



JOURNALISM IN A SMALL PLACE: Making Caribbean News Relevant, Comprehensive, and Independent by Juliette Storr

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Journalism and Media in the Caribbean

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, journalism in North America and Western Europe has been saddled with an uncertain future. This uncertainty has led to the emergence of a discourse concerning the demise of journalism and the underlying threat to democracy. Though journalists and media scholars in these regions view journalism as a vital component of democracy, the profession finds itself struggling to stay relevant. This has come about through the spread of two major forces: market-driven principles that usurp social responsibility and co-opt the monitorial, radical, facilitative, and collaborative roles of journalism,¹ and new communication technologies that provide citizens with direct access to information. Though in the Caribbean, journalists and media scholars face similar challenges, they have had to face them within a specific context that includes both the smallness of their countries, as well as the centralized political structures, archaic media laws, dependent economies, and cultural peculiarities under which they operate.

Each of these challenges—commercial and technological—are perceived as threats to journalism. Because of the former, journalism is often seen as a commercial product more concerned with making a profit than being a pillar of democracy, while the latter is often seen as an encroachment on the exclusive rights of journalists to gather and disseminate information. As more people gain the ability to gather and disseminate information without the filtering effect of media organizations, the question “who is a journalist?” has emerged in Western media markets. Scholars such as Marc Raboy, Robert McChesney, and Jon Nichols predicted these

commercial and technological changes would bring about the demise of journalism, imperiling democracy in the process.² In the Caribbean, these changes are happening at a slower pace. The present chapter provides a brief description of the history of commercialism in the Caribbean, as well as a brief look at journalism and the media, its origins and present-day status, in the small states of the English-speaking Caribbean.

Mercantilism, Capitalism, and Commercialism

The first experience of commercialism in the Caribbean was characterized by mercantilism, an economic system that emphasized the accumulation of massive wealth by individual nations. During the colonial period (from the seventeenth to the twentieth century), this wealth was concentrated in the metropolises of the colonizers—Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, and the Netherlands. In Western countries, capitalism supplanted mercantilism as the prevailing theory of economic development at the end of the colonial period. Mercantilism and capitalism are related in that they both support a system of competition, but the latter emphasizes a system controlled by corporations, which is best expressed in Adam Smith’s philosophy of the invisible hand of the marketplace. Mercantilism is also referred to by some economists as early commercial capitalism, but it differs from commercial capitalism to the extent that it was set up by European nations to amass wealth through the plundering of natural resources—gold and silver, and later, slaves, cotton, and sugar—from their colonies. In their book *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, economists John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern refer to this form of economic activity as a zero-sum game whereby participants either win or lose. In capitalism, the means of production are privately owned and production is guided and income distributed mainly through the operation of markets.

Mercantile capitalism, as exemplified by such countries as China, Japan, South Korea, Brazil and Russia, among others, still exists. Economic theorists like Ian Bremmer, Daron Acemoglu, and James Robinson view today’s models of mercantile capitalism as state capitalism or cronyism. They argue that these systems do not produce the type of liberalism that promotes deliberative democracy.³ Bremmer describes state capitalism as antithetical to the ideals of liberal capitalism. In the former, he argues, the state functions as the leading economic actor and uses the markets

primarily for political gain. Acemoglu and Robinson agree that the problems with state capitalism are not economic but political; they believe these models will fail, “as the power of the state will interfere with the development of democratic ideals, particularly in an era of growing public access to information.”⁴ They conclude that “state capitalism is not about efficient allocation of economic resources, but about maximizing political control over society and the economy. If state managers can grab all productive resources and control access to them, this maximizes control—even if it sacrifices economic efficiency.”⁵

Other economists, like James Fallows, Alice Amsden, and Aldo Musacchio and Sergio Lazzarini, view state capitalism differently.⁶ They see it as a sustainable model that will help nations to advance their economies. While state capitalism has been around for centuries, the state either owns the companies or plays a major role in supporting or directing them in contemporary dispensation.

James Fallows, in his book *Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System*, argues that the idea that the state prevents growth and general happiness is an Anglo-American prejudice. MIT economist Alice Amsden, in her book *The Rise of the Rest*, believes India, China, Turkey, and Brazil had no choice but to intervene in their local markets. Fallows and Amsden see state capitalism as a viable alternative to market capitalism.

As independent, postcolonial states, the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean shifted their commercial mercantile systems to capitalist economies that emphasized marketplace ideals,⁷ but the development of commercial capitalism in the Caribbean was influenced by the social, political, and economic structures that were created under colonization. Therefore, although operating in capitalist marketplaces, Caribbean social, political, and economic institutions are still bastions of the former colonial empires that created them for mercantile purposes. The remnants of colonialism are most notable in public service institutions such as broadcasting, education, financial investment, and the judiciary. Despite the neoliberal policies of the 1980s and 1990s, which ushered in the deregulation of markets and the privatization of state institutions in the region, many of these institutions are still nationalistic corporations set up under British colonial government. In many Caribbean countries, the state still has either majority shares or minority shares and political

influence in public utilities such as telecommunications, water, and electricity. Mussachio and Lazzarini describe this as either a “Leviathan majority” or “Leviathan minority” approach, and define this type of capitalism as a hybrid form of state capitalism in which the government exerts considerable influence over the economy.

Fragano Ledgister attributes the current Leviathan institutional structures and systems in the Caribbean to colonization.⁸ He believes colonization in the Caribbean “created authoritarian government at the hands of bureaucrats whose primary concern was social discipline in the interest of the colonizer, but also social amelioration (in part as a means of securing social discipline, in part as a way of providing the state with suitable recruit) in accordance with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century liberal norms.”⁹ Ledgister explains: “the people of the region did not engage in heroic armed struggles for independence nor did they make a radical break with the colonial past and immediately seek to redefine who they were and their relationship with the rest of the world. Instead they took the institutions of democracy, which developed in the tutelary period, and kept them going.”¹⁰

Consequently, in the present-day Caribbean small states are caught between state cronyism and neoliberal capitalism. This is exemplified by the centralized structure of the political systems in these countries, which allows the state to retain considerable power in the decision-making process and often pits the state’s political agenda against the socio-economic agenda of liberal capitalism. This conflict makes it difficult for these states to progress with the advance of deliberative democracy.

