At the Community Level: Cultural Competence and News Coverage of a City Neighborhood

Dianne M. Garyantes[*]

Cultural competence has been embraced by a number of professions whose members interact with culturally diverse communities. Yet the concept has been criticized as being narrowly conceived and ill-defined and lacking effective measures. This study attempts to refine the definition and measures of cultural competence, applying the concept through a textual analysis of the multimedia news texts of student journalists reporting on inner-city communities. The study found that multimedia practices offer the potential to move news texts toward a more culturally competent approach to journalism. Additionally, reporters need to develop strategies to negotiate their "insider-outsider" status in culturally diverse communities.

Key words: Cultural competence; community journalism; Others; inner-city neighborhood

The need for a better understanding about communities and cultures other than our own has taken on a new urgency, given today's rapidly expanding process of globalization, increasingly diverse domestic populations, and increased engagement through digital technologies. An important way that people at home and across the globe learn about communities and perspectives other than their own is through the mass media, including the news media (Bennett, 2005; Brennen & Duffy, 2003; Gans, 1979/1980; Lippmann, 1922; The Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947; Tuchman, 1978). Yet, journalists have long been criticized for their inability to cross cultural boundaries and report about communities and perspectives that may differ from their own (Brennen & Duffy, 2003; Gans, 2011, 1979/1980; Natarajan & Xiaoming, 2003; Said, 1978). In response, some scholars have called for a new approach to mass communication and, in particular, journalism that includes multiple perspectives to provide more inclusive coverage and promote understanding (Gans, 2011, 1979/1980; JanMohamed, 1992; Mowlana, 1984; Ward, 2005).

Many professions have begun to address the issue of inclusiveness and the ability to work effectively with individuals and communities from cultures different from their own by embracing the concept of "cultural competence." These professions include social work, psychology, public relations, business, government, education, and health care (Craig, Hull, Haggart, & Perez-Selles, 2000; D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; Doutrich & Story, 2004;

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[*] Dianne M. Garyantes, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of journalism at Rowan University.

Johnston & Herzig, 2006; National Association of Social Workers, 2001; Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1999). Georgetown University's Center for Child and Human Development features a National Center for Cultural Competence (National Center for Cultural Competence, 2012).

This study applies the concept of cultural competence to journalists by examining the ways in which reporters portray culturally different "Others" in their news texts. The theoretical frameworks used in the study include the social construction of reality, which addresses how people within social groups interpret the world around them (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Schutz, 1944), and concepts related to social cognition including schema, attribution, and cognitive complexity, which address how individuals construct and perceive the world around them (Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Hamilton, Devine, & Ostrom, 1994). The ways in which reporters are influenced by their social groups and personal experiences have the potential to affect the way in which they perceive and report on culturally diverse communities and culturally different "Others." These perceptions can make their way into news content, and audiences could in turn be influenced by these texts.

As Krippendorff (2004) noted, a text "means something to someone, it is produced by someone to have meanings for someone else, and these meanings therefore must not be ignored" (p. 19). Hall (1997) wrote that the importance of texts is situated in their function; they construct and transmit meaning. Language and texts, he wrote, "operate as *symbols*, which stand for or represent (i.e., symbolize) the meaning we wish to communicate" [italics added] (p. 5).

Thus, a fundamental aspect of journalists' work is the news text they produce and the potential meanings they construct. Increasingly, journalists' texts involve more than written articles. They also include multimedia content such as videos, photos, photo galleries, and blogs, all published over the Internet. Multimedia, short for "multiple media," is defined as "using various forms and combinations of media – sounds, text, video, animations (and anything else that may come along) – and presenting them to users/consumers of that content" (Wilkinson, Grant, & Fisher, 2009, p. 165). Multimedia journalism has been defined as the "presentation of a news story package on a Web site using two or more media formats" (Deuze, 2004, p. 140).

This study examines multimedia news coverage of urban communities that is published on a university-based website devoted to hyperlocal coverage of one city's neighborhoods. The coverage can be considered part of community journalism, a concept that has been evolving after having first been conceived as reporting on specific geographical locations such as small towns, suburbs, and particular neighborhoods in large cities (Reader, 2012). Community journalism is distinct from other kinds of journalism in a number of ways, including that it has been characterized by the close relationship between the journalists and members of their audience. Today, the notion of community journalism has expanded to encompass coverage of special-interest magazines, hyperlocal websites and communities that are not tied to a particular location, including virtual communities, which makes the concept ripe for further investigation (Rosenberry, 2012).

Specifically, this study closely examines the multimedia news texts of student reporters covering cultures and communities that are different from their own to identify factors that influence the cultural competence of journalists and to determine whether the students' texts demonstrate a culturally competent approach to journalism.

