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Combining detached watchdog journalism with development ideals: An exploration of Fijian journalism culture

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Abstract

Development journalism has been a key focus of discussion among journalism scholars for around half a decade, but most of the attention has been firmly on African and Asian countries. This paper examines the situation on the little-researched island nation of Fiji, which has experienced considerable political instability since independence in 1970. Based on interviews with 77 of the country's small population of just over 100 journalists, we find that journalism in Fiji exhibits similarities to Western journalism ideals, but also a significant development journalism orientation. A comparison with six other countries from the global South shows that this mix is not unique, and we argue that Western journalism approaches and development ideals are not by necessity mutually exclusive, as has often been argued. In this way, the article aims to contribute to a reassessment of our understanding of development journalism and how journalists in developing societies view their work.

Keywords: Journalist, survey, culture, watchdog, development journalism, professional views, Fiji, Pacific

Introduction

Inspired by a desire among many in the global South to create journalistic models that would better suit their local conditions, the concept of development journalism has been the topic of much discussion in communication scholarship over the past fifty years. Scholars, politicians and journalists across non-Western contexts, but most visibly in Asia and Africa, called for a new type of journalism that fitted the needs of the newly independent countries, rather than replicating the models left by their colonizers. Discussions – mostly of a normative nature – over development journalism were particularly prominent during the 1960s and 70s, while the topic has received considerably less attention since the turn of the century (Xu, 2009).

Despite this, there have been a number of empirical studies that focused on individual countries (Mwesige, 2004; Pintak & Ginges, 2008; Pintak & Setiyono, 2011; Pintak & Nazir, 2013; Ramaprasad, 2001; Ramaprasad & Rahman, 2006; Ramaprasad & Hamdy, 2006; Ramaprasad & Kelly, 2003), and which were concerned at least in part of their analysis with the existence of development journalism ideals. Yet, these studies have tended to focus on Africa and Asia, resulting in a comparative lack of knowledge from one region that is much less populous, yet has experienced politically a similar recent history and concerns over development journalism. The Pacific Islands – a large and very diverse region of many former colonies – have featured far less in the scholarly literature, but, we argue, they are

equally important for a more comprehensive understanding of the types of journalistic cultures that may exist in the global South.

This study focuses on what is arguably the most dominant nation in the Pacific Islands, excepting Papua New Guinea. The Melanesian island state of Fiji is the most populous country in the region and its main media hub. Journalism has a long history in this former British colony, and today there are multiple newspapers, news websites and competing television stations. In addition, various forms of media-related courses are taught at leading and tertiary universities in Fiji, such as the University of the South Pacific. Thus, an understanding of the state of journalism culture in Fiji – a country of just under one million inhabitants (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2007) – also provides an insight into the Pacific Island region more broadly. In particular, its recent history, which has been marked by various political coups, makes it an interesting case study as these coups have all had a lasting impact on journalistic culture.

Journalism in the Pacific is also somewhat of an unknown outside the immediate region, with only very little media research having been undertaken, particularly in terms of empirical research. (Robie, 2004: 32). This study aims to highlight some important aspects of Fijian journalism culture to contribute to discussions around journalism culture more generally, and specifically in relation to the discourse on development journalism. It does so by drawing on the results of a survey of 77 journalists in the country between 2008 and 2009, a time when Fiji had recently experienced its fourth military coup in just over 20 years. In particular, the focus is on the way in which journalists' backgrounds have developed over time, their role perceptions, and how these compare to journalists in other non-Western contexts.

Development journalism

The concept of development journalism has a history dating back around 50 years, when it first emerged among Filipino academics and journalists and the Press Foundation of Asia (Waisbord, 2009). Much like the broader field of communication for development has been defined in various ways (see Manyozo, 2008), development journalism has also been understood differently. Obijiofor and Hanusch (2011: 25) have defined it as a journalism which “advocates the belief that journalists should serve as agents of social change and development in the societies in which they operate”, while Romano (2005) outlines five categories of development journalism. The first sees journalists as nation builders; the second as partners of government, while the third views them as agents of empowerment. The fourth category regards journalists as watchdogs, while the fifth sees them as guardians of transparency. In development journalism, objectivity is suppressed in favor of a non-adversarial journalism (Romano, 1998: 64).

In a recent critical review of development journalism, Waisbord (2009) outlined two key strands of development journalism, characterized as (1) communitarian and (2) statist approaches. The first approach sees development journalism as concerned with “social and communitarian reporting of news about rural, education, health, and economic issues that affect the majority of people in the ‘global South’” (Waisbord, 2009: 148). Here, reporting is seen as needing to focus on non-elites, and issues of significant public interest, while journalism's entertainment function is given far less priority. The second approach to development journalism considers its role in nation-building, with the emphasis on the idea that “journalists should be part of broad political and social efforts towards development, national integration, and internal cooperation” (Waisbord, 2009: 149). Among other things, such reporting can contribute to social cohesion in the case of countries with a variety of religious, ethnic, language and tribal identities, while critical reporting is relegated for fear it could endanger “politically frail and culturally divided countries” (Waisbord, 2009: 149).