This state of conflict is also reflected in journalism and media industries throughout the region. Tensions between journalists and government have escalated since the liberalization of these markets in the 1980s, with journalists pushing for less government control over public information, as well as the revision or elimination of the archaic media laws for libel and defamation that have allowed state representatives to penalize journalists for publishing information that public figures deem damaging to their images and reputations, or which, they claim, threaten national security. The International Press Institute’s (IPI) 2012 mission to the region resulted in the IPI Declaration of Port of Spain, which identified Caribbean countries as being “subjected to a panoply of repressive measures, from jailing and persecution to the widespread scourge of ‘insult laws’ and defamation,

which are sometimes used by the powerful to prevent critical appraisal of their actions and to deprive the public of information about misdeeds.”¹¹ These efforts at state censorship undermine journalistic values, freedom of speech, truth and transparency, and the principles of democracy.

Throughout the English-speaking Caribbean, print media has had a long history of private ownership while broadcasting, with the exception of the private British firm Rediffusion, was owned and controlled by the state until the last two decades of the twentieth century. State broadcasting in the colonies began as public service broadcasting under colonial administration. However, unlike their parent model, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), these broadcasters had to become commercial entities very early in their existence. Colonial broadcasters were not successful in establishing the same financial infrastructure as the BBC, and by the late 1940s and early 1950s they had become commercial entities. These systems were further challenged when deregulation, liberalization, and privatization policies were implemented in the 1980s and 1990s, opening these markets to intense competition.

Caribbean media evolved with a mixture of private and public entities until the late 1980s. Although many states liberalized their markets, particularly with regards to broadcasting, most of them retained a state broadcast entity, some under the guise of public service broadcasting, while others continued as state broadcasters. Few opted out of broadcasting completely. Today commercialism is blamed for many of the ills affecting Caribbean journalism, both print and broadcast. These include marketization, tabloidization/sensationalism, fragmentation, and a decline in professional ethics. Other threats to journalism’s integrity have emerged from new technologies such as the internet, which has provided the public with more access to information and created a competitive forum for citizen journalists and bloggers. Like its global counterparts, the media environment in the Caribbean is faced with the double threat of commercialism and new technology. But the intervening factors of market size, low-to-moderate internet penetration, and culture are sustaining these markets—for now.

It is important at this point to discuss the history of media and journalism in the region. The following historical background is not exhaustive, but it helps to explain how the current state of journalism continues

to constrain and challenge journalists to make the news more relevant, accurate, comprehensive, and independent from those it monitors.

A Brief History of Caribbean Media and Journalism

Journalism in the modern-day Caribbean is prefixed by the global history of journalism, which is as old as the history of people's need to know. Human societies have always found a way to pass on stories about who, what, when, where, why, and how. Storytellers, formal and informal, were the forerunners of modern journalists. As societies evolved from preliterate to literate, we gathered and disseminated our stories about ourselves and our activities, near and far, with the aid of various technologies. The history of journalism thus began with the written word. The earliest traditions of gathering and disseminating written news reports began with the first handwritten dailies in Rome and China between 59 BC and about 222 AD. Later, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, handwritten weeklies became common in European countries like Italy, Germany, Holland, England, and Russia. The modern-day newspaper was of course created with the invention of the printing press. Henceforth, journalism became a structured activity designed to record the daily events of society: gathering, analyzing, interpreting, creating and disseminating news and information.

Mitchell Stephens, in his book *A History of News*, identified the modern-day newspaper as a European invention.¹² He posits American journalism got its start from British contributions, in the form of the first newspaper owners and the style of news reporting. The British had a penny press before the Americans, and the early term associated with newspapers, “the gazette,” was inherited from the British, though it can be traced to the early Venetian newssheets known as *avisi*. The origins of journalism in the English-speaking Caribbean are similar. As colonies of the British Empire, newspapers in the Caribbean were started by British citizens.

In addition to the printing press's contribution to journalism's history, many Western journalists regard John Milton's “Areopagitica,” a speech delivered to the Parliament of England in 1644 against the licensing of printed material and censorship, as the precursor for the modern philosophy on the right to free expression and freedom of the press. It was

delivered during the English Civil War and in the wake of the English Reformation; it was in the furor of this period that print journalism was born. Since the seventeenth century, the British Parliament has been committed to the ideals of freedom of speech and the exposure of ideas to open debate. Today, British journalism's first principle is "press freedom." These core values of free speech and press freedom were passed onto British colonies.

In the English-speaking Caribbean, the history of journalism is also intertwined with the history of discovery, piracy, colonialism, slavery, indentured labor, and long periods of conflict. The printed press was introduced throughout the region in the 1700s, and was owned and operated by members of the white oligarchies found throughout these colonies, most of whom were British or American businessmen and women. Free blacks, or "coloreds," introduced some of the printed press during the latter years of the nineteenth century, but the majority of the newspapers, whether daily, weekly, or monthly, were owned and operated by white mercantilists, and landowning oligarchic elites. Howard Pactor presents a historical sketch of newspapers in the English-speaking Caribbean in his bibliographic directory, *Colonial British Newspapers*.¹³ John Lent provides more details of some of the newspapers in his work on Caribbean media.¹⁴ Other Caribbean scholars, such as Aggrey Brown, Ewart Skinner, Mark Alleyne, Erwin Thomas, and Omar Oliveira, include brief sketches of the media history of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Grenada, and Belize in Stuart Surlin and Walter Soderlund's edited volume *Mass Media and the Caribbean*.¹⁵

During the colonial period there was little concern for keeping a historical record of the daily happenings in these colonies; a lack of archival facilities existed until well into the middle of the twentieth century, which meant that few records of newspapers survived. According to Pactor, British settlers started the first newspaper in the region, the *Weekly Jamaica Courant*, in Jamaica in 1718. There were more than six hundred and fifty newspapers in the English-speaking Caribbean, but none of those started in the eighteenth century are in print today. Only five newspapers from the nineteenth century are still published: the *Royal Gazette* (founded in Bermuda in 1828), the *Daily Gleaner* (Jamaica, 1834), the *Nassau Guardian* (Bahamas, 1844), the *Voice of St. Lucia*, (St. Lucia, 1885), and the *Barbados Advocate*, (Barbados, 1895).¹⁶

The second longest-running publication in the region is the *Gleaner*. According to Jamaican communication professor Hopeton Dunn, the *Gleaner* was been owned by a succession of slave-owning and oligarchic families. Currently the region's largest newspaper publishing group, the Gleaner Company Ltd. is owned by the Clarke/Ashenheim family.¹⁷ The Gleaner Company owns the *Gleaner*, the *Star*, a weekly tabloid, and the *Sunday Gleaner*. White businessman Gordon "Butch" Stewart started Jamaica's second-largest daily, the *Jamaica Observer*, in 1993. In the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago, the histories are similar.

