through. It’s exciting but daunting, people adapt to it very differently. (C. Neustaedter, personal communication, March 25, 2016)

Others who had worked in the industry prior to the emergence of the Internet, like CBC digital copy editor Alistair Steele, described the abruptness of the shift:

Things didn't really change for about 10 years there. You went out with your tape recorder, you held your mic up, and you did an interview, and then you went back and, in my case, filed for a radio newscast at 3:30, 4:30, 5:30 or the next morning. Things have become a lot more immediate now, so the demands are immediate. (A. Steele, personal communication, March 11, 2016)

Research participants who had entered the industry within the past five years were nonetheless mindful of the new demands tied to emerging technologies. Kelsey Johnson, a journalist at *iPolitics*, asserted: “Your job as a journalist isn’t to do an interview and write 500 words [anymore]. It is to do an interview, push the story forward, compete with all the other news organizations that are going digital, put in that clip, live tweet that meeting” (K. Johnson, personal communication, March 10, 2016). Moreover, young journalists like Johnson, CBC journalist Andrew Foote and *iPolitics* journalist Amanda Connelly hinted at the advantage of youth in the journalistic industry (A. Connelly, personal communication, March 19, 2016; K. Johnson, personal communication, March 10, 2016). Foote suggested, “different people have different levels of adjustment to [new digital technologies] but it’s not too hard for me because I wasn’t learning web from scratch” (A. Foote, personal communication, April 27, 2016). Several research participants described the parallels between journalists’ adaptation to new technologies and the adaptation of traditional news firms from mass media to digital media. Some newswriters suggested that traditional firms still lagged behind new technological innovations, evolving business models, and trends toward leaner and nimbler organizations reflective of digitally native firms. Melanie Coulson, former senior editor at the *Ottawa Citizen*, said “the biggest struggle for newsrooms, I think, is that they have a reality and they’re still basing their realities on what was before. They’re not keeping up with technology in how they operate, but also the size, the real estate” (M. Coulson, personal communication, March 31, 2016).

Similarly, Drake Fenton, city editor at the *Ottawa Citizen*, stated:

Technology is changing so quick. Newspapers are already, at least in Canada, historically have been about five years behind technology. By the time they get caught up to

yesterday's technology, it's already moved forward. Advertising models, everything, it's not where it needs to be. Like what newspaper in Canada is using snapchat right now?

None. (D. Fenton, personal communication, March 5, 2016).

However, other interviewees recognized the institutional constraints that tether traditional news firms in different ways than digital native organizations. Neustaedter stated, "for online only outlets, I think they have a lot more latitude for experimentation. They're not weighed down by many many decades of 'the way we do things, the way it's done'" (C. Neustaedter, personal communication, March 25, 2016).

Newswriters portrayed diverging perspectives between the ways new technologies may be used to increase openness, access, audience engagement and efficiency in journalistic work, and the unique ethical challenges and new demands they present. Coulson suggested that the Internet "made the process open. It was a collaborative event or effort, [you could] just go with what you had, put it up online, then get the second side and add that. It really went to that feeling of an organic story that grew and evolved" (M. Coulson, personal communication, March 31, 2016). CBC journalist Chloe Fédio and other research participants similarly commented on the multiplicity of ways news is produced and consumed in the digital age, "there's just so many more ways of sharing information. So, I think news moves faster; stories can move faster in that way" (C. Fédio, personal communication, May 4, 2016). However, some newswriters highlighted the novel demands and challenges presented by new digital technologies. Foote described contemporary journalists' need "to be able to touch on a lot of different things, be able to pick up the new program or start to learn to use an iPad or start to learn to use a video editing tool on your phone" (A. Foote, personal communication, April 27, 2016). Moreover, Fédio laid

out some of the ethical dilemmas tied to emerging digital technologies including the ‘right to be forgotten’ online:

In the digital age, if you post, you know, ‘What’s-his-name, 63, accused of child pornography’, and two years pass, we don’t follow up on the case every day, we don’t know what happens, maybe he gets acquitted, maybe the charges are dropped [...] But the thing is that it gets out there and *it’s there*. (C. Fédio, personal communication, May 4, 2016)

Importantly, all the newswriters I interviewed for this project identified the endurance of certain core journalistic tenets and principles alongside a layering of new digital capacities and skills. Neustaedter puts it well, “I think the core things for any journalists are still a curiosity and a doggedness to ask any question of anybody but layered on top of that is digital skills to know how to find information” (C. Neustaedter, personal communication, March 25, 2016). Indeed, newswriters were unanimously of the view that alongside emerging technologies, a journalist nonetheless should possess a critical mind, and a capacity to gather hard-to-find information. Foote said, “you should have some critical thinking, you should be able to analyze and be able to think on your feet and be able to realize a question needs a follow up and to be able to talk to people who may not want to be talked to for whatever reason” (A. Foote, personal communication, April 27, 2016). Similarly, Johnson stated, “You need to hold people to account. But I think a lot of it is putting things into context and explaining very complex issues in a way that a general reader will understand and realize why something is important or they should pay attention to it” (K. Johnson, personal communication, March 10, 2016).

At the forefront of these ideas is the recognition that, alongside the various changes to journalistic work, the role of the journalist retains many of its core tenets and values. Steele hammered this point home:

I think the role of a journalist is still to be a person who shines lights in dark places and finds out information that's important for the public to know that they might not have known otherwise because corporations or governments didn't want them to know because it's embarrassing or inconvenient for them, and I think if you ask most journalists they still believe in that. (A. Steele, personal communication, March 11, 2016)

6.2 The Future of the Journalist, and the Industry

My conversations with newswriters also revealed both intense passions and anxieties. Many newswriters acknowledged the transferable skills found in journalistic work, though they differed on which sectors journalists should be willing to take these skills if they left the field. These uncertainties were heightened by an understanding that journalism is generally a low-paying profession with minimal job security. Research participants also grappled with diverging understandings of how the industry best move forward, the role of the regulator and the Government of Canada, and how robust journalism in Canada would fare amidst traditional news forms and emerging types of journalistic endeavours. These discussions illustrate two important themes. For one, they suggest that the relationship between journalistic work and PR work in Canada is fraught with complexity and debate. Further, these conversations reveal that newswriters are also unsure how the various transformations taking place in the contemporary Canadian press system will play out.

The newswriters grappled with their understandings of the relationship between work in journalism and other employment sectors requiring similar skills. In many cases, journalistic

work was seen to be the polar opposite of employment in government and PR. Journalism was perceived as a public service, often borne financially by its workers, while work in the latter industries was often portrayed as higher paid though in the interests of the state or an organization, respectively. Many of the newswriters I spoke with had no qualms describing the financial elements of journalist work. Johnson said flatly, “you don’t go into journalism to make money” (K. Johnson, personal communication, March 10, 2016). BJ Siekierski, a journalist at *iPolitics*, commented on the pressures and toll these working conditions can incite:

It makes it really hard when you have communications jobs and government-relations firms who will pay you a lot of money to do something that probably not a lot of journalists would want to do but [...] it’s one thing when you’re single and 25, and it’s another if you have kids and you’re 45 and have a mortgage to pay. (B. Siekierski, personal communication, April 8, 2016)

Similarly, Connelly stated, “how tempting it can be to look outside of journalism at things like communications, government, public affairs. Things that you really can’t come back from once you’ve crossed that rubicon” (A. Connelly, personal communication, March 19, 2016).