Cultural Competence: Current Conceptualizations and Criticisms

Cultural competence, sometimes referred to as cross-cultural competence or multicultural competence, broadly involves the extent to which individuals develop the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to understand and work effectively with communities and people from diverse cultures (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; Sue, 1991; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Sue, a scholar in the field of psychology, began developing the notion of cultural competence in 1982, categorizing the concept with the dimensions of attitudes and beliefs, knowledge and skills (Sue, 2001). The first dimension later was updated as "awareness" (Sue et al., 1992). The awareness dimension, according to Sue (2001), involved the counselor's acknowledgement of his or her own attitudes and beliefs, including assumptions, biases, and notions about other cultures and the world, the role of racism and oppression in society, and the impact of social and cultural influences on human functioning; the knowledge dimension involved an understanding of the worldview of the culturally "different" client, or the client's values and assumptions about human behavior; and the skills dimension involved the practice of appropriate and sensitive intervention strategies. Sue (2001) further updated his model of cultural competence to include the dimensions of foci of cultural competence (individual, professional, organizational, and societal) and race- and culture-specific attributes (African American, Asian American, Latino American, Native American, and European American).

Scholars and practitioners in the fields of psychology, nursing and social work have embraced cultural competence and, like Sue, have attempted to expand the concept's dimensions. Sodowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, and Wise (1994) found that knowledge and skills were not enough for one to be a culturally skilled counselor and suggested that cultural competence models include a dimension that assesses the impact of cultural and racial attitudes on the dynamics of the counseling relationship. Other scholars have proposed dimensions for cultural competence such as the seeking out "cultural encounters" and "cultural desire," which refer to professionals' motivation to engage in the process of becoming more culturally aware (Campinha-Bacote, 2007). Another study advocated for "cultural proficiency" to replace the concept of cultural competence as a way to achieve culturally appropriate nursing care (Wells, 2000). Cultural proficiency, according to Wells, would integrate the dimensions of cultural competence into the culture of an organization, as well as in professional practice, teaching, and research. While these and other additional dimensions of cultural competence have been proposed, Sue's original three dimensions of awareness, knowledge, and skills continue to form the basis of most cultural competence research, training and education programs today.

Meanwhile, the fields of mental health and social work in particular are rife with cultural competence tools and scales. The Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-Skills Survey (MAKSS) is a 60-item survey used to assess, through multiple-choice questions, a measure of social work students' perceptions of their level of multicultural counseling awareness, knowledge, and skills (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991). Using a four-point Likert scale ranging from very limited to very aware, for example, students answer questions such as "At this time in your life, how would you rate your understanding of the impact of the way you think and act when interacting with persons of different cultural backgrounds?" or "In general, how would you rate your level of awareness regarding different cultural institutions and systems?" Another instrument is Ponterotto's Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS), a 32-item, self-reporting measure with a seven-point Likert scale; each scale contains 20 items that pertain to social workers' awareness and knowledge (Kohl, 2005). Respondents are asked to rate on a

scale ranging from "Not at All True" to "Totally True" a series of statements such as, "I think that clients who do not discuss intimate aspects of their lives are being resistant and defensive" or "I am comfortable with differences that exist between me and my clients in terms of race and beliefs."

In a study of the cultural competence of communication professionals, Freitag (2002) assessed the ability of U.S. public relations practitioners to undertake international assignments through a survey instrument, looking at the practitioners' college study of foreign languages and subjects such as non-U.S. history and economics, as well as professional and nonprofessional international travel. He found that cumulative time spent outside the United States was the best indicator of the practitioners' cultural competence, while college study of non-U.S. subjects and foreign languages were partial indicators of cultural competence.

In qualitative studies of cultural competence, researchers have examined the concept through individual and group interviews (Doutrich & Story, 2004; Fitzgerald, Williamson, Russell, & Manor, 2005; Johnston & Herzig, 2006), and the collection of narrative data, such as audiotaped reflective discussions about cross-cultural encounters (Doutrich & Story, 2004) and the use of narrative interviews (Taylor, Gambourg, Rivera, & Laureano, 2006).

However, while cultural competence has gained use and credibility among a broad range of professions during the past two decades, it also has been criticized as relying on vague definitions and inconsistent empirical measures, and missing important perspectives of the so-called "Other" (Herman, Tucker, Ferdinand, Mirsu-Paun, Hasan, & Beato, 2007; Kocarek, Talbot, Batka, & Anderson, 2001). Scholars from the fields of social work and psychology have maintained that cultural competence has not been conceptualized to address the important issues of oppression and social injustice (Dean, 2001) or considerations of power and positionality of those involved in the cultural competence dynamic (Suzuki, McRae, & Short, 2001). In addition, the concept thus far has been measured mainly through quantitative assessments, usually through surveys of professionals before and after they have undergone cultural competence training.

Some scholars argue that the concepts of culture and cultural competence are complicated in nature and best assessed solely through qualitative means (Johnston & Herzig, 2006). Anthropologists in particular have criticized cultural competence as essentializing the multifaceted nature of culture, with some calling the concept a "backdoor to racism" (Lee & Farrell, 2006). Culture, according to anthropologists, is historically situated, de-territorialized, and continually evolving due to internal and external influences. It also should be broadly defined and related to the ways in which people and communities make meaning in their lives (Geertz, 1973; Rosaldo, 1989/1993).