Waisbord (2009: 153) has criticized use of the term “development”, considering it a “hollowed-out and anachronistic concept”, which “hardly adds much to describe either journalistic ideals in the ‘global South’ or the public mission and social commitment of journalism”. He points to problems of theoretical rigor around the concept as well as essentialist visions of the global South as key critiques, while acknowledging it is more an issue of terminology, as development journalism’s core goals are still desirable in those regions. Waisbord notes, however, that the concept of development is so deeply entrenched in scholarly and political discourse that it is unlikely to disappear soon. Recognizing its limited usefulness as a term in today’s world, this paper will continue to employ development journalism in referring to the underlying ideals it aims to promote, and in order to describe how journalists think about their work. In many regions of the global South, development journalism was specifically taught as a term, and may thus be an issue these journalists may well identify with.

A key criticism of development journalism concepts over time has been the way in which they were appropriated by political leaders for their own purposes. Approaches emphasizing certain national or cultural values have invariably been used by political classes to block any criticism. The promotion of Asian values to guide journalism, for example, was premised on the argument that “the modern, economically strong Asian society is best built on a foundation of traditional Eastern beliefs, not transplanted Western values” (Massey & Chang, 2002: 992). Values like respect for authority, group dynamics and an emphasis on communal rather than individualist values was supposed to lead to a new type of journalism (Xu, 2005). But the approach was heavily criticized as being used for political purposes by Asian leaders, and the fact that there are actually considerable cultural differences between the various Asian countries (Xu, 2005). A content analysis of news stories in Asian newspapers found that so-called Asian values were dominant in countries with a restrictive press environment, such as Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei, possibly because “the political leadership promotes them as beneficial to national development, and journalists conceive of themselves as the government’s nation-building partners” (Massey & Chang, 2002: 999).

Similar debates were held on the African continent, where the push for an Afrocentric style of journalism rejected the perceived individualism and divisionism of journalism in the West (Kasoma, 1996). Hence, ideas such as ubuntu journalism developed, which can be understood as an approach that focuses – in line with African values of compassion, reciprocity, dignity and harmony – on contributing to the building of harmonious communities. Journalists are seen as active participants in their communities, rather than detached observers (Blankenberg, 1999; Fourie, 2008). Again, however, some scholars warned against the danger of such approaches being adopted for the purpose of “authoritarianism and regressive nationalism” (Tomaselli, 2003: 436). Speaking about the African situation, Campbell (2003: 37) argued that development journalism “was little more than a guise for strict state control of newspapers and of the broadcast media”, while Altschull (1995: 236) described it as a “smokescreen” that permits “dictators to subject their press to iron controls and strict censorship”.

The promotion of development journalism across the global South has also found the concept embedded in many journalists’ professional views. The literature of journalistic role conceptions finds considerable evidence in many contexts, which show journalists supportive of development journalism’s goals, albeit with regional differences. A survey of journalists in 14 Arab countries has shown that many of them want to use news for social good, and to foster political and social change in the Arab world, as well as defend its people and values against outside interference (Pintak & Ginges, 2008: 218). An earlier survey of Egyptian journalists found a similar tendency to support Arab values (Ramaprasad & Hamdy, 2006). Surveys of Tanzanian journalists found they both rate Western journalistic functions like

accuracy, analysis, investigation and entertainment highly, but also felt it was important to be a partner in national development (Ramaprasad, 2001). In Asia, Ramaprasad and Kelly (2003) came to similar conclusions about Nepalese journalists' professional views, while Bangladeshi journalists also favored evaluation, analysis and education – traits found in many western democracies with free press traditions. At the same time, they valued development journalism functions, though they did not rank them as highly as libertarian ones (Ramaprasad & Rahman, 2006). Similarly, a survey of Indonesian journalists found a tendency to support Western functions such as being neutral and objective disseminators, while the development function received comparatively less support (Hanitzsch, 2005). A more recent study of 600 Indonesian journalists, however, found that “while they are no longer lapdogs of government, they continue to see it as their duty to work for societal development and to give voice to those who have none” (Pintak & Setiyono, 2011). In Pakistan, Pintak and Nazir (2013) also found evidence that ideals of development journalism were embedded in journalists' professional views. A study in 18 countries found that journalists in non-Western societies tended to be more supportive of the need to advocate for social change, a core goal of development journalism (Hanitzsch et al., 2011). At the same time, many studies also showed that journalists highly valued what were generally seen as Western journalistic functions (Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Mwesige, 2004; Ramaprasad, 2001). As Hanitzsch et al. (2011) point out, it appears that detached reporting and watchdog journalism are somewhat universal functions, and they are supported even in the global South. There, however, other roles – often viewed as development journalism ideals – come into play, which appear to be in addition to, rather than standing in for what are typically seen as Western ideals.