The longest-running publication in the Bahamas is the *Nassau Guardian*, which was established by a white oligarch family, the Moseleys. Today, the *Nassau Guardian*, along with the *Nassau Tribune*, which was started by white businessman Leon Dupuch in 1903, is one of two national dailies in the Bahamas. Dupuch's mulatto son, Etienne, was editor of the *Nassau Tribune* for fifty-four years. In 2012, the IPI and the Guinness Book of World Records named him the longest-serving newspaper editor in the world. A black businessman is now part owner of the *Nassau Guardian*. There is a third daily, the *Bahamas Journal*, owned by black businessman Wendall Jones, but it is not nationally distributed.

In Barbados, the longest-running paper, the *Barbados Advocate*, was started by the British newspaper conglomerate Thomson Newspapers. A white oligarchic family, the McEneaneys, bought the newspaper in 1985, and it was bought in 2000 by Anthony Bryan, a black businessman. The *Barbados Advocate* "enjoyed a long run as the most prominent newspaper in the country, at various times having a monopoly on the daily newspaper market."¹⁸ It was not until the emergence of the *Barbados Nation* in 1973 that the *Advocate* had serious competition. Local businessmen Fred Gollop and Harold Hoyte started the *Nation* to compete against the *Advocate*. Today, the newspaper industry in Barbados is divided between the two newspapers, though the *Nation* is now the largest-selling paper. There are also a number of smaller monthly circulations and online publications.

The first newspaper in Grenada was the *Royal Grenada Gazette*, which began in 1765 and ended in 1788. According to Pactor, none of the colonial newspapers in Grenada have survived. The oldest newspaper there today is the *Grenadian Voice*, which began in 1982 and is owned by Spice Island

Printers, Ltd. The *Informer*, started in 1984, has become the weekly *Grenada Today*, which is published online.

Ewart Skinner describes contemporary national dailies in Trinidad and Tobago as “conservative entities that promote themselves as independent voices. Their editorial positions support capitalism, middle-class consumerism, upper-class social and cultural aspirations; and foreign, conservative governments, principally the US.”¹⁹ Trinidad and Tobago has three national dailies: the *Trinidad Express*, the *Trinidad Guardian* and *Newsday*. The oldest surviving newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago are the *Catholic News*, a specialty weekly that began in 1892, and the *Trinidad Guardian*, a national daily newspaper started in 1917 by a group of white businessmen. The *Trinidad Express* was started in 1967 by a group of local businessmen as a competitor to the *Trinidad Guardian*. Therese Mills, a black businesswoman and former editor in chief of the *Trinidad Guardian*, started *Newsday* in 1993.

Belize’s media history is similar. Newspapers were started in the colonial period, were first owned by white oligarchs, and later, blacks and other ethnicities became media owners; in the mid-twentieth century, political parties became publishers of national newspapers as well. In August 2012, the columnist Janus provided a brief history of newspapers in Belize in the newspaper *Amandala*.²⁰ According to Janus, there was only one newspaper in the 1940s, the *Daily Clarion*, and it was started in 1936 under colonization. Phillip Goldson and Leigh Richardson turned the 1940s newsheet *Oh Yaeh* into the newspaper the *Belize Billboard* in 1950. Richardson and Goldson were members of the People’s United Party (PUP) and the newspaper, which functioned as the voice of the PUP, became the *Belize Times* in the 1990s. Today, Belize has no daily newspaper. The major weekly newspapers in Belize are *Amandala*, the *National Perspective* and the *Reporter*. The *Guardian*, another significant newspaper, was established in 1969, and it is also published once a week. The *Belize Times* and the *Guardian* are the official newspapers of the PUP and the United Democratic Party (UDP), respectively. *Amandala* was started in 1969 by the United Black Association for Development (UBAD) and is the most widely circulated newspaper in the country. It is published twice a week. The *Reporter* was founded in 1967 by Harry Lawrence and is published weekly. The *National Perspective*, a weekly founded in 2008, is the latest newspaper. The history of journalism in Belize is not included

in Factor's account, which he claims is more comprehensive than earlier accounts of journalism in the region. However, in *The Making of Belize*, Anne Sutherland notes the first newspaper in the country appeared in 1852; she credits John Lent, one of the most well-known and disputed scholars of Caribbean mass media, as her source. She also acknowledges that in Belize, "there is no historical tradition of an independent press, and little attempt to promote one today."²¹

The emphasis on the ethnic and racial identities, as well as the political affiliations, of media owners is important in a region still encumbered by its colonial past. Race relations and political clientelism are complex and complicated in these hybrid societies. Caribbean nations are still very young, with fifty years of experience (and sometimes less) as independent states. This has not allowed sufficient time for them to evolve into mature democratic states, resolve the tensions among racial and ethnic groups who reside in these small spaces, or dissolve clientelistic practices and patronage-ridden politics. While the majority of these countries have a dominant African population, indentured laborers from East and South Asia (or East India, as it is known in the English-speaking Caribbean), as well as Europeans and people from many other countries, have created a complex multicultural space. In some Caribbean countries, such as Trinidad and Tobago or Guyana, there are two dominant ethnic groups, Africans and East Indians. Belize is a racially mixed society; Latino, Creole, Maya, Garifuna, and Mennonite are its five largest ethnic groups.