This study seeks to answer whether and how journalists can better understand and represent various cultural perspectives in the news and potentially promote understanding about these perspectives by becoming more culturally competent. To address criticisms of cultural competence and to tailor the concept for journalists, expanded conceptual and operational definitions of cultural competence were created for this study. Due to the complex nature of culture noted by anthropologists, the conceptualization of cultural competence used in the research is based on a culturally competent *approach* to journalism and the position of a journalist along a continuum of cultural competence, as discussed by Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989), rather than determining whether a reporter "is" or "is not" culturally competent.

In addition, the study conceptualizes culture, located within the knowledge dimension of cultural competence, as a multifaceted notion that includes "macro" aspects involving cultural practices that conform to common codes and norms; shared language; and common historical,

political, social, and economic development. It also includes anti-essentialized "micro" aspects, such as internal contradictions and inconsistencies, continual change due to internal and external influences, and the multiple identities of individuals within the culture. An understanding of the macro aspects of culture provides a generalized context for the culture, while the micro aspects reveal the reality on the ground, so to speak, meaning the contradictions and complexities inherent in any human activity. A culturally competent journalist would develop an understanding of "macro" and "micro" aspects of a culture and have the ability to convey those aspects of culture to a mass media audience.

The dimensions of awareness and skills developed by Sue et al. (1992) also were used in the operationalization of cultural competence of journalists. For journalists, awareness would involve being cognizant of one's socially constructed and individual cultural perspectives and biases. The awareness dimension also would include mindfulness of potential power issues between sources and journalists, in that journalists ultimately control the content of news texts. A culturally competent journalist would be willing to relinquish some degree of control over news texts to sources, such as not interrupting sources during interviews, using lengthy and accurate quotations by news sources, and incorporating into texts numerous audio and video clips with sources speaking with their own voices. They also would be aware of the complexities involved in intercultural communication, using culturally sensitive language, challenging stereotypes and not being hesitant to approach news sources from different cultures.

The skills dimension of cultural competence for journalists would involve a myriad of skills to interact effectively and appropriately with culturally different "Others," such as communicating effectively and appropriately, creating news texts that avoid stereotypes, and providing context for the way people make sense of their lives by covering a broad array of perspectives and issues related to a particular culture. Being comfortable, open to different perspectives, flexible, empathetic and respectful with others also are important attributes and skills for journalists, particularly those who are reporting on culturally diverse communities.

Method

This study attempts to refine the definition and measures of cultural competence, applying the concept through a textual analysis of the multimedia news texts of student journalists reporting on inner-city communities. The research is part of an extensive case study of a multimedia urban reporting lab in which undergraduate student journalists produced multimedia news and feature stories about urban communities in a large northeastern city. An important aspect of the study and the focus of this article is a close examination of the student journalists' news texts as they relate to cultural competence. The close examination was conducted through a textual analysis of the students' multimedia news texts, supported by in-depth interviews with the students' news sources and community representatives about the reporting and news texts. The operational definition of cultural competence developed for this study was used as a basis for the analysis.

The texts of two student groups working in the multimedia urban reporting laboratory as part of their university coursework were identified for the textual analysis. The two groups of student reporters covered the same issue in the same neighborhood – the sale, use, and abuse of illegal drugs. Each reporting group was made up of three student journalists; one group produced texts about the neighborhood during the Spring 2008 university semester and the other covered the same community during the Summer 2008 semester. The students' multimedia news

packages about the neighborhood were posted on a course website and included written text articles, videos, audio news packages, photographs, and photo galleries.

In a textual analysis, the researcher attempts to "make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text" (McKee, 2003, p. 1). In addition to likely interpretations of the students' texts, evidence of culturally competent awareness, knowledge, and skills was sought within the texts. Other important aspects of assessing the cultural competence of the news coverage included evaluating whether the students were able to represent the complexities of life in the neighborhood and determining the potential meanings that could be generated from the texts.

The neighborhood the students covered is considered part of so-called "Badlands" and is the home to the city's number one drug-selling corner (Volk, 2007, 2011). The sale of illegal drugs, particularly heroin and cocaine, has created a hub of economic activity in the neighborhood that cannot be matched anywhere else in the community. A local newspaper article quoted a university sociologist as saying that narcotics are the "major employer" in the neighborhood (Volk, 2007).

The sale and use of drugs in the neighborhood also can be considered similar to the conceptualization of "inner-city street culture" by anthropologist Philippe Bourgois, who defined street culture as: "a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values, and ideologies that have emerged in opposition to exclusion from mainstream society" (1996/2003, p. 8). This study argues that the sale and use of drugs in the neighborhood examined in this study represents a "culture" according to the way that culture is conceptualized in this study, using anthropologists' Clifford Geertz's definition of culture, which involves "webs of significance," (1973, p. 5) as well as Renato Rosaldo's conceptualization of culture as the way in which people "make sense of their lives" (1989/1993, p. 26). What follows is an analysis of how the student reporters in the two groups covered the neighborhood's drug culture in their news texts.

