The role of a gatekeeper within journalism is of extreme importance in today’s media environment. Gatekeepers ultimately craft and conduct what is being published to the masses, therefore they determine what is to become the public’s social reality, and their view of the world (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

In recent years, there has been blurred lines between establishing who the media audiences are and who the journalists are in today’s society. Due to social media jumping the gates, and with the wide range of accessibility, the differences between public opinions and what is journalistic news is made indistinct.

With today’s fast-paced and competitive media environment, there has been a significant rise of these social media channels, creating outlets where anyone and everyone can be a journalist. Therefore, why do we need gatekeeper journalists anymore? The public need reliable, intelligent and relevant sources which they can go to for news, thus creating a push to try and deregulate clickbait and fake news within the media.

WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR GATEKEEPING JOURNALISM, WHEN ANYONE CAN BE A JOURNALIST?

Gatekeeping as a theory, is the news selection and extraction of news, which then gets passed through a series of gates (the journalists), and gets transformed and ends up in the news (Groshek & Tandoc, 2016). For an example, a journalist may decide to cover a story on New Zealand earthquakes, but will only extract parts of the news that are relevant and credible to be processed and supplied to the public, and then this becomes the news. The shift in society, through social media sites has seen this gatekeeping nonessential for journalism, as these sites jump the gates of traditional journalism, and the audience have the ultimate control over what they read, see or hear in these media echo chambers.

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Framing the News

We like to think of reality as fixed, as something we can all agree on. We trust

the news media may make mistakes, but largely present reality “the way it is”.

The news media make every effort to promote this view by trying to appear

neutral and objective. But the writers and editors who report the news are

anything but objective. They construct a subjective picture of reality,

selecting and organizing a confusing flood of information in a way that make

sense to themselves and their audiences. This process is called framing.

Struggles over framing decide which of the day’s many happenings will be

awarded significance. The media have become critical arenas for this

struggle. Social movements have increasingly focused on the media since it

plays such an influential role in assigning importance to public issues. But

gaining attention alone is not what a social movement wants. The real battle

is over whose interpretation, whose framing of reality, gets the floor.

EXAMPLES

Version 1: Rats Bite Infant An infant left sleeping in his crib was bitten repeatedly by rats while his 16- year-old mother went to cash her welfare check. A neighbor responded to the cries of the infant and brought the child to Central Hospital where he was treated and released in his mother’s custody. The mother, Angie Burns of the South End, explained softly, “I was only gone five minutes. I left the door open so my neighbor would hear him if he woke up. I never thought this would happen in the daylight. “

Version 2: Rats Bite Infant: Landlord, Tenants Dispute Blame An eight-month-old South End boy was treated and released from Central Hospital yesterday after being bitten by rats while he was sleeping in his crib. Tenants said that repeated requests for extermin-ation had been ignored by the landlord, Henry Brown. Brown claimed that the problem lay with tenants’ improper disposal of garbage. “I spend half my time cleaning up after them. They throw garbage out the window into the back alley and their kids steal the garbage can covers for sliding in the snow.”

It was noted that NEWS articles (number and type unspecified) written about one domestic violence murder involving high-status community members, placed a skewed focus on the perpetrator, rather than providing equal information or presenting the perpetrator and victim as a couple (i.e. “Doctor’s Wife Slain” with particular focus on the tragedy of a well-respected doctor suddenly “snapping.”)

Summary

There is evidence, albeit limited, that both trauma-related and non-trauma-related news tends to lack context (e.g., ignoring overarching patterns of risk, historical and cultural interpretations of events, social patterns of violence, and links to broader social concerns).

Lack of context exists across various traumatic events portrayed in the news (e.g., violent crime, war, terrorism, etc.). No studies to date have made direct comparisons across traumatic events pertaining to context. Future studies should examine similarities and differences in coverage across differing events.

Studies use different definitions for various frames, creating confusion about what is needed to improve news delivery. It would be helpful to use common nomenclature in order to improve knowledge of news delivery.