Introduction

Setting the scene: from barriers to risks and resiliency in Latin American Journalism

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Almost 15 years ago, during a period when the failures of neoliberal democracy had not yet fragmented the region into a mosaic of media systems cleaved by political polarization, Hughes and Lawson (2005) summarized what they considered to be the barriers to the strengthening and sustainability of a more investigative, independent and citizen-focused professional news sector in Latin American countries. According to the authors, these barriers included (a) generalized weakness in the rule of law, (b) holdover authoritarian legislation, (c) oligarchic ownership of media outlets, (d) uneven journalistic standards, and (e) limited audience access to diverse sources of information.

In the introductory essay to this special issue on contemporary Latin American journalism, we update the regional picture to set the scene for the more-focused essays that follow. Rather than obstacles to transition toward an idealistic goal, we identify sources of risk to journalists as human beings with fundamental rights and as institutional actors with relative professional autonomy, as well as risks to journalism as an important institution influencing politics and society. We use risk as a structuring concept because the barriers approach was meant to assess the possibility of forward momentum toward an ideal type of democratic media system that probably never existed anywhere, when quite possibly the cumulative intentions and desires of journalists may well be to defend the status quo as is or to renovate and renew the institution in line with the contemporary political, social and economic conditions and sensibilities in a country. The use of barriers also suggested that the current configuration of journalism in a country would not be transformed in ways that

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increase the instrumentalization of journalists' work product for private political or economic purposes. The autonomy and assertiveness of journalistic work has always been contingent on the societal and organizational context, as well as dominant theories or philosophies of the role of journalism in society (Sjovaag, 2016; Hughes *et al.*, 2017). The barriers concept, while understandable given the trajectory in media reform at the time (Segura & Waisbord, 2016), implies that greater encroachment on occupational activities was off the table. This of course was not true then, and it seems even less likely today. Journalism and journalists in some of the region's countries may well face the biggest challenges since overt censorship and state-led repression during the region's dark days of military authoritarianism.

In contrast, the concept of risk used here refers to an array of existential threats to the viability and sustainability of journalism as a semi-autonomous institution that makes meaningful and vital contributions to democratic governance and social life (WJS, 2019). In response to risk, journalism and journalists as institutional actors may on the one hand, retreat from independent, assertive and pro-public norms and practices because of uncertainty, fear or the actual loss of control over news production and publication decisions. On the other hand, journalism and journalists may adapt to new pressures on professional autonomy in ways that preserve or even expand their relative autonomy vis-à-vis news sources, media owners, advertisers, regulators, violent criminals, politicians, partisans or security forces. The process of adapting well to uncertainty, threat or adversity is referred to in psychology as resilience (American Psychological Association), and can be applied to journalists and journalism.

In the remainder of this essay we briefly assess what has happened to the "barriers to media opening" identified 15 years ago when political systems across the region had just begun to reflect the economic polarization that has defined the continent for centuries but seemed all-the-more unacceptable given the big promises and uneven performance of democratic accountability and neoliberal economic restructuring. We then describe the political-economic, criminal and cultural sources of risk to journalism today and review some signs that journalism and journalists will adapt and become resilient in ways that protect autonomy and democratic norms in the face of multi-facetted forms of risk.

Barriers Revisited

Of the five barriers identified in 2005, a decade and a half later weakness in the rule of law is clearly what most imperils journalism and journalists in many Latin

American countries. The assassination of journalists in Latin America increased 68 percent in the decade after The Barriers to Media Opening was published, compared to the decade before 2005, according to data from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) [1] . Harassment, intimidation and threats also were on the uptick, according to numerous human rights organizations. The origins of anti-press violence in Latin America appear to be disproportionately located in assertive local-level coverage of crime, corruption and especially, the fusion of both (HUGHES *et al.*, 2017; DUNHAM, 2017, FLIP, 2011).