Results

The first group, the Summer 2008 student group, covered the neighborhood during a six-week summer session at the university in May and June 2008. This group consisted of three students who were 22 to 23 years of age. One student was an African-American woman, who will be called "Sharon," and the others were two men, one white man, who will be called "George," and one mixed-race of Irish and Puerto Rican descent, who will be called "Ryan." All reported that they had grown up in middle-class, suburban areas of 30,000 people or less, with residential populations that were somewhat ethnically diverse; all had grown up approximately within a 75-mile radius of the city in which the university was located. Sharon was majoring in the broadcast journalism sequence; Ryan was in the magazine sequence, and George was in the news-editorial sequence.

Summer 2008 Group: "The Corner That Cares"

The Summer 2008 group produced several multimedia pieces as assigned during the semester. This analysis examines the students' final multimedia package, which focused on local services for drug-addicted people. The multimedia package was titled "The Neighborhood Corner That Cares." One text featured a 5:47 video called "The Saving Corner," about three

social service organizations located around one corner of the neighborhood. One of the organizations provides Christian-based ministry for addicts by a local pastor who is a former drug addict; another is a food kitchen run by a local Catholic organization; and the third is a 12 Step recovery house, which runs programs for addicted people and provides apartments for homeless addicted people. The students' video features interviews with the pastor at the service agency, the priest who directs the food kitchen, and workers and addicts at the recovery house including recovering drug addicts who now live or work there. Accompanying the video was a written, print-style article, "The Last Stop is Always the Hardest," about the 12-Step recovery house and the apartments it provides next door for homeless addicts. The article describes the recovery clubhouse and the apartment building, and it includes quotes from some of the former addicts who have received services. Most of those same quotes also were featured in the video.

The recovery house and stories of former addicts are part of the "web" of the neighborhood's drug culture. An analysis of the news pieces showed that the student reporters demonstrated aspects of a culturally competent approach to their coverage relative to the community's drug culture. For example, the students' news texts revealed an understanding of little known, nuanced, "micro" aspects of the drug culture. In "The Saving Corner" video package, multiple voices and perspectives of recovering addicts were heard, revealing their struggles with addiction and the help they had received in the recovery house. The reporters also were covering an issue of significance in the neighborhood, which indicates a "micro" level of knowledge of the community and its priorities. Thus, the students' texts had the potential to transmit some knowledge of the culturally different "Other" to their audiences.

Another indication of knowledge of the Other in the group's news texts was that the student reporters were able to represent some of the complexities of life in the "web" of the drug culture, according to interviews with news sources and neighborhood representatives. One news source said in an interview that the video in particular represented the reality of life for an addict, and he noted that audiences "need to hear about both sides. They need to see the struggle everybody came out of and where they are at now, versus where they were before...It gave it a good point of view of reality."

One reason the student reporters were able to provide a representative account was because they featured recovering drug addicts telling their own stories. The students extensively used the former addicts' own voices, particularly in the video, and allowed the sources to speak for extended periods of time without interruption. During the interviews, the camera held on people's faces for extended periods of time, with few edits. The lack of interruption and amount of time the students provided for the subjects to tell their stories demonstrated empathy and respect for the recovering addicts, both of which are skills and attributes associated with cultural competence. In addition, even though the stories addressed common mainstream news media storylines about the community – drugs in the so-called "Badlands" – the student reporters produced alternative storylines by focusing on solutions to the problem such as services for addicts and other people in need. This approach contrasts with the city's mainstream media's coverage of the community, which tended to focus on crime and law-and-order themes.

The nature of multimedia storytelling was highly contextual. Photographs, audio packages, and videos used in multimedia storytelling take the audience to a particular location and allow people to tell their stories in their own words. Having people speaking in their own voices – rather than solely mediated through a reporter's notes and texts – not only shifted some of the control of the narrative in the residents' direction, but it also allowed the audience to come to know local residents. But while the student reporters in the Summer 2008 group interviewed a

number of people and featured them speaking in their own voices and within their own context, they did not harness the full contextual potential of multimedia storytelling. The written article that was located below the video on the students' web page for the course used the same interviews and same information as "The Saving Corner" video. The news article provided no new information for the audience about the recovery house and addicts' lives. Also, there were technical problems revealed in shaky camera shots and quick cuts in the video; one interview was conducted in an environment so noisy that the speaker could not be heard. These technical issues have the potential to lower the credibility of both the reporters and the piece.