Journalism in the Pacific Islands

In line with the calls for development journalism in Africa and Asia, scholars and politicians in the Pacific Islands have advocated an approach to journalism that would be rooted in the local cultural particularities of the region and which would support local development. One prominent supporter of a cultural approach more generally was Fijian anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa (1993), who influentially called for a “Pacific Way” in redirecting theoretical and practical thinking in the region. In relation to journalism, a study of Papua New Guinean news media discussed the difficulties of merely transplanting Western journalism into a society which has very different societal needs (Rooney et al., 2004). Similarly, Papoutsaki and Sharp (2006) noted that the fact Papua New Guinean journalism training was mainly conducted by Western educators. Increasingly, journalists in the region have called for a reclaiming of Pacific images in the media, given the fact many dominant media are owned by Western proprietors and “have failed to seriously take Pacific and indigenous cultures and their world views into account” (Robie, 2004: 249). Journalism students in Papua New Guinea have also been reported as rejecting what they see as a confrontational style of journalism, instead arguing for a more collaborative model (Papoutsaki & Sharp, 2006). News media in the Pacific Islands face a multitude of challenges. It is quite common, for example, for governments in the region to complain about poor journalism, sometimes merely because it is challenging those in power. A human rights summit in Samoa in April 2008 found that violence and intimidation of the media, as well as political interference in editorial decision-making were common in some countries in the region (Singh & Prasad, 2008). Fijian journalist Seona Smiles says the deep-rooted beliefs in South Pacific societies about respect for authority could translate into a lack of accountability and transparency on behalf of the powerful. This created problems for anyone who questioned those in power. “The Pacific is littered with publishers and journalists being

chastised and chased” (Smiles, 2001: ix). There is little doubt that such experiences have a profound impact on local journalism cultures.

Yet, empirical evidence on Pacific Islands journalists is relatively rare, even though some surveys have been conducted in the region. While there were some early explorations by Vusoniwailala (1976) and Waqavonovono (1981), the first serious attempt was conducted by Phinney (1985), who interviewed 42 Papua New Guinean journalists, finding them to be relatively young, predominantly male, and highly educated. In the early 1990s, Layton (1992; 1994; 1995; 1998) conducted surveys with 164 journalists across the 24 media-producing nations and territories in the Pacific Islands.

In terms of their professional views, Pacific journalists were “remarkably supportive of the critical role of the press” (Layton, 1998: 134). Two-thirds of respondents considered it extremely important to investigate claims and statements made by the government, and only one-third thought positive news should be stressed – although this number rose to 47 per cent among journalists working for government-owned media. At the same time, there was some support for development journalism ideals. Journalists expressed relatively low support for the adversarial role, with only 20 per cent saying it was extremely important to be an adversary of public officials by being skeptical of their actions. Similarly, providing entertainment and relaxation was not a highly-rated role, with only 22 per cent saying it was extremely important. However, the issue of national unity was high on journalists’ agenda, with three of four journalists believing that “media have a responsibility to promote harmony between differing racial groups, indicating the sensitivity of racial relations in the region” (Layton, 1998: 134). Layton (1994: 404) argued that her study found some evidence for the emergence of a “Pacific-style” of journalism. These ideals, it would seem, align quite well with those offered in other regions of the global South.

No study since has taken a pan-Pacific Islands approach to journalism culture. Instead, the only major follow-up studies have focused on Fiji and Papua New Guinea. Robie’s (1999) survey of 59 Fijian and 65 Papua New Guinean journalists provided further insight into the professional views of news people. Robie was the first to provide a reasonably reliable sample, considering there were only just around 100 journalists in each country at the time. In relation to Fiji, Robie’s (1999) data provides an important baseline. He found that journalists were extremely young, with a mean age of 22, ranging between 18 and 50 years of age. There was relative gender parity, with women representing 49 per cent of all journalists. In terms of education, the trend found by Layton (1995) was confirmed, with merely 14 per cent of Fijian journalists holding a tertiary degree. Asked what they perceived as the most crucial role of a news organization, 63 per cent nominated the watchdog role, followed by nation building, which received 17 per cent.

A follow-up survey in 2001, conducted with 43 Fijian and 63 PNG journalists came to similar, though more in-depth conclusions (Robie, 2004). Gender distribution was the same as two years previously, though the mean age now stood at almost 25 years. Education levels had also increased, with 26 per cent of respondents now tertiary educated. In relation to their professional views, journalists could this time choose three from 11 functions, with the watchdog role still receiving the most support at 74 per cent. This was followed by the role of educator (42 per cent), defender of the truth (40 per cent), as well as nation builder (35 per cent) and the people’s ‘voice’/mouthpiece (33 per cent). The entertainment role only received 12 per cent support.