However, other research participants viewed work in industries outside of journalism with less reluctance. When asked whether she would find herself as a journalist in five to ten years, Fédio answered, “I hope so. And I think that I can’t really imagine doing anything else. But then when I think about the skills that I have, and the kind of work that I do, it could easily be transferable to other things” (C. Fédio, personal communication, May 4, 2016). Coulson, having already left the field of journalism and taken up a job in PR, described how she understood the shift:

I'm still able to be creative and tell a story just now I have a bit of a mission, a goal, an objective of what I want my message to be which is a little bit different, a little bit, because I have my organization's interests in my message. But I still think as a journalist you're boiling down the facts to a story that has a message that you determine so there is still that similarity (M. Coulson, personal communication, March 31, 2016).

Moreover, other newswriters I interviewed suggested this would be their first option if they were to leave the field. Fenton bluntly stated, "my back up is comms if I thought I couldn't get back into journalism. There's a lot of different outlets where they'd look for people with a journalism background" (D. Fenton, personal communication, March 5, 2016). Fenton's statement, and others like it, seem largely wrapped up in an uncertainty about the longevity of journalistic work and the health of the press system in its entirety. Speaking on her impermanent status at the CBC, Fédio shared, "I would love to have a full-time permanent position and I think that ... that will come. But the CBC is going through funding cuts and then there's hiring freezes and stuff so it's just a matter of like, you know, it's just about being patient" (C. Fédio, personal communication, May 4, 2016). Steele, who has secure employment in the industry, did not feel these sentiments himself; however, he understood and acknowledged the challenges characterizing journalistic work:

I feel bad for students too. You're graduating—I graduated almost twenty years ago and, at the time, it was tough enough to get an internship and then turn that internship into temporary work and then turn that, if you were super lucky, after five or six years, into a permanent job. I don't think that's happening anymore for anybody. (A. Steele, personal communication, March 11, 2016).

Alongside contrasting understandings about the transferability of journalistic skills, newswriters also portrayed a range of views about the future of the journalistic role and the Canadian press system in its entirety. Connelly told me, “I’m a huge supporter of public broadcasting, we need to have a strong public broadcaster so perhaps government investment [would foster a more robust press system in Canada]” (A. Connelly, personal communication, March 19, 2016). Connelly, who hails from first CBC and now digital native firm *iPolitics*, suggested digital news firms may rise to the fore alongside traditional news firms:

I think that over the next couple of years we’re going to see, as the models for start-ups and more independent outlets become more, not established, but as we see a better sense of what works and what doesn’t – we’re going to see more outlets and more companies figure out how to work with that and hopefully see more startups and more independent organizations being able to thrive and compete with large media organizations as well.

(A. Connelly, personal communication, March 19, 2016)

Notwithstanding, Coulson and other research participants still saw an important part for traditional news firms to play in the Canadian press system, “I think the role of traditional media in emerging new media is that they become a trusted source so they’re not necessarily the gatekeeper of news but they’re a filter maybe. They help the audience understand what’s actually going on” (M. Coulson, personal communication, March 31, 2016). However, other newswriters portrayed less optimism toward the future of the press system in Canada. While Steele didn’t comment on the promise of emerging journalistic endeavours, he showed little faith in policy solutions from the Government of Canada and the regulator.

I think that ship has sailed. This notion that somehow government, or the CRTC, is going to save journalism is laughable given the amount of ownership concentration that they

allowed. They had rules and they just looked the other way and it was a disaster. So, I don't think—we shouldn't, and we can't, rely on government or the CRTC to save us now. (A. Steele, personal communication, March 11, 2016)