The textual analysis of the students' news package also revealed that one reporter's perspectives came through in the written article about the recovery house. For example, the article described the black-colored door of the apartment building for homeless addicts as looking "like it could lead to another dimension." It is not clear what dimension the reporter was referring to, but the representation reflects the reporter's perspective and would not necessarily be shared by others. A more culturally competent approach to reporting would be for the student journalist to be aware of his own perceptions and attempt to learn other perspectives, such as finding out about the meaning of the black door from the individuals who live in the building and local residents who live nearby. The reporter also wrote that after entering the apartment building, "it is easy to see that what its residents call an apartment looks more like a jail." Again, the residents refer to the place as an "apartment," yet the reporter writes that it is "more like a jail" – another reference to the way the reporter makes sense of the world rather than the individuals he is writing about. The text goes on to state that life in the building is "almost like living in primitive times…in the sense that entertainment and technology are non-existent." Once again, the reporter's socially constructed way of making sense of the world – that life without entertainment or technology is "primitive" – could be viewed differently by those who have other perspectives. The text also does not demonstrate empathy for the lives of people in the community. In this case, dimensions of cultural competence such as awareness of one's biases, knowledge of the Other, and the skills of being empathic and open to different perspectives do not appear evident.

In addition, alternative voices relative to the services available in the community were missing in the video package, according to interviews with the news sources. One news source said he wished the student reporters had talked with people who go to the food kitchen to "help people understand that people don't really choose to live here. A lot of middle-class people think that they just don't want to get a job and they are lazy." Thus, while the multiple perspectives were provided regarding recovering addicts at the 12 Step recovery house, the perspectives of other local people who need the food services featured in the video were not provided.

Little "macro" information was provided within the students' news texts, indicating a lack of cultural competence. One of Ryan's course-related blog postings provided some neighborhood history about manufacturing jobs leaving the neighborhood, which helped to pave the way for an economy based on the sale of illegal drugs, but this information was not included in the video package or the text article. The blog post stated that the loss of manufacturing jobs in the neighborhood left a "void of business (and) created a hub for drugs, especially heroin." Inclusion of this important contextual information would have made for a more culturally competent "The Corner That Cares" text.

Another way the students could have provided more context and "macro" information in their pieces on recovery from drug addiction would have been to dig deeper into the "whys" of addiction. According to one news source:

They only view their present condition and the present condition that they are in. I don't think they dig enough to try to ask the questions of why. I think if they ask that question, they will find out why, you know, sexual abuse has driven some of these girls to, not just to their addiction, but also to the prostitution, to support it and to numb their pain.

As Hall (1997) noted, meaning in texts is based on the symbolic function of the word, photo or electronic transmission; this tells us what the text stands for. "The Corner That Cares" multimedia text features the food kitchen and services for drug addicts, and includes interviews with addicts who talk of their struggles with drugs. The main message seems to be: *These people need help*. While this representation of the culture is a compassionate one, this representation – coupled with some of the language used in the text article about the apartment building seeming "primitive," within "another dimension," and like a "jail" – also is a limited one and indicates "exoticizing" of the recovered addicts. This multimedia package included factors that both contributed to and hindered the level of cultural competence in the texts.

Spring 2008 Group: "War on Drugs"

This section analyzes a multimedia package about drug addiction and sales in the same community produced by the second student group working in the neighborhood. This student group was made up of three female journalism majors, all 21 to 22 years of age. In this case, one of the students ("Maya") grew up in the neighborhood and still lived there at the time she was reporting on it. She was majoring in the broadcast journalism sequence and the other two were in the magazine sequence. Maya and another student, "Susan," were of Asian descent, and one, "Joanne," was white. Susan, who was of Korean descent and had been adopted by a white family, grew up in an upper-middle-class suburban county that was contiguous with the city. Joanne grew up in a middle-class, suburban community about 95 miles away from the university. Maya, who was of Vietnamese descent, had lived in the neighborhood since the age of three. In contrast to the previous group, which covered the neighborhood during the condensed six-week summer period, the students in this group were working in the neighborhood during a typical 15-week semester.

The group's text analyzed in this study also focused on the students' final project about drug addiction and sales in the community. Like the text produced by the other student group, elements of the multimedia piece represented aspects of the "web" of the local drug culture. The multimedia piece included: a photo gallery with captions that led viewers through different drug-related aspects of the neighborhood, such as the railroad tracks where addicts shoot up and garbage cans that act as stashes for drugs; a text article providing the economic history of the neighborhood and discussing how drug sales have become the new economy; and a series of two- to three-minute videos, including one set of a "drug tour" of the neighborhood, another set that featured "Voices" links of interviews with local people in various stages of addiction, a video news package about a needle exchange program in the area, and a video of a local community activist rapping about the local drug problems. Other links included blog postings in which the students wrote about their experiences reporting on the story, contact information for the sources, and email addresses for the reporters.

Several factors that contribute to cultural competence emerged from a textual analysis of the group's texts. Some of the same indicators of cultural competence uncovered in the previous

group's stories also were demonstrated here, including that the texts reflected "micro" knowledge of the neighborhood by providing nuance and multiple perspectives and by addressing an issue that was important to local residents. In addition, as with the previous group, news sources interviewed said the texts represented the complexities of the drug culture in the neighborhood.