In a review of a number of studies concerned with Pacific Island journalists’ conduct during a range of conflicts, Singh (2011: 261) argues that reporters were often ill-prepared to handle the complexity of events they faced, and their stories thus lacked background and context. In his interviews with a small number of leading Pacific Island journalists, Singh (2011) found that while they often saw a need for objectivity and neutrality in their work,

they also realized that it was not always possible to do so. Thus, “the majority of respondents have a flexible attitude about going beyond being a detached observer of events to proactively contributing to efforts to build a better society” (Singh, 2011: 273).

While there has not been extensive empirical research on Pacific Islands journalists, the few studies that do exist point to a largely youthful workforce, which correspondingly lacks work experience and qualifications (Robie, 2004: 32). Since Robie’s studies at the turn of the millennium, however, there has been no comprehensive survey of Fijian journalists, and it is important to re-examine their profiles and professional views. The development of the journalism program at the University of the South Pacific, for example, may arguably have led to a better educated workforce, which may also have reshaped journalists’ professional views. Further, the fact Fiji enjoyed a relatively free media environment during the mid-2000s may have contributed to the development of its journalism culture, as may have the 2006 coup, which has left Fiji an “undeniably a politically, socially and economically fractured nation” (Singh and Prasad, 2008b: 5). They wonder whether it is enough for the news media to be neutral bystanders: “At a time when the future remains hazy and without a well-defined direction, should the Fiji media continue to stick to the western journalistic principles of objectivity and neutrality, or should it report in a manner that is more beneficial for a developing country such as Fiji?” (Singh and Prasad, 2008b: 5). Such questions are typical of development journalism orientations, and it is important to examine whether there is a trend in this direction in Fiji as a result of the events of recent decades. Hence, this study aimed to explore the following research question: *What are Fijian journalists’ professional views, and to what extent do they align with development journalism ideals?* Further, we also aimed to compare Fijian journalists’ role perceptions vis-à-vis those of journalists in other so-called ‘developing’ countries in the global South.

Methodology

To answer the research question, we conducted a survey of journalists working in the Fijian news media. Fiji was chosen because of the existence of a number of previous studies against which to compare our results, as well as the fact that it has a relatively vibrant media environment. Politically, it makes for an interesting case as well, given the four military coups in 1987 and 2000, which involved the deployment of armed troops and had severe and immediate impacts on the news media. In 1987, one newspaper, *The Fiji Sun*, was closed temporarily, while *The Fiji Times* engaged in self-censorship and was allowed to keep printing (Singh & Prasad, 2008b). In 2000, Fiji Television, the national television station, was attacked and ransacked, a foreign journalist was shot and wounded, and a local journalist imprisoned for treason (Perrottet & Robie, 2011). More recently, the 2006 coup by military commander and now Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama also led to threats and intimidation of news outlets and journalists, eventually leading to renewed self-censorship and a relaxing of the government’s grip on the media. That was, until media organizations became bolder in their reporting, and the government expelled three expatriate newspaper publishers from the country (Singh & Prasad, 2008b). Finally, in 2010, the Fijian government announced a crackdown on press freedom. Journalists whose work was “against the public interest” could be jailed, and media outlets had to be 90 per cent owned by resident Fijian citizens. This development led to Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp having to sell the nation’s leading newspaper, *The Fiji Times* (Chessell, 2010).

Despite these various challenges, Fiji, along with Papua New Guinea, has the most highly-developed news media industry in the region (Robie, 2004). It has two major mainstream daily newspapers, a range of radio stations, two free-to-air commercial television stations, a number of news magazines and a growing number of internet websites (Grey & Hassall, 2008). There is a slow growth of online news, and Fijian media are embracing the

new challenges and opportunities these developments bring, but, according to a recent study, they have been slow in up-take (Foster, 2008). Nevertheless, news blogs rose to prominence following the 2006 coup, reporting much more freely than the mainstream media, which had been placed under severe restrictions (Foster, 2007). Albeit later than elsewhere, digital technologies are thus beginning to impact journalism and news media in the Pacific, and particularly under military restriction appear to open up new avenues to challenge power elites.

In terms of the established mainstream media, Fiji has a relatively small number of journalists of only slightly more than 100, and this project aimed to survey as many of them as possible. All heads of news organizations were contacted in order to gain permission for research assistants to enter newsrooms. All surveys were completed by the journalists using printed questionnaires, while a research assistant was present. In the end, 77 valid questionnaires across eight news organizations were completed, an increase over the number of surveys conducted by Robie, who had interviewed 59 Fijian journalists in 1998/99 (Robie, 2001) and 43 in 2001 (Robie, 2004). Given the fact the number of journalists overall in Fiji is very small, we believe this sample represents a reasonably good approximation of the overall population. Journalists were interviewed in all the main media organizations which publish news. This includes 33 journalists (42.9 per cent) who worked at the newspaper *Fiji Times*, 15 (19.5 per cent) at the newspaper *Fiji Sun*, eight (10.4 per cent) at radio network Communications Fiji Limited, seven (9.1 per cent) each at the website Fiji Live and at Fiji Television, three (3.9 per cent) at *Mai Life* magazine and two (2.6 per cent) each at the newspaper *Daily Post* (which has since ceased publication) and the news agency Pacnews. This sample is a good reflection of the media landscape, in particular given the dominance of the print media market in Fiji, which is still the main employer of journalists. Data collection occurred between 2008 and 2009, and was thus following the 2006 military coup, but before the introduction of the more draconian press laws in 2010.