The issue of race relations is particularly relevant to the economic, political, and social development of these countries. The fact that these relations were created during the colonial era, and were only rarely addressed publically, underscores some of the challenges journalists face when it comes to covering economic elites in Caribbean countries, as the majority of the wealth still remains in the hands of white oligarchs. The emergence of a black oligarchy has provided some economic diversity, but social life remains stratified along class and race lines.

Since its inception, journalism in the Caribbean served the mercantile class and the metropolitan centers of the British Empire, which has advanced the wealth and culture of the British colonizers, and not the economy and culture of the colonies themselves. Although within the truncated history of the English-speaking Caribbean, journalism has often focused on disseminating news from external centers, it has also provided a rich

portrait of social, economic, and political life in these “often obscure” and “nonessential” colonies. However, much of the content has focused on the concerns of the ruling elites, with very little attention, especially during the colonial era, paid to the internal or domestic social, economic, and political needs of the majority black, Indian, and indigenous populations. The content of newspapers during the colonial period and well into the middle of the twentieth century came directly from European centers, especially London, and later, from American cities like New York and Miami. Many of these early newspapers filled their pages with duplicated copies of foreign news stories; many also shared their content with each other, such that few local news reporters were hired. This outward focus superseded the need to focus on the injustices of colonization and slavery. The editors or publishers, along with a handful of additional persons put most of the newspapers together. Local news reporting in the region did not begin until the 1930s and 1940s, and even then a limited number of local stories made it into Caribbean papers. There were no local bylines in the newspapers until the late 1950s and early 1960s—and even then, most of the news reporters or journalists, particularly in broadcasting, were foreigners. It was not until the 1960s that more locals were hired at newspapers and radio stations. Of course, the amount increased after these countries became independent states, yet as Yvette Stuart noted in her 2001 study of Bahamian national dailies, a significant amount of news content—more than 50 percent—was still foreign or international; it focused mainly on the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada.²²

The black press in these countries also made significant contributions to the development of democracy, but unfortunately very few of these early efforts have survived. After slavery was abolished, the metropolitan-centered approach continued, but there was a shift to local news as more black or colored newspapers appeared in circulation during the latter part of the 1800s and early 1900s. These early black publications provided a context for reflections on black social, economic, and political life. By the start of the twentieth century, there was more domestic news in the local white-owned newspapers, but the content remained predominantly foreign. By the time radio broadcasting started in the 1930s there was a definite shift to local news, though foreign news was still dominant.

According to Howard Pactor, the earliest colonial papers “present a detailed record of the life and concerns of the colonists of the region. The

individual papers reveal their own purposes in each colony at particular times in the colonial period. Reflective of oligarchic opinion, many of the journals serve as valuable records of European struggle to survive in the region.”²³ However, as Pactor recounts, “by the late nineteenth century, newspapers established by and for the black communities began to appear. While many of these journals did not survive, their presence helped instill confidence and pride in the black populations, which contributed to the establishment of successful newspapers and to the eventual end of social disabilities and colonialism.”²⁴

While Pactor provides a positive description of the impact of black journals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it took several decades before these newspapers were financially successful or succeeded as major contributors to the end of social injustice under colonization. Further, there were other factors that led to the end of colonization. The trade union movement of the 1930s, the early attempts at regionalization through the creation of the West Indian Federation in the 1950s, the American civil rights movement of the 1960s, the regional independence movement of the same decade, along with other global events after the end of the Second World War, contributed to the demise of colonization. These additional factors also led to shifts in the purpose and function of journalism throughout the region. The domestic or national needs of these former British colonies began to take precedence over international and colonial concerns. However, the long history of external leadership and focus continued to influence the profession and practice of journalism. As the need to be informed of their own domestic concerns grew, spurred on by early trade union, federation, and independence movements, Caribbean journalists shifted their focus from the external metropolitan centers in Europe or North America to the internal centers of these growing nations. By the 1950s and 1960s, journalism, particularly through the black press, emerged as an advocate for the majority black population in most of these countries, as educated black elites took political control of their countries and propelled them to independence. In countries like Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, where the population is divided between Africans and Indians, the independence movement was dominated by members of the educated black and Indian elite, such as Eric Williams and Forbes Burnham, the first prime ministers of Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, respectively. Indian leaders like Guyana’s Cheddi Jagan and Trinidad and

Tobago's Basdeo Panday also played a significant role in the development of these countries. When black-led political parties replaced the oligarchic white minorities during the independence movement of the 1960s and 1970s, journalism—both print and broadcast—shifted its purpose to nation building.

Broadcast journalism's beginnings in the region are similar to that of print (though while broadcast media also began under colonial administration, slavery had been abolished by the time it developed). The earliest radio station, VIBAX, began operating in the Bahamas in 1930. Private citizens from the white mercantile class, colonial governments, or Rediffusion, introduced radio throughout the region. Because the colonies were so dependent on external centers to survive, broadcast radio went the way of newspapers, focusing mostly on the needs of the external metropolises rather than local populations. The goal of colonial broadcasting was to advance the values, standards, and beliefs of the British Empire, and the education and enlightenment of the rural areas of the region, particularly in the realm of public health and agriculture.²⁵ Broadcasting throughout the English-speaking Caribbean was guided by the public service ethos of the BBC, and early broadcasting in the colonies thus reflected the political, economic, and social policies of colonialism.

When radio broadcasting began in the 1930s, "it provided the citizens of the colonies with a faster means of disseminating information; it also ameliorated the fears and isolation of the people who lived in the rural communities: radio allowed them to learn more quickly about impending threats like hurricanes and tropical storms, and it informed them about other activities that were important to the economic and social wellbeing of their communities."²⁶ American communications scholar Harold Lasswell identified three additional functions of early broadcasting: surveillance of the environment (knowing what is going on), correlation of the parts of society in responding to its environment (having options or solutions for dealing with societal problems), and transmission of cultural heritage (socialization and education).²⁷ Charles Wright added a fourth function: entertainment.²⁸ These functions were encapsulated in the BBC's motto "to inform, educate and entertain."