6.3 Conclusion

My conversations with nine newswriters in Ottawa provides insight into how journalistic work is perceived by those on the frontlines of the industry. These discussions reveal that newswriters understand the role of the journalist as one that is undergoing a process of transformation alongside the broader Canadian press system. This transformation is complex and fraught with diverging understanding about new technologies, financial constraints, job insecurity, the transferability of skills and the future of the industry. Moreover, my interviews add further depth to my quantitative analysis of journalistic employment in Chapter 5. For one, it was apparent that the newswriters I spoke with were aware and concerned about the decline in permanent and stable journalistic work. Indeed, the figures from Statistics Canada suggest that between the years of 2012 and 2015, the rate of permanent journalistic jobs for an organization, in contrast to self-employment, fell sharply from 86.3% to 75.4% revealing a rapidly increasing number of freelance journalists. Further, in the last two years alone, journalistic job permanency has dropped from 69.3% to 57.9% pointing to a growing army of contract workers in the journalistic industry as well. Interestingly; however, the newswriters I met were generally not aware of the rising employment numbers in the industry that the Stats Canada numbers show. Many reflected public understandings and alarm toward the idea of 'journalistic purging' across a range of news media, particularly print. More than anything, I think, this speaks to the importance of a broader public conversation around these figures so that those inside and outside the industry can discuss their implications on the future of journalism in Canada.

Alongside all the tensions, anxieties and changes characterizing contemporary journalistic work, the newswriters I spoke with throughout the duration of this project found their employment intensely stimulating and meaningful. Fenton told me, “it’s an incredibly interesting job. I often work twelve or thirteen hours a day and I never begrudge that. It’s really exciting and you’re constantly learning, constantly getting involved in different issues and topics and diving into them deep” (D. Fenton, personal communication, March 5, 2016). Foote asserted, “I don’t have a dream job that I’m not doing *because this is kind of it*” (A. Foote, personal communication, April 27, 2016). Similarly, Steele shared, “it’s going to sound pompous—but there’s a righteousness to [journalistic work] still. Again, I’m still idealistic about the profession. But, I couldn’t really imagine doing anything else” (A. Steele, personal communication, March 11, 2016).

7. Conclusion: Five Modest Recommendations

This thesis has analysed the present state of journalism in Canada, the number of journalists employed in the industry, and how newswriters view the role of the journalist within this changing environment. It shows that when talking about journalism in Canada we should talk not so much of a crisis, but a moment of wrenching changes. This argument is developed in an analysis of emerging players in the Canadian news landscape, shifting industry trends, formal inquiry into the state of the press and recent regulatory review into the state of the media. Further, figures from Statistics Canada show that the nature of journalistic employment in 2016 is much more complex than commonly believed. Instead, Statistics Canada reports that the number of journalists in Canada, while fluctuating, has ultimately risen, suggesting that many journalists may be finding their way in an evolving landscape. My interviews with nine newswriters in Ottawa supplement my central argument by revealing that journalistic work is also undergoing a process of transformation alongside the broader journalistic system in Canada. Newswriters, while grappling with the technological change and economic difficulties of the contemporary press system in Canada, are rethinking the industry and their role in it.

However, a transformation toward an increasingly robust Canadian press system is not necessarily the result of these changes. As I have noted throughout this thesis, there are many potential risks and opportunities for mischief that must be considered. As I established in Chapter 1, Canada has an extensive history of press subsidization and preferential regulatory policy. These decisions have often acted in the best interests of large horizontally integrated traditional news firms and massive vertically integrated media conglomerates rather than toward novel and innovative journalistic endeavours. As Hannaford (2007) aptly states, “possibly the most compelling long-run reasons for gaining market share and building an oligopoly is the

increased ability to affect, even control, government actions” (p. 89). Accordingly, as I noted in Chapter 4, these choices have played a part in creating a press system of tight oligopolies in three core traditional news distribution media: newspapers, television, and radio. Even more worryingly, Internet advertising, where much of the declining revenues from traditional news firms seems to be shifting, is dominated by large global tech firms such as Google and Facebook. Moreover, the rise of the number of journalists employed in Canada has occurred alongside a rapid increase in PR specialists, and a decline in the permanency and stability of journalistic work.

