Using Journalism for Human Rights Education in Ghana: Journalists' Learning

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores experiences of journalists using their craft for human rights public education in Ghana. It includes Ghanaian and North American journalists' perceptions about their occupation, their experiences with an on-the-job training program and their beliefs about the ways journalism can be used for public education.

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To all the people at LUV and NHYIRA, thank you for your openness and for welcoming me. Working with you, I learned so much about Ghana and about myself. I would especially like to thank the journalists who worked with me as a trainer and produced programs, current affairs stories and documentaries with me. This was above and beyond your duties at the station and I appreciate the extra work you put in.

My work on this study started with my first class in the Master of Education program at UPEI in September 2004 and I appreciate the guidance and coaching of my professors through this process. I would especially like to thank my advisor, Dr. Graham Pike.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Before starting this research study I had never formally worked as a teacher or trainer, but had informally taught people things over the years, as we all have – maybe without even realizing it or reflecting on it long enough to know the impact. I had taught people how to use digital editing software for radio and layout software for newspaper production, for example. I edited my university newspaper and taught new reporters how to create news stories. I had worked with new reporters and interns in my newsroom.

I planned to take a year away from my regular job with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as a reporter and editor and wanted to work as a trainer or teacher, hopefully within my profession. There are various organizations throughout the world which do hire journalism trainers to work in developing countries and new democracies to create media infrastructure or to develop existing media.

I had heard about Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) from a friend and colleague and was interested in the work they were doing in Ghana. They were training working radio, television and print journalists with a goal to improve the quality and quantity of human rights reporting to educate citizens and better equip them to defend human rights – their own and others' (JHR, 2005). JHR's project fit with my goal to gain experience as a journalism trainer and timeframe and I was intrigued by the idea of putting my skills to work for a larger goal.

The only problem was that I would never have classified myself as a human rights journalist, though once I started thinking about it, I began to realize that I had actually done a number of stories that I had not considered human rights journalism at the time, but probably were just that.

For example, I had done a number of stories about a man from Camaroon who believed he had been discriminated against by employers– some actual and some prospective – because of his race. Those stories led me to do a documentary about his struggle with Prince Edward Island's judicial system, including his efforts to have the court reverse its rare decision to bar him from launching any further legal action without prior permission of the courts (Taylor, 2003). That is most definitely a human rights story – this man believed he was being systematically discriminated against because of his ethnicity, and I cannot decide whether that is true or not, but I do believe racism exists in this society and it is not outside of the realm of possibility that he had in fact been discriminated against by a number of employers.

I had also done a story about a group of shell fishers who had been accused of defrauding the federal government of hundreds of thousands of dollars through the employment insurance program (Taylor, 2000). I had covered the story in tax court, not in a human rights context, so I did not think of it then as a human rights story. But, sitting in that courtroom I realized that most of those accused could not afford a legal defense and some had very low literacy skills. It struck me at the time as being unfair that they were pitted against a team of government lawyers. The memory of one poor fisherman, in particular, in his everyday clothes – not a suit, but pants and work boots and jacket - sitting at a desk struggling with the words in his scribbler as he tried to make his case, even today makes me angry and sad. Why didn't most of those shell fishers have lawyers? Likely because they could not afford them. Why did they have low literacy skills? Maybe their economic situation did not allow them the same access to education that those federal lawyers had when they were growing up. Those are human rights and

social justice issues to me – the inequality of access to justice and education. But at the time I had not thought of them as human rights stories. I thought of them as people stories.

So, while I may have recognized stories such as those as being stories about discrimination or stories about access to justice, I had not categorized those stories as being human rights stories, but I do believe they could be interpreted that way.

As Peter Uvin (2004) points out, there are varying degrees of acceptance by nations and institutions of what human rights academics consider to be the three generations of human rights. Those three generations are also explored in a handbook JHR provides to volunteer trainers prior to departure. The first generation includes the civil and political rights defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) such as freedom of thought, opinion and expression and the right to equal access to public services. The second generation rights, also defined by the UDHR are classified as social, economic and cultural rights, such as the right to an education. The third generation of rights are defined as those in article 28 of the UDHR – including the right to social development and self-determination (Uvin, 2004; Kelsey & Peterson, 2003). Kelsey and Peterson (2003) also document the human rights defined in the Ghanaian constitution including economic rights, cultural rights and the rights of women, children, and the disabled.

So, whether I had seen myself as a human rights reporter or not, I did have the experience of having used my skills to explore human rights issues and I did have the experience – both as a journalist and as a technical editor– to teach others. I felt

comfortable with that, but what made me a little uncomfortable was this notion that I might be crossing the line from journalist to activist.

Going to work for a non-governmental organization (NGO) with the goal of educating people about human rights seemed, in some ways, contradictory to what I believed a journalist was supposed to be – objective and neutral. How could I be objective and neutral if I had a critical agenda? When it came down to thinking about using my skills in this new way, this very deliberate way - to educate and to help people to understand their rights - as much as I wanted to do it, there was also a part of me that was squeamish about stepping out of that protective shell of neutrality and objectivity, until I started to critically reflect on objectivity itself.