In each news organization, we attempted to survey journalists across three general levels in the editorial hierarchy, which are based on their responsibilities within the newsroom: senior managers, junior managers and non-management staff. Senior managers were defined as having power to shape strategic goals of the newsroom, with authority ranging across large divisions within the newsroom (for example, job titles such as Editor, Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor and News Director). Junior managers were defined as being on the middle level of the editorial hierarchy, making operational decisions on a day-to-day basis (Bureau Chief, Chief-of-Staff, Section Editor, Executive Producer and News Producer). The non-management level consisted of rank-and-file journalists who gathered and produced news with usually no or very little editorial responsibilities. Due to the problems of surveying journalists in Fiji, which have been reported by previous researchers (Layton, 1992; Robie, 2004), we were not always able to sample an adequate mix of the three levels in each newsroom. Nevertheless, our final sample consisted of four senior managers (5.2 per cent), 13 junior managers (16.9 per cent), and 60 non-management staff (77.9 per cent).

In order to measure Fijian journalists' professional views, we applied Hanitzsch's (2007: 369) theoretical framework, which defines journalism culture as a "particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful". Hanitzsch (2007) identifies three essential constituents of journalism culture, referring to the functions of journalism in society (institutional roles), notions of reality and what constitutes evidence (epistemologies) as well as how journalists deal with ethical problems (ethical ideologies). This paper focuses on institutional roles, among which Hanitzsch locates questions about the extent to which journalists intervene in the political process and society at large (interventionism; ranging from an interventionist to a passive

pole), journalists' position toward centers of power (power distance; ranging from adversary to loyal) and the extent to which journalists focus on giving the audience what they want to know as opposed to what journalists think they should know (Market orientation; ranging from citizen-oriented to consumer-oriented).

Institutional roles were measured by asking respondents to identify the relative importance of 12 different "things the news media do or try to do". Respondents had a choice of five answer options: 'extremely important', 'very important', 'somewhat important', 'little important' and 'not important at all'. Because these questions were also used in Hanitzsch et al.'s (2011) study of journalism culture in 18 countries, this allowed some specific comparisons with other countries, in addition to a broader comparison with past studies of Pacific and other non-Western journalists.

Results and Discussion

Demographic profile

In terms of the demographic profile of Fijian journalists, our results show some important progress when compared to the earlier studies conducted by Layton (1992) and Robie (2001) (Table 1). Firstly, the role of women in Fijian journalism appears to have increased, with women now representing a clear majority at 54.5 per cent. This is not a dramatic shift, given that even in the early 1990s some considered Fijian journalism a "women's occupation" (Kacimawai, cited in Layton, 1995: 109). Past findings from nearby Papua New Guinea similarly showed near equality in terms of overall gender representation (Robie, 1999). These are notable findings, considering women's roles in Pacific societies and the fact that women represent only 3.6 per cent of national parliamentary seats across the region (George, 2013). However, the results do show that in terms of power, women are still disadvantaged. While two of the four senior managers were women, only three of the 13 junior managers were, a trend that is similar to nearby Australia, where women are now in a majority numerically, but still grossly underrepresented at managerial levels (Hanusch, 2013).

--- *Insert Table 1 around here* ---

In terms of age, Fijian journalists are getting older on average. While Layton (1995) had found that 65 per cent of Fijian journalists were in their twenties and Robie found a mean age of 24.7 years, the journalists in our sample were on average 27.9 years old. The age distribution is slightly more even, with 32.9 per cent aged between 21 and 25, 42.9 per cent between 26 and 30, and 32.9 per cent over 30 years old. Of course, the overall age is still much younger than the average age of journalists in many Western as well as non-Western countries. Across the 18 countries studied by Hanitzsch et al. (2011), the average age was 38 years. While there was a tendency for journalists in non-Western countries to be younger, nowhere was the average age less than 30 years.

Much like in other countries, however, women tend to be significantly younger than men. Women journalists in Fiji are on average 25.7 years old ($SD=3.89$), almost five years less than the mean male age ($M=30.1$, $SD=4.44$), a statistically significant difference, $t(68)=4.38$, $p<.001$, two-tailed, with Cohen's $d=1.05$ indicating a large effect. Not surprisingly, there is also significant gender disparity in relation to work experience. While the overall average work experience of Fijian journalists is now 6.4 years compared to almost half that in 2001, women have only worked in the industry for an average of 5.12 years ($SD=4.78$), compared with men at 7.89 years ($SD=4.44$), a statistically significant difference, $t(75)=2.61$, $p<.05$, with Cohen's $d=0.6$ indicating a medium-sized effect.