The situation is less clear-cut for the other barriers. Many countries have removed criminal defamation and desacato laws from their federal statutes, while passing new access-to-information laws. The problem has been provincial laws and military codes remain riddled with provisions criminalizing journalism and the implementation of access-to-information laws remains discretional in many instances. As Kanashiro and Yap show in this volume, journalists' professional standards remain uneven and sometimes are in great need of self-regulation, although research has clarified that at the discursive level journalists in the region voice strong support for a variety of democratic normative stances (Hanitzsch et al., 2019). The representation of marginalized groups in society also remains problematic in mainstream media outlets, as they were along the Mexico-US borderlands during a period that foreshadows present-day tensions and polarizations. González de Bustamante vividly captures the moral geographies that permeate media representations of borders. However, in every country there are new media startups that bypass the political and economic restrictions on the traditional press and are setting new standards in representation and investigative journalism. This is even occurring in Cuba, where internet access remains comparatively very low, but a creative underground distribution system has grown to service the unmet demands of Cubans for entertainment and information produced outside of the state (Llanes and Oller Alonzo, this volume).

Limited audience access to diverse news and information, as well as oligarchic media ownership, have been disrupted (but not distinguished) by journalist-run projects using new technologies to lower costs and increase access. In most countries there is at least some non-profit media outlets producing investigative reporting projects that have transformed not only the financial model for investigative journalism, but are producing some of the most impactful "Watchdog" reporting in decades. New "non-profit" news outlets such as Ojo Público (Peru), Plaza Pública (Guatemala) and Puerto Rico's Center for Investigative Journalism have renovated the financial model and distribution practices of investigative journalism. Their reports are launching

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anti-corruption and accountability processes across the Americas. At the same time, cross-border, non-profit reporting collaborations have emerged on many levels to trace the origins and transnational flows of organized crime and corruption; the most famous is the worldwide Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, which produced The Panama Papers and The Paradise Papers series. However, geographic concentration of media has become an increasingly visible problem, although it is not new. These projects and the diversity and access to coverage that online startups across the region bring to media systems have not penetrated large semi-rural and less-developed swaths of the region. In these territories we can speak of local "news deserts" (ABERNATHY, 2018) or zones of silence (MOREIRA & DEL BIANCO, 2019) [2].

In contrast, the record of state-led diversification of media ownership without encroachment on journalistic autonomy is mixed; its biggest success occurred in Uruguay, but similar legislation diversifying the radio and television spectrum was reversed in Argentina with a change in government. The media systems of Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia reflect these countries' political polarization with state-owned media on the left and privately-owned media (or what's left of it, in Venezuela) on the right.

Risks to Autonomy and Pro-Public Journalism

While most of the barriers to democratic development in Latin American media systems present in 2005 remain today, although in weaker or stronger variants, a number of risks to the professional autonomy already attained by journalists in Latin America can be identified. Further, we should add another dimension to our analysis – the wellbeing of journalists as human beings with fundamental rights. When considering risk, contemporary research from NGOs and the academy emphasizes deadly attacks on journalists and the probable sources of these attacks, which are political as well as criminal. While understandable and necessary, this focus on physical violence misses a range of other risks and how journalists respond to them (see AMADO *et al.*, 2019). To various degrees across the Americas, journalists also face targeting by populist politicians who delegitimize them personally as well as their fact-based news reports in general. Harassment from political partisans responds to a political culture that defines journalists as part of the opposition, which should be demonized. Another culturally based risk is the rise of hate speech directed at journalists; the online harassment of journalists across the region often maps to misogyny and the othering of ethnic and religious minority journalists, not just political fanaticism and populist targeting. In the realm of economic risk, the

inability of mainstream news organizations to take advantage of and thrive in the new digital economy has increased economic pressure on journalism. Economic risks to journalists and journalism manifest in a number of ways, from sector downsizing (layoffs and the shuttering of news organizations), to labor informalization and the economic precarity of journalists (i.e. poor and uneven freelance wages, long-term employment without benefits, salary reductions, and layoffs).