Theoretical Framework

When I go to work as a journalist, there are certain expectations about the way I should approach my job. I work in a culture that espouses the necessity of objectivity, fairness and balance in storytelling.

Objectivity, as I had come to understand it, meant that I should park my personal beliefs and biases at the door when I started my day - or at least that I mentally push them outside of my mind before starting to write - and that I should definitely leave them out of anything that is going to air. To ensure that happens in journalism, we have checks and balances built into the system - from the time the story is pitched to a producer through to airtime. We have lengthy meetings in which discuss and we develop story ideas and our approach. Who will we interview? From what "angle" will we approach our research? What is the best means of telling this story - is it a news story, or something more in-depth? Would an interview with a key character do the story justice, or does it warrant

more extensive research and a documentary treatment? We also have our peers vet our stories before they go to air. The focus of this process is ensuring that the story flows well and is easily understood. Sometimes there is a discussion of the content of the story itself. How do you know something to be true? Where did you get that information? Why do you think it is important to include that element in the story? Who does this person represent? Why are we including them in the story? What are their credentials? Are we using the best language so the story is accessible and digestible? Sometimes lawyers are also called to take part in the vetting process to make sure we aren't defaming any characters in the story, or to ensure that we haven't broken any laws while gathering information. In these ways, we feel confident that we are objective - that we have set aside our biases or have made significant attempts to make sure our stories themselves don't reflect any bias.

Yet every day in newsrooms, personal feelings are expressed and stories are chosen based on personal interest. In my years as a journalist, I have heard colleagues talk openly about political preferences and observed co-workers use their craft to further causes they believe in, such as healthy eating. We all have personal views and biases. The question is whether we journalists can keep those opinions and biases at a safe distance when we tell stories or conduct interviews, and is it necessary to do that? Is it possible to believe that as journalists we are truly objective when we do our jobs? How can we go from expressing strong opinions one minute, to assuming we've safely put them away the next? That requires an examination of objectivity - its importance, and its function.

I used to believe that complete objectivity is possible when doing our jobs as researchers, journalists or storytellers. After much reflection and reading, I think that's

something taken for granted. I question whether it is possible for anyone to be completely objective in research. I think all data are viewed from a particular, personal lens. I have also come to realize the importance of getting to know that lens before doing research. How can you prevent your own biases or perspectives from creeping into your work without having reflected on what they may be? How do you feel about a subject as a researcher? How strong are your opinions? How might your own history help to shape and colour what you are seeing, hearing or reading?

Thomas Schwandt (2000) says our biases and beliefs help to shape our interpretations, that they are part of our own tradition and thus part of us. I understand that to mean that it is not necessary to try to adopt the pretense of having absolute objectivity, but rather that we as researchers need to explore and identify our own biases and beliefs and understand how they may shade our work and help us understand the data we are interpreting.

It seems unrealistic that, even though I am a journalist, I wouldn't have opinions - I have to believe in something. How could I not? As argued by Kincheloe and McLaren (2002),

> ...researchers, whether they admit it or not, always have a point of view, a disciplinary orientation, a social or political group with which they identify...researchers need not shed all their worldly affiliations but to identify them and understand their impact on the ways they approach a social or educational phenomenon (p. 101).

Maybe it is my obligation as a journalist to examine and reflect on my own beliefs so I can be aware of my biases and try to keep my reporting as neutral as possible.

In his writings on hermeneutics, Schwandt (2000) also discusses meaning and intent as viewed by philosophers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, James Garrison and

Shaun Gallagher. Schwandt says these traditions are part of us, "a living force that enters into all understanding" and that the researcher doesn't have to shed her inherited biases or prejudices in order to understand something (pp. 194-195). In this way he says there can never be any correct interpretation, only varying versions of truth. I agree with this concept because I don't know how we could possibly escape ourselves entirely when observing, collecting data and writing. We are attracted to certain topics, pieces of data, or people for a reason and I think that reason is very personal and subjective. Further, that subjectivity will greatly influence how we interpret data. For example, if a journalist (or researcher) observes a politician being uncharacteristically vague in an interview, she might believe the politician is lying or doesn't know what he's talking about. Maybe that's a function of the researcher's own belief that politicians can't be trusted. That perception may well influence how she chooses to tell the story - the tone and language she uses or the factual content she selects. But is she seeing the whole picture? It may well be true that the interview subject is avoiding her questions. He may also be preoccupied by something in his personal life. There can be any number of explanations. In this sense, I believe the researcher is interpreting data through her own lens and is constructing the meaning of data to a certain extent.

