

Research Practices: Praxis and Precarity

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As a researcher of news media, and as a Latino, it has become increasingly obvious to me that not all areas of media research are given equal attention—and it's a fact that many Western researchers ignore, but most academics are aware of. In the global South, including most of Latin America, there is a dearth of information about the rapidly changing media landscape and the role that new technologies are playing in media routines. What little research is available often does little to expand our understanding in the literature, and often relies heavily on broad generalizations for regions as a whole, rather than focusing on specific nations or their individual media. This problem raises two main questions, among many others: 1) How can the focus of media research be redirected towards these important and understudied topics? and 2) How can we promote greater diversity in who is conducting these studies and who is being studied?

As a journalism scholar, I have found that academic coursework outside of my discipline and interdisciplinary conferences have been invaluable in inspiring my research interests and subtly influencing the lenses through which I view my research. Even TA'ing for courses like "Reporting Latin America" has brought up wonderful research questions that I currently explore in my work. While I understand that many media researchers may not be in the same position, being able to participate in interdisciplinary, international conferences is a great way to become involved in these conversations and begin interacting with these complex topics. Another valuable tool in shifting the focus of media research is promoting and participating in online courses for industry professionals, such as those that are offered by the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas. These courses not only offer a view into how media industries are shifting in different areas of the world, but also offer researchers the opportunity to interact with industry professionals whose opinions and insights should inspire academic research. Even without the ability to travel or interact in-person, these digital forums offer academics from across the globe an invaluable opportunity that often comes free-of-charge.

While the aforementioned approaches can help promote greater diversity in media research, the question of who is conducting these studies and their global focus is far more complex. For many reasons, especially those pertaining to resources and opportunity, a significant portion of media research is currently conducted in 1st World Western nations. The focus of these studies is often also of the 1st World Western nations that are producing the research. In contemporary media research, this focus can be shifted by collaborating with media researchers in other nations and encouraging international ties between universities in the West and those in developing nations throughout the world. By encouraging international collaboration, we can not only impact what questions are being asked, but also by whom. These collaborations can

also help mitigate issues of a language barrier to academic publishing, as international teams can work together to submit to popular journals that publish in English.

Aside from answering these major questions, it is important that this conversation discuss the methods that we as researchers use when studying this changing media landscape. While there has traditionally been a divide between qualitative and quantitative research, I believe that best practices mean advocating for the best method to answer a research question—and often that means using mixed methodology. Quantitative research provides media studies with a degree of statistical significance that allows us as researchers to better-understand phenomena as they are happening and predict how they may change in the future. Qualitative research, however, is essential because it contextualizes why and how these phenomena are happening, with great specificity. In my current studies that investigate how emerging technology like VR/AR are being adopted by Latin American news media, it is my qualitative work with journalists in this region that really adds great value to existing literature. While we can theorize and hypothesize why this technology should be adopted throughout the region, it is only when interacting with actual media professionals that the complexity of the issue becomes clear. For this reason, I advocate that media researchers work more closely with the media professionals that they study, as they can provide invaluable insights and help researchers find practical outcomes for their research—after all, it's not enough to just study media, we have the knowledge and the ability to help improve how and what media produces.