The multi-facetted risks contemporary journalists face and the stress that these risks produce originate in the political-economy, criminal activity that sometimes involves state actors and security forces, and oppressive cultural systems (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Typology of Sources of Risk to Contemporary Journalism.
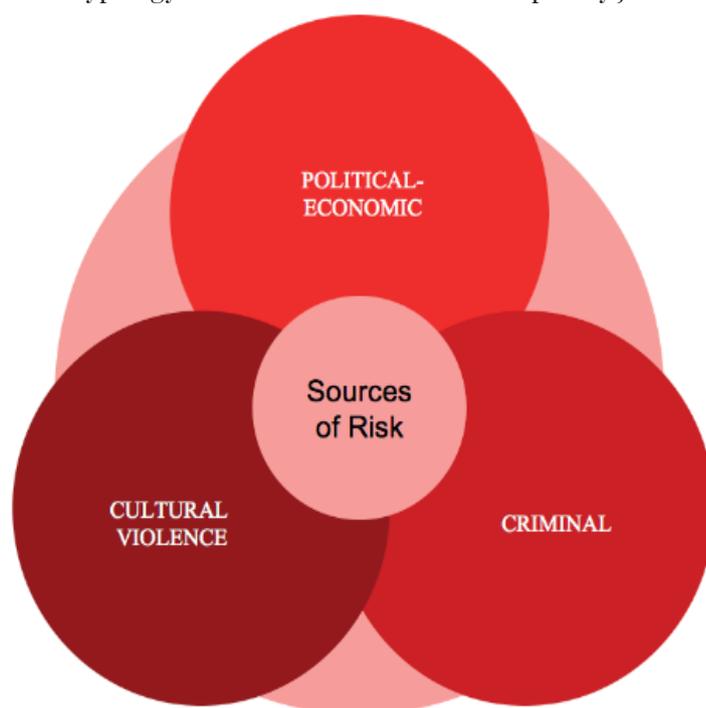
Resistance and Renewal?

Working in a high-risk, high-stress occupation can produce physical, emotional and psychological impacts on journalists personally, and curtail their occupational performance in ways that erode the democratic functions of journalism in society. However, resistance, renovation and resilience can also occur. If gauged only by employment numbers and financial tally sheets, journalism as an institution important to democracy is unraveling across the hemisphere. These data have led some observers to pronounce journalism "in crisis" and even predict the "death" of journalism. Such a view is incomplete, however. Indications of institutional resistance, renewal and even resiliency are visible within both the mainstream press and at the margins. Sometimes journalists and news organizations do indeed retreat from democratic norms and practices in the face of severe risks to their integrity, but

other times they resist encroachment on professional activities and seek to renew practices and structures that maintain or improve upon their public mission in new circumstances.

Examples of journalistic resistance and renewal are well known in journalist circles, and sometimes documented in recent academic work, but they have never been studied in a comprehensive and systematic way. Self-protection and support groups such as the Red de Periodistas de Juárez, formed by women, have emerged in Mexico in the face of horrible anti-press violence and the near-complete impunity attackers (De León Vázquez, 2018). Human rights organizations and journalist associations across the hemisphere, as well as international governmental organizations, have raised the profile of journalist safety on national and international agendas (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2017). As previously mentioned, "non-profit" news outlets are setting a new standard in Watchdog journalism based upon a new financial model for such work. Collaborations for investigative reporting rather than competition is becoming more frequent. In short, journalists are seeking ways to renew the foundations of democratic journalism in the face of multiple and sometimes severe risks, while at the same time they try to cope with unprecedented levels of stress associated with these risks.

In this rest of this special edition, authors in eight countries document aspects of the current context of risk and resiliency, as well as retreat, in Latin American journalism in varying ways.