I think it is even more important to reflect on the notion of objectivity and bias as a journalist working for a public broadcaster. If we think of journalism as an educational tool, or as a public service designed to give our audience the information we think they need or could use to make educated choices and form perceptions, then the notion of objectivity becomes even more problematic. We're not only interested in presenting just the facts: we explore issues and engage people in debate, presenting a variety of opinions

to allow the public to shape their own. In that sense we become an active player in that exchange of information and debate, and taxpayers fund that work. American journalism professor James Napoli (2002) argues public journalism is gaining popularity, but he doesn't equate public journalism with an objectivity model. He says critics would like to see public journalism push the model of objectivity aside so the news media would "involve readers in the process of finding solutions by helping them to clarify core values and to understand complex issues...requiring engagement by journalists in social problems and interaction between the press and the public in a search for answers" (p. 247). Napoli's description resonates with me as a journalist working for a public broadcaster. One of the ways we do try to ensure our objectivity is by providing balance and presenting a broad range of perspectives. However, that system also seems somewhat flawed at times. We assume objectivity because we have presented at least two competing opinions, and we seek out contradictory opinions for the sake of balance, Meanwhile, we journalists are choosing stories to tell based on our own personal interest, or by our personal measure of what the public interest may be. In this sense we are far from neutral storytellers, and maybe it is up to us to define our biases and decide how they will, or will not, influence our work.

It was with these questions about the assumptions we bring to the practice of journalism and how we deliver information to the public - in essence contributing to all that creates public opinion and perception - that I began this research.

Biases, Limitations and Challenges

Before going to Ghana, I had talked with two people who had worked as trainers with JHR and had an interview with the organization's director/co-founder and had read

about the organization on its website and newsletter. I had also read a background document provided by JHR about human rights including definitions of human rights; history; laws; human rights in developing nations and in Ghana; and brief on human rights reporting in Ghana (Kelsey & Peterson, 2003). Stories written by a previous JHR trainer (Ross, 2005) were also posted on the Internet as were current Ghanaian publications and those also helped to inform me,

I therefore had a basic understanding of how JHR worked; the kinds of stories that had been done by JHR volunteers and trainees; and a basic background in human rights law and reporting in Ghana. However, as noted above, I had never considered myself to be a human rights reporter or to have any greater knowledge of human rights than the individuals I trained.

I have worked for almost all of my career for a public broadcaster, but I would be working in a private radio station in Ghana. Other JHR participants would be working in private radio, television and newspapers. Even in Canada the attitudes of public and private journalists sometimes differ, and the content we produce is often different as well. For example, private radio stations devote less airtime to news and current affairs and more to music and entertainment. News and current affairs stories are generally shorter and have less content and context. I was not sure, for example, if my concept of a feature story or documentary would be the same as that of my new colleagues. I was not sure about the technology and resources available in the newsroom where I would work because I was the first volunteer placed there. That lack of knowledge about private media, human rights journalism and how journalism was practiced in Ghana were in my mind prior to embarking on the project.

One of the major challenges to working with JHR and thus to doing this research was that the organization had run out of funding. I had not anticipated this when I applied to work with JHR, but was told during my interview with the director. I agreed to go as a trainer knowing that I would pay my own way. It was an expensive choice – between plane ticket, visa, inoculations, anti-malaria medication, accommodations, and other associated costs - and one that required me to find ways to finance my work. I was able to offset some of the expenses by freelancing and by getting a grant, through the Canadian International Development Agency, to produce stories about human rights and development. As a result, I only worked for JHR for five months rather than six. The sixth month I spent working on the stories for the grant. (With the exception of a few days during January spent helping my replacement get situated in Kumasi and at the station). Also during my spare time I researched stories for that project and gathered some interviews. So, I was busier than I had anticipated during my time there.

I was posted in the city of Kumasi, while most of my JHR colleagues worked in Accra (one other was posted in Tamale, in Ghana's northern region). That meant I didn't have a social network or support from the organization. In fact I had very little contact with JHR during my time in Kumasi. My colleagues in Accra had the benefit of regular group meetings to discuss stories and what was and was not working with their training. Therefore my experience may not reflect those of my colleagues in Accra.

As I noted earlier, I had limited teaching experience. I had worked with a small group of English as Second Language students in a classroom setting and had tutored another. This was my first time working for any extended period of time as a teacher. It was also my first time training journalists. I am sure that lack of experience had some

influence on the pace of work early in my placement. This was also my first time working in a foreign country and there was a period of adjustment as I got used to a new living arrangement (I lived with a local Ghanaian family for the first three months), a new transit system, a different culture and a new set of co-workers.

My location also meant that gathering data was a greater challenge than it would have been had I been in the same city with my colleagues. All but one of the participants I interviewed for this research worked in Accra which meant that I had to travel five to six hours by bus each way to meet with them for the interviews. A follow-up interview with one participant required travel from Accra to Kumasi.

One challenge I had anticipated, was the impact of illness on my work. During my stay in Ghana I had a number of health problems – the most serious of which was a bout of malaria which kept me out of the office for a week. Illness also hit my colleagues at times, which made working at a regular pace a challenge.