The Spring 2008 group also demonstrated several factors that contribute to culturally competent news coverage that were not reflected in the previous group's stories. The texts revealed a deeper level of knowledge of the Other in the form of additional context about the community's drug culture. For example, the texts included "micro" level information, such as the needle exchange program – a specific aspect of the neighborhood's web and a concern for local residents – as well as "macro" level information, such as structural issues and the economic history and development of the neighborhood. Elements in the group's multimedia text, including the photo and video drug "tour" of the neighborhood, emotional interviews with current and recovering drug addicts, and the article outlining the historical background and information about the socio-political development of the neighborhood, provided other "micro" and "macro" context needed to help audiences understand the extent of the drug problem in the neighborhood and its effect on local residents.

The "War on Drugs" stories indicated other factors that could be considered contributors to cultural competence. For example, like the first group, alternative storylines were offered. The texts included the voices of current and former drug addicts, as well the director of the needle exchange program and community residents who oppose the program because they say it litters area parks with needles and attracts addicts. The Spring 2008 coverage contrasts with the previous group's drug services story, which did not include the perspectives of active addicts, of residents who oppose services for addicts in the community, or of others affected by the web of the drug culture in the community.

In addition, the students in the Spring 2008 group developed attributes and skills specific to knowledge of the Other and toward more cultural competence by clearly moving out of their comfort zone to report on the story. While the previous student group went to local organizations providing services for addicts, the students in this group went to drug corners to observe transactions, underneath railroad bridges where addicts shoot up heroin, to parks littered with needles, and to local businesses affected by the discarded needles. The active addicts were interviewed on the street.

A community organizer who acted as a guide on the "drug tour" for the Spring 2008 group said he has provided such tours for other journalists, including professional journalists, and took note that this student group went beyond the information he provided and found active and recovering addicts to interview. He said:

> The stuff they did without us, interviewing the other people, that stuff was impressive to me because that's really not easy to get…. It still takes a lot of courage to go and approach them and try to get them to open up like that. They don't know… how they're going to be perceived and there's a very delicate thing about being a specimen. Nobody wants to be looked at like you're coming down here to look at me 'cause I'm a freak. You know, like, no one likes that feeling, so you have to cross that barrier and make them feel like, you know, it's all right.

The Spring 2008 group not only went out of their comfort zone to report the story, but the students also went beyond their primary news sources – the community organizers who took the group on a "drug tour" - in order to provide information to their audiences. The students presented their audience with additional "micro" knowledge with interviews with active addicts. And, while the community organizers provided a "macro" perspective by discussing the economic decline of the neighborhood, the students' written article in the multimedia piece included additional "macro" information such as U.S. Census data providing the latest employment and economic statistics on the neighborhood.

In fact, the "War on Drugs" package demonstrated a great deal of "micro" and "macro" knowledge of the community's drug culture. The students' video and written news text discussed the historical and socio-political development of the community, as well as the roots of structural issues, in the form of economic and political deprivation in the urban neighborhoods relative to the suburban communities in which some of the students were raised. "Micro" knowledge also was evident in the students' drug stories, where the texts were multi-vocal and interviewees were placed within their context: on the street, along a particular side-street that is falling into hands of drug dealers, at the drug corners, and in parks where used needles litter the grass. The interviews with addicts and local residents were often emotional and were shot in close-ups, drawing in the audience and almost making them a part of the story.

In addition, the blogs for the Spring 2008 reporters indicated awareness of self, a willingness to challenge or even change their own perspectives, and an inclination to remain open to the perspectives of community members. One blog described a student's visit to a local Narcotics Anonymous meeting to learn more about addiction; another wrote that she came to realize the sale of drugs "wasn't a business that only affects certain people. People of all ages and races were on that corner trying to make money to survive." The students' blogs also were open about the students' experiences during the reporting process; the blogs revealed the students' positionality and expressed a great deal of compassion the students felt toward the addicts and the people in the neighborhood. Joanne wrote in her blog that the drug tour was "one of the most eye-opening experiences I've had" in the city, later adding that she left the drug tour "with my eyes wide open with nothing to say," while Maya – who observed recovery sessions in the same 12-Step house as the students in the other group – wrote twice in her blog that she wanted to cry over the drug addicts' stories. This type of empathetic revelation and self-awareness was not evident in the previous group's blogs.

Maya was the student who also was a resident of the community. Although Maya's position in the web may be differently located compared with the other students because she and her family are affected as local residents, she still said she had had limited exposure to the culture and remains on its outer edges. Thus, while she could have been considered an "insider" as a resident of the neighborhood, she still was an "outsider" to the drug culture in the community. Interestingly, Maya was aware of her "outsider" status relative to the drug culture and arranged the tour with community organizers to learn more about the use of sales of drugs in the community. She was able to negotiate her "outsider" status by connecting with an "insider" to the culture she wanted to cover.