In the early years of radio broadcasting, colonial stations—those owned both by the state and by Rediffusion—did not meet all the needs of these Caribbean societies.²⁹ Their primary focus was meeting the needs

of the British Empire, namely the expansion of colonialism and the mercantile system. In the colonies this translated into news and information services that concentrated on public service. This condition changed when these state institutions “shifted their goals in the 1940s and 1950s to commercialization. Commercialization brought state broadcasting’s sole dependence on the government for economic survival to an end. Decision-making powers were shared with advertisers who demanded that the stations attract larger audiences. These demands resulted in improvements in technology and quality of service and increases in staff.”³⁰ However, state control of broadcasting remained.

The independence movement of the 1960s also influenced radio broadcasting in the Caribbean. In post-independent states, colonial radio stations were taken over by the newly elected national governments and henceforth became state-run entities; independence thus shifted the focus from external to internal. Yet while local programming increased, foreign content was still high. Also, Rediffusion continued to own private radio stations throughout the region until the 1990s, so external control of information continued. During the early days of independence, both print and broadcast journalism focused on nation building. This form of journalism was prominent throughout the region and is referred to by many scholars as development journalism. Later the term “communication for development” became the preferred term in the literature, and has since been used to describe media’s role in development.

The term “development journalism” emerged at the Press Foundation of Asia in the 1960s. Asian journalists were concerned that foreign news organizations were covering socioeconomic developments in their countries in a superficial way; many journalists simply reported government press releases and quotes verbatim, rather than provide meaningful analysis to help citizens understand the impact or consequences of development projects. In the 1970s and 1980s, development journalism became very popular with African and Caribbean governments, who used it to foster national growth, and today it continues to focus on social conditions in developing states in an attempt to improve them; it identifies and examines socioeconomic problems such as poverty, researches its causes and consequences, and explains how to address it in developing countries. Despite its usefulness, development journalism lost its prominence in Caribbean states in the late 1980s, and was subsumed by commercial journalism.

One of the key goals of development journalism is to help government institutions implement positive socioeconomic change, especially in rural or remote areas of developing countries. Journalists are called upon to collaborate with government agencies to raise awareness of public projects through the stories they tell. Development journalists also propose changes and solutions. Their work therefore stands as a powerful advocate for positive change in the lives of millions of poor people. Clifford Christians, Theodore Glasser, Denis McQuail, Kaarle Nordenstreng, and Robert White describe this type of journalism in their description of the collaborative and facilitative roles of journalism.³¹ Other scholars, like Michael Schudson and Silvio Waisbord, refer to this type of coverage as advocacy journalism.³² In the facilitative role, Christians et al. explain, “the media is relied on by other institutions for certain services in areas such as politics, commerce, health, education, and welfare.”³³ They believe “the media provide access for legitimate claimants to public attention and for paying clients. But they also make a virtue of the facilitative relationship, provided that it is voluntary and does not compromise their integrity, credibility, or independence.”³⁴ In developed countries, collaborative journalism “supports the national interest, is patriotic, and respects authority.”³⁵ In developing countries, collaborative journalism takes the form of development journalism and supports development goals: “The collaborative role specifies and values the tasks for media that arise in situations of unavoidable engagement with social events and processes.”³⁶

Michael Schudson links the history of advocacy journalism to the “partisan press” and “partisan journalism,” which was popular in the US throughout the nineteenth century. Schudson discusses the vilification of advocacy journalism and its critics’ strong belief that it taints the normative values of truth, objectivity, and balance. He identifies advocacy journalism as a tool for political mobilization, whereby the news media serves as an advocate for particular political programs and perspectives and mobilizes people to act in support of these programs. Despite the argument that equates partisan journalism with propaganda, Schudson believes that advocacy journalism or partisan journalism could be useful in democratic states: “if different partisan viewpoints are well represented among institutions of journalism, then a journalist-as-advocate model may serve the public interest very well. Partisan journalism enlists the heart as well as the mind of the audience. It gives readers and viewers not only information

but also a cause.”³⁷ In contrast to advocacy journalism, Schudson explains, “the objective, informative, and non-partisan investigative functions of today’s leading news organizations may have de-mobilizing effects. They provide people with information, but they do not advise people what to do with it. If anything, they seem to imply that nothing can be done, that politicians are only interested in their own political careers.”³⁸

A second definition of development journalism aligns more closely with the collaborative role of journalists. Government and the press join together to spread important information throughout the country, especially crisis situations like terrorism, natural disasters, crime, health, and safety. Christians et al. point out that even without crises, “there is usually a latent or partial system of cooperation between the media and organs of government and the state that produces voluntary collaboration.”³⁹ They acknowledge that this type of journalism “impinges on the independence of the press and other media”⁴⁰ but is legitimate and absolutely necessary. Governments need the media to help them educate and inform citizens and also to enlist their cooperation on major development projects. The danger to journalism comes when government uses “development” to restrict freedom of speech and journalists are told not to report on certain issues because it will impact the “development” or “security” of the nation. This limits the journalist’s role in democratic states of providing citizens with the truth, and it impedes effective decision-making.

As a result of mid-twentieth-century political changes in Caribbean states, “broadcasting became a significant medium for transmitting culture, mediating politics and economics, selling products and services, and extending communication capabilities throughout the region and beyond. After independence, merchants and politicians paid more attention to radio’s ability to reach a large audience simultaneously with the same message. Listeners, and later viewers, became more interested as the quantity and quality of programs increased after 1950.”⁴¹ Although Caribbean radio programs still had a lot of foreign content, particularly from Britain and the United States, there was a significant increase in local input. “Music programs became more entertaining; radio personalities became more endearing; and news programs were more informative and interesting. Government agencies and departments began to use radio and television to disseminate information to the public, particularly on education and public health.”⁴² As radio broadcasting, and later television, developed, it

“cut across physical, economic, and social barriers to provide a variety of common cultural experiences.”⁴³

Internal and external forces also facilitated these changes. While European colonization gave broadcasting its structure and function, “American technology, and British and Canadian training and programming, changed its format and content; Caribbean and Commonwealth cooperatives gave it a regional focus; and nation building brought social, economic, political, and cultural changes to Caribbean societies and an indigenous focus to broadcasting.”⁴⁴

Caribbean media markets have evolved through two additional periods since the 1970s—the period of liberalization, deregulation, and privatization, which started in the mid-1980s, and the period of new digital technologies, which began in the mid-1990s. The region is still reacting to the changes brought on by both periods, which include intense commercial competition and increased digital communication. These changes will be discussed in more detail throughout the remainder of this book, but it is important to note that they have had a profound influence on the profession and practice of journalism throughout the region.