Adriana Amado, from Argentina, reviews the universal metaphors associated with journalism and well-known media brands to reflect upon whether these metaphors, which were universalized in a different period, will describe the roles of journalism as it transforms. Celeste González de Bustamante, from the University of Arizona, presents the conceptual framework of moral geography to analyze local television news portrayals of undocumented migrants and migration during the 1970s and 1980s in the Arizona-Sonora section of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, using archival research and qualitative content analysis as methodologies. José Raúl Concepción Llanes and Martín Oller Alonso discuss how the entrance of new media technologies in Cuba in the last two decades, largely in the absence of state regulation, has slowly opened alternatives to the state system. Their article reviews those changes and discusses what they mean for consumption of information and entertainment materials in Cuba by focusing in the development of the alternative cultural consumption market on the island. After describing the development of the new media market over at least two decades, they focus on the Paquete Semanal (Weekly Package) and its implications for the conservation of the socialist ideological foundations of the Cuban government and the status quo 'modus operandi' of

The current state of journalism and the media industry in different countries are presented and discussed here. In the first of these articles, Mariana De Maio and Gustavo Torres González argue that the Paraguayan media system and journalism have several traits noticeable in its neighbors, including political parallelism, censorship, ownership concentration, violence against journalists and the abrupt termination of state-sponsored reforms targeting media pluralism. However, these similarities are placed within the unique historical development of the media-state relationship of Paraguay, a small, land-locked country bounded by bigger neighbors, which has received little attention from media scholars. Their article intends to help fill this absence by describing the history and contemporary situation of journalism in Paraguay for an international audience. A second article, authored by David Blanco-Herrero and Carlos Arcila Calderón, shows how the social, political, and economic crisis that affect the Venezuelan population is also visible in the field of communication, which suffers from three main problems: An economic crisis, which makes it difficult for media to survive and also stymies the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs); Socio-political polarization, which makes most media take an ideological position for or against the government and lowers credibility; and censorship and state control, which prevents the existence of free and independent media, often leading to self-censorship. These authors also highlight the proliferation of digital media as a means to get way from censorship and state control in Venezuela. The third article in this group comes from Colombia, authored by Jesús Arroyave and Miguel Garcés. Based on the local results from the second round of The Worlds of Journalism Study (2012-2016), they present their analysis of contemporary Colombian journalism, revealing that it has a strong partisan component, closely linked to the country's political and economic elites. Among the roles supported by Colombian journalists the authors list objective reporting, promoting tolerance and contributing to social change. They argue that this incongruence seems to be explained by significant organizational influences perceived by journalists in the form of pressure from publishers, editorial policies and media owners.

Three other articles complete this especial issue. From Peru, Lilian Kanashiro and Lucía Yap addresses journalistic coverage of news related to feminicide from a socio-semiotic perspective, especially journalistic enunciation. They argue that, although there is a wave of interest and concern about gender violence, including the various forms of violence against women, little research has been produced about the various forms of representation of these events by journalists. Their results indicate that coverage does not accurately represent official feminicide statistics,

since there is more coverage of intimate feminicide and, to a lesser extent, non-intimate feminicide. Matías Ponce's article, from Uruguay, reviews the presence of presidents and former presidents on Twitter. He argues the presidents' use of Twitter contradicts the theories that point to social networks as a space to improve the interaction between citizens and political actors. The methodology is based on a quantitative analysis of the use of social networks by 17 presidents and ex-presidents in 2017. The research was conducted ten years after the definition of Karpf (2009) on "policy 2.0," which presented an optimistic view of the participation of political actors in social networks. Finally, Alberto Cairo's article argues that most people who create charts or maps regularly for slideshows, articles, documents, and the like do not understand the basic elements of visualization, such as encoding, even though there is an increasing professionalization in the use of new design technologies.

Despite the linguistic proximity of the Spanish and Portuguese languages, there is still a distance to overcome to allow the circulation of academic work about journalism and the media in the Americas. In most Brazilian universities, the internationalization of scientific production is a growing demand, with the adoption of institutional policies that encourage alliances and collaborations. In this context, the purpose of this special issue of Lumina is to give visibility to the connections established among Latin American researchers gathered as part of the regional team to work on themes and specific questions to be included in the questionnaire for the third wave of the international comparative research The Worlds of Journalism Study (2020-2022).

Notes

[1] According to CPJ, and including journalists whose deaths were confirmed or suspected of being job related, 112 journalists were killed from 1995 to 2004 and 165 were killed from 2006 to 2015.

[2] For Colombia, see Cartografía de la Información (Information Maps) at https://flip.org.co/cartografias-informacion/. Accessed Aug. 1, 2019.

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