Past studies by Layton (1992) and Robie (2004) found a low participation rate in tertiary education by Fijian journalists, but it appears the continued existence of a journalism

program at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji has had a beneficial impact. While in 2001, Robie (2004) found only 26 per cent of the respondents to his survey had completed a tertiary degree, that number has now risen to 38.6 per cent. Correspondingly, there has been an increase in the percentage of graduates who focused on journalism or communication in their degree, with four out of 10 graduates having majored in this area. While these rates of tertiary education are still low compared with many other countries around the globe (Weaver & Willnat, 2012), they do appear to contradict recent claims that “few Fiji journalists have been educated beyond secondary school” (Singh and Prasad, 2008b: 4). There also appears to be a trend that women are more likely to be better educated, with 43.2 per cent of female respondents having completed a tertiary degree, compared with only 33.3 per cent of male respondents. While not statistically significant, this finding supports perceptions of women being in a clear majority among journalism and communication students elsewhere around the world (Obijiofor & Hanusch, 2011).

While there have been changes in some areas of Fijian journalists’ demographics, income is not one of them. While Robie (2004) found a mean annual income of F\$13,000, our study found a median of between F\$12,-14,000 (we asked respondents to only identify their income bracket from a scale of 10 income levels, hence we were unable to calculate a mean dollar value).

Institutional roles

In terms of journalists’ role perception, the results support earlier findings by Robie (2004), who had argued that Fijian journalists lean most strongly towards a watchdog role of the media, but there is also evidence to support the existence of a development journalism orientation (Table 2).

--- *Insert Table 2 around here* ---

The three most strongly favored roles among respondents included being a watchdog of the government, providing citizens with information they need to make political decisions, and the need to be a detached observer. More than four out of five respondents said each of these roles was either very or extremely important. Such indicators of a high power distance, low market orientation and weak interventionism could be classed as ideal roles in a Western definition of journalism, a somewhat surprising finding given the media environment in Fiji, but, as we discussed earlier, this can be entirely consistent with approaches in other non-Western contexts (see, for example, Ramaprasad, 2001; Mwesige, 2004).

In 2001, 74 per cent of Fijian journalists surveyed by Robie (2004) had said they saw the media’s key role as being a watchdog of democracy. There may be a few reasons for this. Firstly, journalism education across the Pacific Islands is still Western-dominated and many media organizations have Western owners. In Papua New Guinea, the *Post-Courier* is owned by Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp, and, at the time of our survey, so was the *Fiji Times*, which had numerous Australian editors and publishers throughout its history. Following the 2006 coup, it was highly critical of the military regime, before censorship was installed in 2009 (Radio New Zealand International, 2009).

At the same time, traditional development journalism roles also received considerable support among respondents. Almost two-thirds said it was very or extremely important to advocate for social change, while just over half said it was important to support official policies to bring about prosperity and development – similar to other developmental contexts around the world (Ramaprasad, 2001), and also similar to nearby Papua New Guinea, where journalists have expressed a desire to report on development issues, even if they do not always have the opportunity to do so (Rowlands & Khosla, 2014). Supporting official

policies had also received considerable support from journalists interviewed by Robie (2004) at the turn of the millennium. Journalism's role as entertainer of audiences, as expressed by a high market orientation, did not receive much support from Fijian journalists, in line with key development journalism tenets. Less than half said they thought concentrating mainly on news that will attract the widest possible audience or providing the audience with the information that is most interesting was very or extremely important.

In terms of the three dimensions of professional roles which were investigated here, we found consistent answers in terms of market orientation and interventionism. Journalists favored low interventionism by and large, and a low market orientation as well. This means Fijian journalists tend to prefer detached reporting rather than influencing public opinion or setting the political agenda. Similarly, they focus on news that addresses audiences in their role as citizens rather than consumers. In terms of power distance, a somewhat contradictory result emerges. While the overwhelming majority of respondents say it is important to be a watchdog of government, only half say the same about being a watchdog of business. Both of these items were conceptually identified as constituting high power distance. At the same time, however, items that were conceptualized as low power distance provided an inconsistent result. Conveying a positive image of political and business leadership was ranked last among all the items, which is consistent with Hanitzsch's (2007) high power distance orientation. However, supporting official policies to bring about prosperity and development was a role that was very or extremely important for more than half of the respondents, and in terms of a means analysis the item was ranked fourth. It appears that this role seems to be at least to some extent compatible, in the eyes of Fijian journalists, with being a watchdog of those in power.

Fiji journalism culture compared

To examine the extent to which Fijian journalists think about their work in similar or different ways from other non-Western contexts, we compared their role perceptions with those of journalists studied by Hanitzsch et al. (2012). Table 3 shows how Fijian journalists compare to six other countries from the global South.