Returning to Hall's (1997) notion of the meaning and symbolic function of texts, an examination of the "War on Drug" package showed that it attempted to draw in its audience with historical context, multiple perspectives from people in the neighborhood affected by drugs and the drug trade, closely shot interviews, a take-you-there tour of the neighborhood, and revelatory blogs. Even the title of the package, "War on Drugs," while indicating a mainstream law-and-

order storyline, also seemed designed to activate the audience. The meaning of the piece indicated "a call to arms" and implied that we all should do something about the drug problem in the neighborhood. This meaning reflects more of an "insider's" perspective on the drug problem in the neighborhood because it attempts to make the issue a salient one for everyone to solve for the good of the neighborhood, versus a "situation" to be observed, with a certain amount of shock and surprise, from the outside. The reporters were able to cover more aspects of the drug culture's webs of meaning, including its complexities, such as the desperation of the addicts and storeowners who no longer want to sweep up used needles in front of their shop. They also were able to penetrate the cultural web's interior, and help the audience to understand more how people involved in the neighborhood's drug culture make sense of the world.

Implications and Conclusions

The text in this study that indicated the more culturally competent approach to journalism was the "War on Drugs" package. The package's videos, photo galleries and written article provided important "macro" historical context about the neighborhood such as how and why drugs became a major aspect of the area's local economy, as well as "micro" information about what local residents are doing today to address the drug problem in the neighborhood. The "drug tour" video and photo gallery links gave audiences a chance to visit the neighborhood and see some of the devastation caused by the drug trade. A link called "Voices" featured video interviews with drug addicts discussing their situations in their own voices with very little editing or reporter interference. Another link navigated to the students' blogs, which reflect awareness of their position in relation to their sources, their perspective on the drug issues in the neighborhood, as well as local contact information and the opportunity for audience interactivity. Reflecting on one's interactions with those who have cultural perspectives different from one's own is an important part of the process of cultural competence. Interestingly, the "War on Drugs" multimedia package continued to be featured on the lab's website a year later. The other package was taken down from the website as additional content by the course's students was posted.

The study uncovered a new factor that contributes to a culturally competent approach to journalism: negotiation of the complexity of an "insider" or "outsider" status. While most of the students reporting in the neighborhood were "outsiders" to the community, one student, Maya, had grown up there and was still living there with her parents. Yet, she was unaware of the extent of the use and sale of drugs within the community, thus was an "outsider" to this particular culture. Because she was aware of her "outsider" status on this issue, she and her fellow group members garnered the assistance of an "insider" guide to show them the nuances – or "micro" knowledge – associated with the community's drug culture, such as drug stashes, sites where addicts used drugs, and the location of the busiest drug corner in the city. The other student group, meanwhile, produced texts that exoticized recovering addicts, which indicated an "outsider's" perspective. The reporters were not able to negotiate their "outsider" status in the community and gain knowledge of the Other; they and their texts remained on the fringes of the cultural web.

The textual analysis also found that multimedia journalism provided a great deal of context for news stories, offering the potential to move journalists and their news texts toward a greater degree of cultural competence. This potential can only be realized if reporters utilize the potential of new multimedia journalistic practices, including using various media platforms to

provide "macro" and "micro" context for news stories in a way that approaches what Geertz (1973) referred to as a "thicker description" of a particular culture. Harnessing the potential of multimedia would involve understanding how to best make use of the strengths and weaknesses each medium in order to produce an effective multimedia story. In order to provide a more culturally competent text, reporters also would allow news sources to speak for themselves in news stories, thereby shifting power through control of the narrative toward people in the community. While mainstream broadcast journalism can also feature video interviews, the norms and time constraints of the industry diminish journalists' ability to air long-form and uninterrupted interviews. Web-based videos are less constrained by such norms.

In addition, the web allows journalists to produce texts such as blogs that demonstrate a high level of self-awareness of one's cultural perspectives and biases and that increase the transparency of the reporting process. But while blogging has added a new dimension to the journalistic process, allowing reporters to move away from a strict journalistic voice and format and toward a more personal mode of communication with their audiences, reporters need to take care not to locate important factual information and context in their blogs while leaving them out of their news stories. Also, factors that seemed to diminish the level of cultural competence of the journalists' texts included evidence of stereotyping or a reporter's perspectives in news texts, missing perspectives about an important community issue, and technical problems that diminished the texts' credibility.

The textual analysis also found additional factors to add to the operational definition of journalistic cultural competence developed for this study. Specifically, some of the factors that contributed to the cultural competence of the student journalists' news stories included producing alternative storylines from the mainstream media in order to provide additional context about an issue of concern to the culture, and leaving one's comfort zone to report multiple perspectives on an issue. In addition, the study showed that while it can be important to use "insider" sources to help negotiate one's "insider/outsider" status, journalists need to go beyond those news sources to provide more complete context and culturally competent coverage. A revised operational definition of the cultural competence of journalists as it relates to their news texts is located in Table 1.