One of the greatest challenges I had as a trainer with JHR had very little to do with journalism or training at all. I was the first trainer the organization had placed in the LUV FM newsroom and it took quite a lot of time and negotiating to figure out how the arrangement was going to work. For the most part this fell to me, though JHR's country director did travel to Kumasi at one point to help me negotiate with management. Also, because I was the first foreigner to work in their newsroom, it took some time for the staff to get used to me. At first, they weren't sure why I was there and it was a challenge explaining it to them and getting them to trust me and want to work with me. I think the time it took to negotiate the placement and the time it took to gain the trust and understanding of my Ghanaian colleagues limited the number of human rights stories we

produced and the amount of training that took place. It should also be noted that because it was a new arrangement with the LUV FM newsroom, my experience is likely not reflective of the other trainers placed there after I left, or the experience of the trainers placed in newsrooms where a relationship with JHR had already been established.

I believe I was very conscious of the potential to appear to be the all-knowing Westerner showing up to tell Ghanaians how to do their jobs, and that may have influenced how I approached my job. For example, almost all of the stories we produced during the training were ideas generated by the journalists themselves. I helped them to develop those ideas, but the original ideas were their own. I tried to encourage reporters to follow-up on stories and to explore issues further, but again those original story ideas were their own.

Language, at times, also became a challenge. English is widely spoken in Ghana, though for many I worked with it is their second language. The LUV FM newsroom shared space, resources and reporters with NHYIRA FM– a Twi language station. Twi was the mother tongue for most of the reporters I worked with. It took some time before one Ghanaian colleague was comfortable enough to tell me that he did not always understand what I was saying – he said partly because I spoke quickly, but I imagine it was also because I tend to speak softly. I am not sure how many other reporters had difficulty understanding me. I did make an effort after that to speak more slowly and clearly. When I read back the data from the interviews for this research, I see that at times I needed Ghanaian participants to repeat themselves, and in some cases asked for clarification during our follow-up meeting. I believe my Ghanaian colleagues would have appreciated it if I had learned their more of their local language faster.

Each journalist who participated in this study was aware of my relationship with JHR. In one case, a participant was also someone I had worked with directly at LUV FM. I can only speculate as to how this may have influenced their responses to my questions, but I imagine that relationship must have had some influence.

This study explores the experience of a number of journalists who either trained, or were trained through the JHR program. Those experiences are as unique as the individuals involved. Their experiences may be similar or different than others involved in the JHR program. This study explores participants' experiences during a limited period of time – and does not account for any changes to the program, which may have evolved since the time data were gathered.

Some of these challenges and limitations mentioned above did influence my research in terms of the amount of time I spent training and thus gathering data on my own personal experience. Most notably, there was a slow start up time when I first arrived, illness partway through, and I cut my time a few weeks short to work on a freelance project for budgetary reasons. My distance from other participants in this study also influenced my decision not to write a narrative thesis: however, my central research questions did not change.

Justification

I believe this study will add to the body of existing research on the practice of journalism in foreign countries, training journalists in foreign countries and the use of journalism as an educational tool, or as a means of raising public awareness about social justice or human rights issues.

In my preliminary literature review I had found no formal studies on the use of journalism to educate the public about human rights issues in West Africa, nor had I found any studies exploring West African and North American journalists' perspectives and learning. However, at the time I conducted this research, a colleague of mine also embarked on a similar research study, also for her Masters' thesis. Her findings are explored and taken into account in Chapter Two.

The study was also a means of professional development for me, the researcher. I had never worked in a foreign country and had never used my journalistic skills for a specific educational purpose, or for the express purpose of creating awareness about human rights. My learning through this experience will be valuable to me as a journalist, and I hope to share that learning with others through this research. I broadened my scope of knowledge about the practice of journalism and gained an understanding of how media can be used as an educational tool.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This literature review was conducted partially before I left to work in Ghana and partially after I returned to Canada. Therefore, some of the literature helped me to prepare for my experience as a journalism trainer in a foreign country, while other reading helped me to interpret my data and position my study within the existing body of research.

Training and Teaching Journalism in Foreign Countries

Prior to leaving for Ghana, I conducted a preliminary literature review which focused largely on the education and training for journalists in developing countries and new democracies. That review helped to inform me of the varying levels of training I might encounter in Ghana and helped me to understand that journalism is practiced differently throughout the world, and that I should be prepared for differences in practice. The following paragraphs mostly deal with that preliminary review, though I have added to it post-research.

In Canada, journalists typically get a university degree or college diploma in journalism or a related field. This training often extends to post-graduate training as well, and most journalism programs require some kind of on-the-job training.

The level of training in foreign countries can be very different depending on the value placed on the craft and the local economic and political situation (Clarke, 2002; Cleary, 2003; Downie, 2000; Okigbo & Pratt, 1997). In Cambodia, for example, there is one journalism course offered at the university level, but no degree in journalism offered. Aid organizations have worked in that country to offer overseas university scholarships and local short-term training programs, while other journalists have learned through on-the-job training (Clark, 2002). In Mexico, journalists are taught in both universities and

through on-the-job training, but there is no clear distinction between journalism and public relations education, though the situation is starting to change (Cleary, 2003). In Canada, it is not unusual for journalism graduates to go directly to work in public relations after graduation, or to switch to public relations after some time working in journalism. Some of my classmates at the University of Regina now work in public relations and some enrolled in journalism school intending to go that route.