The Purpose of Journalism

The function of the press in modern societies rests on our understanding of the relationships between media, culture, and society. Many scholars have developed theories to explain these relationships. The most famous emerged from the various committees to establish and govern the BBC, which created the public service ethos that formed the basis of Caribbean colonial broadcasting, as well as the American Hutchins Commission report, which established the requirements for a free and responsible press.⁴⁵ Other significant contributions came from Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm’s *Four Theories of the Press*, which identified media’s role in four political systems—authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and communism⁴⁶—and theories of development—democratic-participant, postcolonial, media economics, and elite power groups. While these normative theories try to explain media’s role or function in postmodern societies, they fall short to the extent that they rely on how things should be rather than how things actually are. Although debunked by scholars such as John Merrill and Ralph Lowenstein, in their

article “Media, Messages and Men: New Perspectives in Communication,” and Jennifer Ostini and Anthony Fung, in their article “Beyond the Four Theories of the Press: A New Model of National Media Systems,”⁴⁷ *Four Theories of the Press* is still highly regarded in journalism and communication schools in the United States and beyond. However, it has been criticized for its idealism, lack of empiricism, obsolescence, and inapplicability to contemporary societies. International media scholars Ostini, Fung, Merrill, Lowenstein, John Keane, and others, have argued for more grounded theories that reflect the current variations in media systems, cultures, and societies. Ostini and Fung believe that “although journalism is contextualized and constrained by press structure and state policies, it is also a relatively autonomous cultural production of journalists negotiating between their professionalism and state control.”⁴⁸ They propose a new model incorporating the autonomy of individual journalistic practices into political and social structural factors to reflect current global press practices more accurately. This is the perspective that I embrace in this work. But instead of using the conservative and liberal categorization of Ostini and Fung, I propose a more open model that incorporates the theory of hybridity, a mixing of various global perspectives with local and regional realities to explain the function and purpose of journalism in small Caribbean states.

My proposed model also builds on the earlier models of Caribbean media scholars such as Stuart Surlin and Walter Soderlund, Aggrey Brown, Ewart Skinner, Mark Alleyne, Erwin Thomas, John Lent, and Omar Oliveria. In Surlin and Soderlund’s 1990 edited volume on mass media in the Caribbean, five major characteristics of Caribbean media are identified: government-press relations, mass media ownership, media imperialism, growth of mass media industries, and journalism education.⁴⁹ Building on Picard’s 1983 elaboration of *Four Theories of the Press*, Surlin and Soderlund identified these systems as either “authoritarian-tending” or “liberal-tending.”⁵⁰ Authoritarian-tending systems are those “which exert direct or indirect government pressure to ‘restrict’ the reporting of news (authoritarian), or conscious government use of the media to portray a particular social and political reality (communist systems).”⁵¹ Liberal-tending systems are those with “minimum government interference regarding the information the press disseminates, the operative principle being that truth will win out in the free marketplace of ideas.”⁵² The cultural domination

theses, particularly the one proposed by Humphrey Regis that encompasses the key framework of domination by importation/exportation with the addition of reexportation, are also included in this proposition for an open theoretical framework.⁵³ The reexportation framework complements theories of hybridity and is important for understanding current practices. Also, particularly salient for modern Caribbean societies are the theories of Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, as well as Christians et al., on the role and responsibilities of journalism in the twenty-first century.

The dictates of the marketplace are contravening the general consensus that journalism should serve the needs of the people of the Caribbean by providing citizens with the information they need to be participants in their own governance and make informed decisions that affect their daily lives. Kovach and Rosenstiel articulate this position in their book *The Elements of Journalism*. They see journalism as “storytelling with a purpose. That purpose is to provide people with information they need to understand the world. The first challenge is finding the information that people need to live their lives. The second is to make it meaningful, relevant, and engaging.”⁵⁴

In the introduction to the book *What is Good Journalism? How Reporters and Editors Are Saving America’s Way of Life*, editors George Kennedy and Daryl Moen examine the value of journalism.⁵⁵ Kennedy and Moen believe that

Journalism tells us most of what we know about the world beyond our own experience, and that it goes where its audience cannot or will not follow. Journalism keeps daily watch on the actions of government and the other powerful institutions of society. Journalism exposes wrongdoing and injustice. Journalism explains in everyday language the findings of science and the arguments of philosophy. Journalism pulls together and organizes obscure but important facts to create useful knowledge. Journalism tells stories of heartbreak and heroism, of triumph and disaster, of the endless fascinations in ordinary life. Journalism is the glue of information that holds a complex nation together.⁵⁶

The American Project for Excellence in Journalism argues that the central purpose of journalism “is to provide citizens with accurate and reliable

information they need to function in a free society.”⁵⁷ American journalists who contributed to the project believed this definition encompassed “myriad roles, such as helping define community; creating common language and common knowledge; identifying a community’s goals, heroes, and villains; and pushing people beyond complacency.”⁵⁸ There are other requirements, too, “such as being entertaining, serving as a watchdog, and offering a voice to the voiceless.”⁵⁹ To accomplish this task, American journalists identified nine core principles: obligation to truth, loyalty to citizens, discipline of verification, independence from those they cover, the independent monitoring of power, a forum for public criticism and compromise, making the news interesting and relevant, keeping the news comprehensive and proportionate, and the exercise of personal conscience. In the second edition of *The Elements of Journalism*, Kovach and Rosenstiel added: “the rights and responsibilities of citizens.”⁶⁰ This last principle is particularly important in a digital environment where citizens can also gather and disseminate information.