Public policy review, formation and implementation is a crucial component of the Canadian press system in Canada. The state’s relationship with the press and historical decision-making in this regard is at the root of many of the characteristics that define it today, and will in the future. The public record reveals that ideas about the risks that media concentration and cross ownership pose to a robust press system and the journalistic workforce have been an enduring feature of policy discussions since at least the mid twentieth century including the Davey Committee, the Bryce Commission and the Kent Commission. Further, renewed interest in these issues illustrated in recent proceedings held by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, calls for an overhaul to the entire media system by Heritage Cabinet Minister Melanie Joly, and CRTC decisions that have trended toward consumer interests, all present opportunities for public policy that acts in favour of a diverse and robust press system in Canada. The actions of the Government of Canada and the CRTC to support the potential of novel forms of digital journalism are at the heart of this promise. By consumption measures, Internet news is widely dispersed between traditional news media with online extensions, digital native news firms and international news sources. Rising employment numbers in Canadian journalism also indicate

that some journalists *may* be moving from traditional news firms and vertically integrated conglomerates toward digital native journalistic endeavours.

Accordingly, I close this thesis with five recommendations for further action. Firstly, the Government of Canada should encourage novel forms of digital journalism rather than support incumbent media organizations. It is best decided by experts whether this entails targeted subsidies; however, it is clear this does entail acting against the creation of subsidies for traditional news firms and preferential policy for vertically integrated conglomerates.

Historically, these firms have employed an excess profit motive in Canada which has resulted in largely self-inflicted financial wounds. There is no reason to believe any government subsidies or preferential policy will be used to serve the public interest. Secondly, the government should financially support a robust CBC. While emerging digital native news firms show indicants of filling some of the gaps left by declining traditional news companies, a robust CBC could be at the heart of ensuring Canadians have access to local news coverage that reflects their communities. Thirdly, Statistics Canada should revise the classification of journalist in the LFS to better reflect the diverse manifestations of the role on the Internet including citizen journalists, bloggers, various genre specific journalists at digital native news firms, and podcasters. This will bolster a public conversation, inform decision makers and garner a more robust data record on journalistic employment in Canada. Fourthly, the CRTC should encourage structural separation between the provision of Internet services and wholesale access to network infrastructure. As I identified in the second section of Chapter 4, Internet news shows promise for a greater diversity of voices than traditional mass media. However, bottlenecks both within, and in gaining access to, the network challenges this diversity. Accordingly, and finally, the CRTC should also act against violations of net neutrality between Internet service provision and content. This is best

set as a precedent in the upcoming CRTC proceedings concerning differential pricing practices (CRTC, 2016b).

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Appendix A: Interview Consent Form

Title: Canada's Contemporary Press System: Shifting Industries, Formal Inquiries, and Journalistic Employment (Project #104067)

Funding Source: Ontario Graduate Scholarship

Date of ethics clearance: February 22nd, 2016

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: May 31st, 2016

I _____, choose to participate in a study on the labour of journalists in Canada. This study aims to determine the realities of the work of Canadian journalists and the challenges and potential benefits that characterize this work. **The researcher for this study is Sabrina Wilkinson in the department of Communication at Carleton University.**

She is working under the supervision of Dwayne Winseck in the department of Communication at Carleton University.

This study involves one 30-minute interview. With your consent, interviews will be audio-recorded on a password protected wireless mobile device. Once the recording has been transcribed, the audio-recording will be destroyed.

You have the right to end your participation in the study at any time, for any reason, up until May 30th, 2016. You can withdraw by phoning or emailing the researcher or the research supervisor. If you withdraw from the study, all information you have provided will be immediately destroyed.

All research data, including audio-recordings and any notes will be stored on secure network drive. Research data will only be accessible by the researcher and the research supervisor. Within the completed thesis, participants will be named and their responses will be attributable to them.

Once the project is completed, all primary research data will be destroyed.

If you would like a copy of the finished research project, you are invited to contact the researcher to request an electronic copy which will be provided to you.

The ethics protocol for this project was reviewed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board, which provided clearance to carry out the research. Should you have questions or concerns related to your involvement in this research, please contact:

CUREB contact information:

Professor Louise Heslop, Chair (CUREB-A)

Professor Andy Adler, Vice-Chair

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Do you agree to be audio-recorded: ___Yes___No

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

Date