Many journalists in English-speaking African countries are taught in post-secondary institutions with an American or Western style curriculum and textbooks, but there is some criticism of whether that is the best way to teach African journalists (Okigbo & Pratt, 1997, Jimada, 1992). In their review of journalism education in Anglophone Africa, Okigbo and Pratt (1997) describe an American style of instruction as one that favours truth seeking or hypothesis proving. They describe a European model as one that teaches the value of critical analysis and ideological interpretation, and they conclude that more Africanized curricula would be more meaningful and reflective of society. Most of the journalists I encountered in Ghana had some level of post-secondary education or specific post-secondary journalism training – most commonly through private technical schools. On-the-job training or internships were also common, and some interns and working journalists I encountered came from academic fields other than journalism or communications.

I have noticed throughout my reading that many authors don't set out to describe or define Western journalism. Rather they describe the differences between the way they practice and teach journalism and the way the craft is being practiced in the countries in which they are teaching. In Laos, for example, the style of reporting is described as

"...unattractive and unimaginative...non-sanctioned criticism never appear in print or broadcasts...journalists tend to publish or broadcast government and agency documents rather than interview sources, and rarely initiate reports" (Downie, 2000, p. 103). A similar situation was described by James Napoli (2002) who, in writing about his experience training journalists in Albania, found much of the reporting in that country was driven by the agenda of politicians or officials. Stephen Quinn (2001), a university professor in the United Arab Emirates, found the media in that country to be "little more than a showpiece for the ruling families or business interests" (p.162). In Cambodia, journalists have been criticized for printing just about anything, including unsubstantiated information (Clarke, 2002). Clearly, there are similarities and differences in the way journalism is being taught and practiced around the world and prior to my departure for Ghana these studies helped to inform me of the possible differences in training and education I might encounter.

Several studies noted the effect poor wages have had on local media. In Albania there has been a high turnover of journalists in media organizations, which has presented challenges to trainers trying to introduce a new system of reporting (Napoli, 2002). Clark (2002) noted that poor wages paid to journalists in Cambodia, meant that many took second jobs, which meant fewer opportunities to improve their skills through training programs. The economic situation in Africa has led to out-migration of journalism instructors, thus hurting the quality of local journalism programs (Okigbo & Pratt, 1997).

Economics also comes into play as trainers try to grapple with the different values of the reporters they are teaching in foreign countries. One author and teacher describes a "dreadful clash of values" in China where reporters are slipped packages of money at

press conferences and have come to expect the money (Zeitlin, 2002, p. 190). In her study of journalism education in Mexico, Johanna Cleary (2003) makes reference to a 1997 study that says it has been common for reporters to accept bribes or payment in some form or another for favourable coverage. These issues arose in my research as well and I discuss them in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

Several authors included in this review discuss cultural differences that they encountered when training journalists in foreign countries. In one instance, Zeitlin (2002) asked his students to identify the sources in their stories more clearly and to make sure their stories were grounded in fact, rather than opinion. The students said this was not the Chinese way. Another cultural challenge described by Stephen Quinn (2001) working in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the presence of religion in the classroom. He said because students prayed four or five times a day, they left the class to do so. Students also cited their religion as a reason for missing deadlines, saying their assignments would be done as Allah willed them to be done. Quinn also found reluctance among his students in the UAE to challenge authority, which is what he was trying to teach them to do. Similarly, in China, Zeitlin (2002) found it difficult to assign work outside the classroom because "state and local officials rarely spoke to journalists and were less inclined to speak to students...students, more knowledgeable than I, were shyly reluctant to make official inquiries" (p. 191). While these authors are addressing situations they encountered while working in various countries around the world, I think they were all important cultural issues for me to consider before heading to a foreign country to train journalists. My ideas of how the craft should be practiced might not coincide with the local culture of those I would train.

There are critics of aid-based or volunteer training by Western journalists. International aid organizations have offered journalism training in Cambodia for years but as Judith Clarke notes in her 2002 paper on training in that country, critics have questioned whether the programs have worked as those organizations intend. Clarke refers to comments by the government's information minister who worries the organizations are spending money to teach the wrong people because not all those being trained end up being journalists. Overall, the author believes the aid-based programs are working, but she says "care will be needed in deciding where to invest aid and how to ensure the kind of training that will most benefit Cambodians" (p. 96). In his article on teaching in the UAE, Quinn (2001) predicts a "clash of values between those with Western news values and Arab governments" (p. 154). In Kenya and Nigeria, there have been calls for a new curriculum based on local values to replace the existing Western developed curriculum currently being to train journalists (Okigbo & Pratt, 2001; Jimada, 1992). There are also doubts in China about the value of teaching local journalists a Western model of journalism when they will be working in a state-controlled media environment (Zeitlin, 2002).