Caribbean journalists have also articulated similar versions of the purpose of journalism in their societies. Bahamian journalist Tosheena Robinson Blair believes “the purpose of journalism is to educate, to inform, to keep our people abreast on what is happening in society, why it is important to them, why they need to know this, and why they should care.”⁶¹ Veteran Bahamian journalist Nicki Kelly also explained that “journalism has a very big responsibility ... to inform people, to investigate, to expose wrongdoing, and to initiate positive changes.”⁶² Karen Herig, editor of the *Nassau Tribune*, holds similar views about journalism’s role in keeping “people informed about things that they have the right to be informed about, holding people and a government accountable, warning people if there is crime.”⁶³

In its 2010 code of ethics, the Press Association of Jamaica noted that all members of the press have a duty to maintain the following professional and ethical standards:

- 1) The rights of freedom of expression and the freedom to receive and impart information are fundamental rights of all human beings.
- 2) The agencies of mass communication, private and public, are carriers of public information, opinion and discussion essential to give practical effect to the right of freedom of

expression and right of all individuals to access information. 3) Those rights carry obligations that require media organizations to represent and reflect the public interest at all times and journalists to perform their professional duties with intelligence, objectivity, accuracy, and fairness.⁶⁴

Barbadian journalists uphold similar values. As Eric Smith has explained, “We have a commitment to the people who don’t have a voice ... we have a commitment to try and seek out truth and justice and even where people wield a lot of power in advertising or they may wield a lot [of power] in politics or the legal system we still have a duty despite the legal hurdles that we may encounter to ensure that there is always right and justice and fair play.”⁶⁵ Journalist and radio talk show host David Ellis said he would like to see “more individuals within the profession who see themselves and the role that they play as being absolutely vital to society.”⁶⁶ One of the owners of the *Barbados Nation*, Harold Hoyte, believes the role of the journalist is to “ensure that the less fortunate in the society are protected, that the leaders in society are kept honest at all times.”⁶⁷

In Trinidad and Tobago the sentiments are similar. As Omatie Lyder, editor of the *Trinidad Express*, explained, “The ultimate reward for me is when people get useful information from my stories that they can use to make important decisions in their lives.”⁶⁸ A young Trinbagonian journalist, Peter Christopher, believes journalism is not just a profession but a duty. He identifies the current practice of journalism in the Caribbean as weak and lacking quality because many young reporters treat it as merely a nine-to-five job. He thinks journalists need to think seriously about what they do and how it impacts society. “I don’t consider journalism [as] just a profession because in a way ... it’s almost like ... it’s a duty that you have to the public because you have to get the facts out. You are basically the voice of the people in a way.” He believed “you have to get the information they need. It’s not just about writers or just to say hey Peter wrote the story that’s in the newspaper. It’s about how this affects the people, what does this mean to the public. It’s a vocation, that’s what I believe journalism is.”⁶⁹

Another aspect of the journalist’s role in Trinidad and Tobago, Christopher added, is to

highlight an issue, be it [a] public issue or public figure, an event that happened, and relay the facts, the information and implications to the public. That is the role of a journalist to me. I'd say very few [of us] are [doing this]; many of them would just cover the event and say this happened. They wouldn't go into why this happened or what will happen if this happens and the few that do, they sensationalize what happen[ed] and try to swing an angle that would cause controversy.⁷⁰

In 2012, Belizean journalist and professor Holly Edgell posted an article on her blog entitled "Journalism in Belize: It's time to temper guts and gore with balance and context."⁷¹ Edgell's comments came amidst a growing concern for the sensational nature of crime coverage in Belize and the region as a whole. "I believe Belizean journalists should temper their coverage," she argued, since "balanced storytelling that respects privacy and allows members of the public to retain their dignity in times of crisis can still be compelling."⁷²

Based on these comments, one could conclude that Caribbean journalists hold similar views to those of their American and European counterparts on the central purpose and value of journalism. How well Caribbean journalists apply these fundamental principles in the current milieu of technological innovation and market-led reform will be examined later in this book.

The English-speaking Caribbean is experiencing a period of rapid change in broadcast and print journalism. While there are some parallels with changes experienced around the world, there are also areas of divergence. In the midst of the shift to commercialism, Caribbean journalism is flourishing economically as the overall circulation of tabloids, broadsheets, and specialized magazines multiplies and the number of news formats (free dailies, broadcasting time, online news portals) increases. From Jamaica—the largest independent English-speaking country in the region, with a population of 2.8 million and geographic space of 4,111 square miles, five terrestrial television stations, twenty-two radio stations, fifty-two cable television stations, and four newspapers—to St. Kitts and Nevis—the smallest independent English-speaking country, with a population of 41,000 on a landmass of 133 square miles, and three

terrestrial television stations, twelve radio stations, two cable television stations, and three newspapers—these micro states have created over-saturated media markets. And these figures do not even include the availability of foreign media channels through satellite, internet technologies, and spillover signals.

Despite the increase in media channels and the attendant rise in profits, the homogenization of journalism, the rise of sensationalism and more entertainment-oriented reporting, as well as the blurring of boundaries between news and advertising, has resulted in a backlash against journalism. Much of this backlash presents itself in the form of public criticism and challenges to the profession. Robert Picard, a British professor of media economics, argued in a 2009 lecture at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford that in the current dispensation, journalists in Britain deserve low pay because they were not creating much value. Professor Picard explained the instrumental value of journalism—things that facilitate action and achievement including awareness, belonging, and understanding—has been usurped by contemporary communication developments whereby any ordinary person can observe and report the news, gather expert knowledge, determine significance, and publish this information using a variety of audiovisual aids. Further, most of the people doing these activities are doing them without pay. Accordingly, Picard believed journalists must redefine the value of their labor beyond this level. This lecture was reprinted in the 7 June 2009 *Jamaica Sunday Observer*. According to Byron Buckley, president of the Press Association of Jamaica, members of the association were upset with Professor Picard's statements.

For Caribbean journalism to survive and advance, practitioners need to center journalism so that it emerges as a more effective pillar of their democratic societies. Three significant areas that could be improved are comprehensiveness, relevance and engagement, and independence. And, as Professor Holly Edgell of Belize has argued, journalism in the Caribbean should focus on the three Rs: reality, responsibility and restraint.⁷³

Comprehensiveness and Proportionality

In *The Elements of Journalism*, Kovach and Rosenstiel argue that one of the main principles of journalism should be comprehensive and proportionate

news coverage. This principle rests on the notion that journalists should pay more attention to what stories to cover in their communities. Christians et al. argue that this principle is even more important in the current age of internet and wireless technologies.⁷⁴ According to Kovach and Rosenstiel, journalism is our “modern cartography; it helps citizens to navigate society: that is its utility and its economic reason for being.”⁷⁵ Based on this responsibility, Kovach and Rosenstiel believe journalism’s value depends on its completeness and proportionality.