Table 1: Refined Operational Definition of Culturally Competent News Texts		
Awareness	**Knowledge**	**Skills**
Production of news texts that demonstrate: Awareness of one's own position and cultural perspectives and biases **Awareness of potential power issues associated with sources and journalists**, including the use of lengthy and accurate quotations by news sources and use of a high level of use of audio and video clips with news sources	**Production of news texts that demonstrate:** **Knowledge of the specifics of the "macro" aspects of particular cultures,** such as knowledge of the cultures' history; political, economic, and power relations; and certain beliefs and values, including religious beliefs **Knowledge of the specifics of the "micro" aspects of particular cultures,** such as	**Production of news texts that demonstrate:** Attributes and skills that demonstrate empathy, respect and non-judgment of those culturally different "Others," including open-mindedness and the ability to obtain and reflect multiple and diverse perspectives **Production of news texts that represent the complexities of life in the**

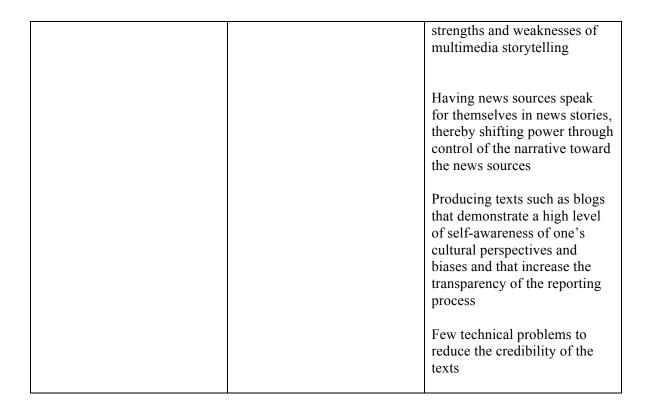|		
speaking with their own voices **Awareness of the complexities involved in intercultural communication**, including the use of culturally sensitive language when speaking to news sources and through the demonstration of dispositions associated with effective and appropriate intercultural communication including: - little hesitation to approach news sources who are of a different culture; - self-confidence, or the ability to approach news sources with relative ease; - inquisitiveness, or asking numerous questions and listening to responses about the news source's perspective; - maturity, or being even-tempered and respectful in interactions with sources; and - the willingness to challenge stereotypes, understand one's limits, and learn from their news sources	the ability to produce alternative storylines from the mainstream media, include a wide range of diversity and type of (official versus nonofficial) sources and diverse range of news sources interviewed	**culture** Nonstereotypical language in news texts and level of contextualization of story in the form of background information on people or issue and use of photographs and video Producing a wide variety of perspectives and stories and covering a broad array of issues related to one particular story Producing alternative storylines from the mainstream media Leaving one's comfort zone to report find multiple perspectives Demonstrating awareness of one's own cultural perspectives through blogs **Negotiation of "insider" or "outsider" status** Ability to negotiate "insider" or "outsider" status as a journalist, such as having awareness of your status in the community and/or using "insider" sources as a bridge to different cultures Going beyond official or insider sources to gain information **Harnessing the potential of new multimedia journalistic practices** Providing macro and micro context for news stories using various media platforms and in a way that approaches "thicker description" of a particular culture; this includes an understanding of the

		strengths and weaknesses of multimedia storytelling
		Having news sources speak for themselves in news stories, thereby shifting power through control of the narrative toward the news sources
		Producing texts such as blogs that demonstrate a high level of self-awareness of one's cultural perspectives and biases and that increase the transparency of the reporting process
		Few technical problems to reduce the credibility of the texts

A major implication from this research is that a culturally competent approach to journalism should become a topic of discussion in journalism courses. Awareness of self and knowledge of the Other, not just skills, should be taught and encouraged with the journalism students. With training and education in cultural competence, journalists can learn to become aware of their own social constructions and their individual perceptions related to their own schema and attributions. The result of increased cultural competence is the potentially for more representative news coverage of culturally diverse communities.

A limitation of this study is that it examined the news texts of only six student reporters. While the textual analysis is part of a larger, extensive case study of the multimedia lab and the texts were selected because the reporters covered the same issue in the same neighborhood, it is important to recognize that the sample size used in the study is small. The analysis should be considered part of an exploratory study that can inform community journalism, journalism education, and future research in this area. Some of the findings in this study deserve further research, including the potential of multimedia storytelling to increase understanding for *audiences* about culturally different Others. The latter topic would involve audience reception research and would be best addressed in a separate study. Another important area of research would be the examination of cultural competence as it relates to reporting practices.

It is clear from the study's findings that cultural competence is not only an appropriate concept to be applied to journalists and community journalism, but it also is an important one. The value of coverage that presents multiple cultural perspectives and increased understanding for audiences cannot be underestimated. In our increasingly interconnected world, there can be no better goal for the journalism profession today.

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