One article I found very informative during the course of this review was James Napoli's (2002) essay on increasing stories with social impact in Albania. The author wrote about a project run by ProMedia, an American aid organization. The goal was to help journalists expand the scope of their coverage to include inspirational stories about personal achievement for example, or community work. A trainer worked with a group of journalists helping them to develop these sorts of stories - from the pitch to the final product. At the end of the project there was a group feedback session about their learning.

The author says while writers and editors were pleased with the project, there was no way to measure the impact on readers and he says maintaining the level of journalism with supposed social impact would be difficult in Albania because of the transient nature of newsroom staff. While this is not formal research Napoli is discussing, I find the project interesting because in many respects it reflects the kind of project I worked on with JHR, although in a different part of the world.

Using Journalism for Public Education

Journalism is frequently used as an informal educational tool. Special interest groups use the media for public education campaigns by organizing events and inviting the media or by pitching stories directly to journalists and editors. Based on my own experience journalists cover these stories, or agree to conduct interviews, because they believe the information offered is relevant, timely and that their audience would find it useful. Therefore, the consumer or audience is absorbing, evaluating and using the information – those informal educational materials – on a regular basis.

While the measured impact of media campaigns or informal public education efforts using the media on audiences may be difficult to gauge, I am sure if any public relations expert were asked, they would concede the mass media is an incredible tool for influencing public opinion, and for delivering messages. As Westoff and Rodriguez (1995) note:

> A library of literature on mass communications accumulated over the past half-century has reached disparate conclusions on the general question of whether the mass media can influence behavior. Such questions have been posed about a wide range of behavior, including the effects of television on violence, on children's education, on consumers' choices of products and on voting behavior, among others...the belief that there is some effect has persisted and is reflected in the emergence of a whole industry devoted to such activities. (p. 26)

While I believe the authors are referring to the communications industry, it also seems another industry, devoted to using the media for public education, and training journalists to use their skills for public education has developed as well. Various organizations are working to improve coverage in specific areas such as HIV/health, women's issues, human rights, democracy, and elections coverage by offering training to journalists (IMPACS, 2007; Internews, 2007; JHR, 2007). However, while, as Westoff and Rodriguez (1995) note, there is literature on the influence of mass media, I have found little peer reviewed research within the field of education exploring the use of journalism for public education or measuring or exploring the impact of training journalists in a specific field with the goal of improving coverage in that area. I believe this indicates a gap in the available literature.

Some studies which are useful within the context of this research explore the impact of media on public knowledge and mobilization (Newton, 1999); the use of media to deliver information such as family planning (Olaleye & Bankole, 1994; Sharan & Valente, 2002; Westoff & Rodriguez, 1995); and, the use of television and radio in various African countries to deliver educational materials on environment, health, agriculture and wildlife, in a more structured format (Nyirenda, 1995; Windborne, 1998). The authors have varying conclusions about how effective mass media communication and informal or non-formal educational programming is in terms of audience learning.

There are other forms of educational media, or using media for delivering curriculum in a more formal context, such as delivering lectures to students in rural or remote areas via radio broadcast (Maskow, 2000 and others) but I believe the use of

media in this context falls outside the scope of my research and, therefore, I have not included it for discussion.

In Ghana, where my research was conducted, the media is currently being used for human rights education by both non-governmental organizations and the Ghanaian government (CHRAJ, 2003; Windborne, 1998). In its 2002 annual report, Ghana's Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice talks about the importance of working with the journalism community to deliver human rights educational information, and paraphrases the Commissioner congratulating the media "on the significant role that it plays in entrenching a democratic and human rights culture in the country." (p. 14.) The report also outlines efforts of the commission to use radio as a means of public education:

> The Regional Director continued with radio programs on the B.A.R and SKY F.M. stations in Sunyani, There is a weekly educational program dubbed "Radio Lawyer" Tuesdays at 8.00 am and 2.00 pm when the Regional Director answers questions from the public on human rights, the Commission in general and other relevant issues. In fact this program has been very successful and helpful to the Commission because of the radios' wide coverage and the awareness creation of the program. This has much improved the performance of the Commission compared to previous years. (p.21)

However, I have not found many peer reviewed studies linking human rights reporting and education in Ghana or elsewhere. Two studies which specifically discuss journalism (and media) and human rights coverage indicate journalists could do a better job of reporting on human rights issues (Kaplan and Mohamedou, 2002; Park, 1998). Kaplan and Mohamedou (2002) recommend that human rights reporting be worked into standard journalism school curriculum and that there be on-the-job-training for journalists and editors and that human rights organizations collaborate with journalism organizations to promote "accurate and reliable information on human rights questions" (pp. 120-121).

As Peter Uvin (2004) notes: "Improving flows of information to the poor is one of the most important things international aid actors can assist with..." (p. 157).