The absence of both is one of the great areas of weakness in Caribbean journalism. The ideal of more complete and balanced news coverage comes from American, Caribbean, and European media scholars, but it is best articulated by Kovach and Rosenstiel, who believe this is one of the core principles that journalists should practice in the twenty-first century. As citizens, they note, we should ask the following questions: “can we see the whole community in the coverage? Do I see myself? Does the report include a fair mix of what most people would consider either interesting or significant?”⁷⁶ These questions are particularly important in the Caribbean context as these microstates encompass multicultural societies; in such an environment, issues of media diversity and media literacy are becoming more prevalent. This principle will be examined in more detail in the second part of this book.

Relevance and Engagement

Another principle that is equally important to the practice of journalism in the Caribbean is the principle of relevance and engagement. Kovach and Rosenstiel’s seventh principle of journalism requires journalists to make the significant interesting and relevant.⁷⁷ They note that much of the debate on engagement and relevance is positioned in relation to one or the other—engagement versus relevance. But this is a false dichotomy; news should be relevant *and* engaging, particularly in an oversaturated information age. Kovach and Rosenstiel ask: “Should we emphasize news that is fun and fascinating, and plays on our sensations? Or should we stick to the news that is the most important? Should journalists give people what they need or what they want?”⁷⁸ They claim that understanding these two as either/or, storytelling or information, need versus want, distorts the overall purpose of good journalism. Most people want storytelling *and*

information, facts *and* fascination, entertainment *and* information. The “journalist’s task is to find the way to make the significant interesting in each story and finding the right mix of the serious and the less serious that offers an account of the day.”⁷⁹ This position moves journalism towards the middle of the continuum between storytelling and information. Seen through Kovach and Rosenstiel’s argument, “journalism is storytelling with a purpose.” They believe “that purpose is to provide people with information they need to understand the world ... [to find] the information that people need to live their lives ... [and] to make it meaningful, relevant, and engaging.”⁸⁰ An interesting question to ask in contemporary journalism, both globally and in the Caribbean, is, “If journalism can be both significant and engaging, if people do not basically want it one way or the other, why does the news so often fall short?”⁸¹ Within the Caribbean context there are numerous problems that stand in the way of news being presented engagingly and relevantly, including “haste, ignorance, laziness, formula, bias, cultural blinders.”⁸² Each of these issues contributes to the current “if it bleeds it leads” focus of journalism, and they will be explored in the Caribbean context later in this book.

Independence

Kovach and Rosenstiel’s perspective on the principle of independence starts with the question: What makes something journalism? The answer, they argue, goes beyond the elements of truthfulness, commitment or loyalty to the facts, and extends to citizens playing the watchdog role, verification, and providing a public forum. They believe that while journalists must maintain a “fidelity to accuracy and facts,” they must also remain independent from those they cover. This principle applies to hard news, soft news, commentary, opinion, or criticism. “It is this independence of spirit and mind, rather than neutrality, that journalists must keep in focus.”⁸³ This is responsible journalism.

The central issue for journalists is determining to whom or what they owe their allegiance. Does their loyalty lie “with friends, colleagues, their political ideology or party, with the news medium or organization for whom they work, with cold facts or with the truth?”⁸⁴ In giving citizens the information they need to understand their world and make important life decisions, journalists must understand this important principle and

decide where their loyalty should lie in a given situation. Yet ultimately, journalists, no matter what type of journalism is practiced, owe their loyalty to accuracy and hard facts.

Achieving journalistic independence is complicated in small places like the Caribbean, but it is an important part of advancing the public interest and providing citizens with the information they need to be free in a democratic society. In the Caribbean, this principle is closely related to journalism's mandate to be an independent monitor of power and a voice for the voiceless. These principles are often captured by the act of "investigative reporting," but there is a lack of this in the small countries of the Caribbean.

American and British journalism has a tradition—although not always evident or implemented when most needed, such as during times of war—of pursuing and exposing corruption that has been largely absent from Caribbean journalism. Perhaps the most famous example is the Watergate scandal of the 1970s, which was reported by American journalists Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward in the *Washington Post*. This coverage culminated in the resignation of President Richard Nixon. Similarly, the 2012 phone hacking scandal in London, reported by British journalist Nick Davies in the *Guardian*, caused the demise of Rupert Murdoch's newspaper, *News of the World*. According to Kovach and Rosenstiel, after the Watergate story, investigative reporting in the United States gained "celebrity status and sex appeal and redefined the image of journalism."⁸⁵ The effect was seen everywhere from the *New York Times* to CBS, with its creation of the television program *60 Minutes*, to the creation of local investigative teams, or "I-Teams." The independence required of the press to perform its monitorial role is not new: it predates the Watergate scandal. In the United States, investigative journalism has its "roots in the earliest notions of the meaning of a free press,"⁸⁶ as well as the First Amendment. For the British, a free press can be traced to the early days of reporting with the founding of the press and the movement for reconstruction later borne out in the advocacy of John Milton, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, John Stuart Mills, and other philosophers who agitated for liberty and equality. This history was transferred to the English-speaking Caribbean through colonization.

It is difficult, and at times impossible, to follow the American or British (or for that matter Canadian, Australian, or any other) tradition of

investigative reporting in the Caribbean. Therefore, it is important for the region to develop its own style of investigative reporting. In the following chapters, I will discuss the reasons for the lack of investigative reporting in the English-speaking Caribbean and the challenges of implementing the principle of independence. I will also recommend a hybrid style of investigative journalism that may be more conducive to the Caribbean context.

These principles—comprehensiveness and proportionality, relevance and engagement, and independence—should become the core of the practice of journalism in the Caribbean. Using these principles, journalists might advance the role of their profession in the region.