--- *Insert Table 3 around here* ---

The results show that Fiji is similar in some ways to many other countries, but also displays some notable differences. As noted earlier, high power distance, low market orientation and weak interventionism were aspects that were highly ranked by journalists in all of the seven countries included here, with the exception of Chile and Mexico, where support for being a watchdog of government was not quite as strong. Advocating for social change – ranked fourth highest among Fijian journalists – also was a prominent role perception in Brazil, Indonesia, Egypt, Mexico and Uganda, while it was comparatively less important in Chile. Motivating people to participate in civic activity received somewhat equal support in terms of its relative ranking in the seven countries, ranking between fifth and seventh on the list of 12 items. The only exception was Mexico, where it was ranked third. When it came to supporting official policies to bring about prosperity and development, however, Fiji stood out, together with Uganda. It appears that Fijian journalists are unusually more supportive of this approach to journalism, with more than half of respondents seeing it as very or extremely important, ranking the item sixth among the 12 roles. In contrast, the item was ranked eleventh in Chile, Indonesia and Mexico, ninth in Egypt, and eighth in Brazil. Only in Uganda was it ranked more highly, in fifth place. Journalists in all seven societies reject the notion that journalists should convey a positive image of political and

business leaders, and they do not believe journalists should set the political agenda. Most also hold a low market orientation, consistent with development journalism ideals.

Overall, Fijian journalists' role perceptions show the most similarity to those held by Ugandan journalists, at least in terms of their relative ranking. This is a curious finding, though there are some similarities in the political and economic development of both countries, as well as aspects of media freedom over the past decades, such as a post-colonial legacy, low economic base and intermittent press restrictions despite a relatively vibrant media environment (Mwesige, 2004).

While the combination of a Western watchdog approach and support for official policies among Fijian journalists may at first glance be surprising to some, this finding is not unusual if one examines some of the definitions and understandings of the development journalism concept. At the peak of the debate over development journalism's principles and purpose, Ogan (1982: 11) had called development journalism merely a "new wine in old bottles" that was related to social responsibility theories of the press. Differentiating between development support journalism – which had an authoritarian context that served only the goals of those in power – she defined development journalism as "the critical examination, evaluation and report of the relevance, enactment and impact of development programs" (Ogan, 1982: 10). This approach also aligns with the communitarian approaches identified by Waisbord (2009). In Fiji, a developing country with a turbulent political history, journalists thus clearly understand their role as needing to contribute to nation-building, but – perhaps more so – to keep those in power accountable for this national project. Development journalism is not a fixed form of reporting. Rather, it will surface differently according to the political climate, and the political history of a country. Clearly, given the educational context as well as media ownership at the time of the survey, Western traditions were influential, much like in many other countries in the global South. In Uganda, Mwesige (2004) has speculated on the reasons for this, pointing to an enduring colonial legacy, universal conventions on journalism's place in society, or media globalization.

Hence, Fijian journalists – and their colleagues in many other developing societies – are now guided by a combination of traditional watchdog journalism which nevertheless holds on to development journalism ideals. It appears feasible, at least according to the respondents' answers, that the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as is often argued. Perhaps it is indeed possible to hold the powerful to account, while still supporting their policies if they lead to the improvement of ordinary people's lives.

Conclusion

The concept of development journalism has been much debated over the past 50 years or so, with a variety of studies aiming to examine its functioning in a number of non-Western context. While most of the focus has been on Africa and Asia, other, smaller regions have received comparatively less attention. In focusing on the Pacific Islands region, and specifically on Fiji, this study aimed to contribute to our understanding of the way in which journalism culture operates in a developmental context that has been marred by a politically turbulent history. Having experienced a relatively free media environment following independence in 1970, Fiji's coups have made for a precarious situation at times. All the while, there have been considerable changes over the past two decades or so in the island nation's media system. A second television channel was introduced in 2008 – interestingly this occurred after the coup in 2006 – and there is now widespread availability of the Internet, connecting these far flung islands into the immediacy of news. Further, the expansion of the University of the South Pacific and its journalism program has arguably expanded the number of tertiary-educated journalists.

Our results show that, compared to past studies, there have been some considerable advances in Fijian journalism. These include the continued rise of women in journalism, even if there is some evidence to suggest they are still disadvantaged at managerial levels (despite the fact they are more educated than men on average). Fijian journalists are also now older, more experienced and better educated, with a significant increase in university-educated journalists, even though the numbers are still much lower than in many other countries around the world. In terms of their salaries, however, there does not appear to have been much improvement.