My research does not evaluate the impact of the use of journalism as an educational tool on the consumer of the educational materials (ie. it does not evaluate the impact of the information broadcast and published on the reader or audience). It does, however, examine journalists' experiences using their craft and their media to deliver educational information about human rights in the form of stories about human rights issues. Therefore, I believe my research does help to fill a gap in the existing literature in this field and it should be of benefit to both educators in the field and for development and human rights organizations.

Journalists for Human Rights

In an annual report, JHR (2005) described its mandate in the following way:

> By ensuring that human rights are front and centre in the media, JHR:
> - Increases public education and awareness about human rights, creating widespread societal acceptance of human rights norms
> - Educates victims about their rights, empowering them to protect themselves
> - Pressures local authorities to crack down on rights abusers
> - Creates a social environment where human rights abuses aren't tolerated (p. 3).

And, in the same report, the organization stated:

> This approach represents a departure from traditional human rights groups. Standard high-level efforts to pressure governments into adopting human rights laws and policy mean nothing if human rights are not respected by average citizens. (p. 3)

In short, JHR is trying to improve the skills of journalists and attract them to human rights reporting in order to educate audiences and readers about human rights in hopes of creating a positive human rights environment. Therefore, the educational element of

JHR's program in Ghana is two-fold: First, it is teaching and training journalists in the basics of (Western) journalism; and second, it is trying to teach the Ghanaian public about their human rights and about human rights abuse.

As noted above, during the time I worked with JHR and conducted research for this study, a colleague of mine, Erin Moore (2006) gathered data for a similar study grounded in Development Communication theory for her Masters thesis in Global Journalism.

Moore interviewed Ghanaian participants in the JHR program and because the data for both studies were gathered at approximately the same period of time, the Ghanaian participants in Moore's study may have had the experience of working with some of the same North American trainers as those included in my study. The participants in Moore's study are anonymous, so I cannot be sure there is no repetition.

While my study aims to evaluate journalists' learning and experiences using their craft for human rights education and explores the impact of the experience on my own perceptions about journalism, Moore's study looked at the impact of JHR training on Ghanaian journalists and on the stories they produced, as well as examined the barriers to human rights reporting in Ghana.

I find some of Moore's findings and the perspectives of the Ghanaian participants included in her study informative. Some were critical of the JHR trainers they worked with:

> Without intending to do so, and while it is perhaps uncomfortable to acknowledge, the JHR model of sending predominantly white Western journalists to train Ghanaians reproduces colonial power relations of whites in a superior role to blacks...This relationship, combined with the perception by the Ghanaian journalists that some of the JHR trainers lack sufficient training themselves, risks creating the overall impression that

> the trainers are there only because they are white and Western educated, which in an of itself qualifies them as trainers regardless of their inadequate professional experience. (p. 45-46)

Moore also found that some participants did not see JHR volunteers as trainers or educators, but rather as colleagues or partners and that participants found the technical training offered by JHR volunteers to be more beneficial than the human rights reporting training.

Moore's findings provide me with the additional perspectives of Ghanaian participants in the JHR program. Further, those participants may have answered her questions more candidly because, at the time, she was not associated directly with JHR (though Moore did go to work as a trainer with JHR after her thesis was published). However, since the research was conducted concurrently, I did not have the benefit of knowing her findings before analysing my data.

I was also canvassed (via questionnaire) for Moore's research. However, my and other trainers' perspectives were excluded from her study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

I went to work in Ghana as a volunteer trainer with JHR. I spent six months working in a bilingual newsroom in Kumasi where reporters spoke and reported in both English and Twi, their native language. I worked with reporters and producers in the LUV FM and NHYIRA FM newsrooms, which are part of the privately owned nation-wide Multimedia Broadcasting Corporation.

I went to teach those reporters and producers how to make documentaries and to help them improve their reporting skills. The stories we would create while doing that training were to be about human rights issues in Ghana, so the journalists could tell better, more compelling and journalistically sound stories to help improve their own and their audience's awareness of human rights.

During my time there I would also do research exploring my and other participants' experiences using journalism for human rights education. I obtained permission from the University of Prince Edward Island's Research Ethics Board and from the director of JHR, Ben Peterson, to do the research.

I had originally planned on writing a narrative thesis. I wanted to tell my story about using my skills in this new way as a teacher or trainer. While I would be working as a teacher or trainer, to help reporters to learn new skills and create some really great stories in the process, I too was going to be learning – about their culture, their practice of journalism and how to teach. I planned on keeping a research journal in which I would record the details of my experience as a trainer and share my reflections on my learning. I also planned to interview other trainers and journalists to gather their stories about their

lives, their experiences and their learning. Then I was going to choose some of those stories, and along with my own journal, weave a tale of journalists' experiences using journalism for human rights education.

Research Questions

Going into the experience, and into the research, my goal was to explore these questions:

- What have journalists in this program learned from applying their skills to forward a human rights agenda?
- What has been the experience of Ghanaian journalists working with Western trainers/mentors in this program?
- How, and to what extent, has this experience influenced my perceptions of journalism?

But then something happened and, in part, it was journalism itself.