The analysis of journalists' professional views in regard to their institutional roles has shown the complex mix of Western journalistic ideals and development journalism that operates in this small island nation. The results indicate in particular the way in which Fijian journalists aim to combine a detached watchdog role with that of being a supporter of national development and an advocate of social change. With Ogan (1982), we argued that while some believe that these roles should be irreconcilable, they are in fact evidence of a development journalism that sees itself as supportive of development, but wants to make sure that governments adhere to the development process, ensuring a need for the media to be a watchdog on those in power. Our comparison with other recent studies in non-Western contexts shows that this is not unique, but rather relatively common. As Hanitzsch et al.'s (2011; 2012) study of journalists in 18 diverse countries has shown, non-involvement and the watchdog function indeed are universal. Supporting national development and advocating for social change appear to be additional, rather than substituting prisms, which journalists aim to employ in their work. The approach is also not uncommon in other parts of the Pacific Islands. Studies of Papua New Guinean journalists have shown a compatibility of development journalism goals and holding those in power accountable (Robie, 1999; Rowlands and Khosla, 2014). Indigenous journalists in New Zealand have also been shown to see themselves as supporters of their own people and their development, but also as watchdogs of power elites (Hanusch, 2014). Rather than necessarily being evidence for a uniquely Pacific – or at least Fijian – style of journalism, our results appear to suggest that there are indeed many similarities with other contexts in the global South. However, this does not preclude the possibility of there being other unique facets of journalism in Fiji beyond institutional roles.

This leads us to emphasize one main caveat. As mentioned earlier, the surveys were conducted in 2008 and 2009, only a couple of years after the military coup led by now-Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama. The coup led to a serious deterioration of media freedom in Fiji immediately, but the most severe restrictions, such as the presence of censors in each newsroom, were not installed until at least mid-2009. Now that Fiji has democratically elected Bainimarama, a follow up study is necessary to compare Fiji's journalistic culture after military rule, with the one in 2008 and 2009. A related limitation of this study is that it is based only on journalists' self-declared views. In this sense, the answers provided by our respondents may at times have been more about journalists' views of what they would like to do, rather than necessarily what they actually do. There is a growing amount of research which suggests a considerable gap between journalists' role conceptions, and the way in which these roles are performed or enacted (Mellado & van Dalen, 2013; Tandoc Jr. et al., 2013). Further research is therefore necessary in relation to the extent to which the stories Fijian journalists produce are in line with the role conceptions they profess to hold.

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Table 1: Key demographics of Fijian journalists

	1992 ¹ (n=32)	2001 ² (n=43)	2009 (n=77)
Female (in %)	50	49	54.5
Age (mean)		24.7	27.9
Tertiary degree (in %)	16	26	38.6
Studied journalism (in %)		26	41.6
Apprenticeship completed (in %)			58.4
Work experience (mean in years)		3.5	6.4
Annual income		F\$ 13,000 ³	F\$12-14,000 ⁴

¹ Layton, 1992; ² Robie, 2004; ³ mean score; ⁴ median score

Table 2: Journalists' views of their institutional roles

	M	SD	% extremely or very important
To act as watchdog of the government	4.51	0.912	87
To provide citizens with the information they need to make political decisions	4.49	0.853	88.3
To be an absolutely detached observer	4.41	0.867	86.8
To support official policies to bring about prosperity and development	3.69	1.042	53.3
To advocate for social change	3.69	0.921	62.4
To motivate people to participate in civic activity and political discussion	3.65	1.326	62.4
To act as watchdog of business elites	3.52	1.334	50.7
To concentrate mainly on news that will attract the widest possible audience	3.49	1.084	46.8
To influence public opinion	3.49	1.137	47.4
To provide the audience with the information that is most interesting	3.48	1.199	44.2
To set the political agenda	2.55	1.382	20.8
To convey a positive image of political and business leadership	2.52	1.252	22.1

Table 3: Comparing Fijian journalists role perceptions across the global South (percentage of those saying very/extremely important)¹

	Fiji	Brazil	Chile	Egypt	Indonesia	Mexico	Uganda
To provide citizens with the information they need to make political decisions	88.3	99	75.8	95	78.8	93	94
To act as watchdog of the government	87	89	64	96	80.8	72	87
To be an absolutely detached observer	86.3	85.9	82	96	62.9	91	78.8
To motivate people to participate in civic activity and political discussion	62.4	60	52	83	63.6	79	77
To advocate for social change	62.4	52.5	41.4	89.8	60.6	66.6	86.9
To support official policies to bring about prosperity and development	53.5	43.4	40.4	54.3	22.2	37	78
To act as watchdog of business elites	50.7	51	58.2	76	60.2	58	57
To influence public opinion	47.4	24	71.7	91	48.5	54	67
To concentrate mainly on news that will attract the widest possible audience	46.8	19	50	66	71.4	43	61
To provide the audience with the information that is most interesting	44.2	67	64.6	17.3	71.7	77	56
To convey a positive image of political and business leadership	22.1	1	11	10.9	13.1	3	30
To set the political agenda	20.8	24.2	49	43.4	41.4	43	51

¹ Data for countries outside Fiji taken from Hanitzsch et al. (2012).