I found myself falling back on those same journalistic practices I mentioned in Chapter One - I looked for a balance of opinions and for a variety of perspectives and backgrounds to broaden the scope of my research. I consciously strove for gender balance in my pool of interviewees, for a mix of print and broadcast, for a balance of experienced versus new, trainer versus trainee. I was, in fact, trying to fill out the corners of the story and to explore the concept of using journalism for human rights education through a variety of voices, which in fairness to the reader had to include that balance. I, therefore, sacrificed depth of experience for breadth: I interviewed more participants, but not in the depth I had planned.

Data Collection and Analysis

I used the same semi-structured question line (Appendix C) for my interviews I had written before going to Ghana, and the interviews took place throughout my time living there. The first was done in August 2005 and the last in March 2006. I believe my own learning during that time influenced the questions that I asked. For example, the original question line included no questions about money journalists receive from event organizers, which is often called 'soli' or solidarity money. I knew before going to Ghana that this practice occurred, but I did not know the extent of it and became more curious as time went on about the influence this money might have on journalists' choice of stories and how they are told. Therefore, later interviews included questions about 'soli' while earlier ones did not.

In addition to the influence my own learning had on the questions asked, the interviews also branched off depending on how the information and telling flowed.

Other factors which influenced my data collection were time and place. I was located in the city of Kumasi, about a five to six hour bus trip from the capital city, Accra, where all but one of my JHR colleagues were working. That meant getting to and from interviews was very time consuming. So, repeat interviews, which I believed would have been required to do in-depth narrative inquiry research would have been very difficult. Each participant agreed to be interviewed for up to one hour, though some interviews were shorter than that and some were much longer, depending on the depth or length of their responses.

Each interview was audio-recorded and later transcribed. I sent each participant (via email) an electronic copy of their transcribed interview, along with a request to review it for accuracy. I also invited them to make revisions and included follow-up

questions – some were for clarification, while others broadened the scope of some of their responses.

Due to the fact that I gathered data over the course of eight months, in several cases, months had lapsed between the original interview and the follow-up questions, so I included an opportunity to present any new information or insight on the subject.

In some cases getting responses to those emails proved to be challenging. I think, in part, the length of time between the initial interview and the dispatch of the transcript was a factor. In some cases the interview and follow-up happened within weeks, while in other cases more time had lapsed. Some interviewees responded right away while others took more time. The Ghanaian interviewees did not respond to the follow-up questions or to my request for them to review their transcripts. Upon reflection, I wonder if the reasons are not only a cultural perception of time, but also that access to Internet and printing facilities are not as widely available and affordable for personal use in Ghana. The journalists all have computers and printers in their newsrooms, but would be sharing them with others. Whatever the reason, the Ghanaian interviewees each took me up on my offer to meet with them again in person to review the data when I returned to Ghana in July. For two of those Ghanaian participants, I recorded their responses to the follow-up questions and later transcribed them to include with the data. For the third, I took notes as we discussed the follow-up questions because my recorder malfunctioned during the interview. One American interviewee did not respond to my request to review her transcript and to answer follow-up questions. It was not possible to meet with her again. Her data is included, but is not as extensive as the others. She was also an anomaly in the

research in that she was not a trained journalist, but rather was a student exploring the possibility of a career in journalism.

In the end, five of the six interviewees reviewed their transcribed interview and responded to it and my follow up questions.

At some point in this process I realized I was not collecting data for narrative inquiry anymore. I was gathering qualitative data on personal experiences and perspectives through interviews with journalists who had either worked as volunteer JHR trainers or had worked with a JHR trainer.

I also had my own research journal with entries that were sometimes personal, and sometimes impersonal. Once I started working at the radio station, I found I had mixed feelings about writing in the journal. I did not officially tell my new colleagues about my research or the journal because I wanted them to feel comfortable with me and I worried they would feel watched or studied. So, when I went home at night to write in my journal, it often did not feel right. I believe those feelings influenced my candour in that I may not have been openly critical of individuals.

I then found myself with what seemed to be two sets of data: my own experience recorded through a reflexive and reflective journal; and one set of qualitative data exploring the experience of journalists using their craft for human rights education and the experience of working with foreign journalists in an educational or training context.

Therefore, I did explore the original research questions and in somewhat the same manner I had planned. However, the reporting of those findings has changed in terms of how those experiences will be told.

To analyze the data, I reviewed the transcripts and the follow-up answers, as well as my own journal. With those research questions in mind, I identified the following themes:

- Beliefs about the profession of journalism and how that may have changed over time
- The experience of using journalism for human rights education
- Challenges to using journalism for human rights education in Ghana
- The experience of working with foreign journalists

The participants' perspectives are summarized in Chapter Four. My own experience is detailed in Chapter Five. These themes will be further developed and explored in Chapter Six: Analysis and Learning.

Participants

The participants were selected from a pool of journalists who were involved in the program, either as JHR trainers, or as working journalists in the newsrooms in which the trainers were placed.

I chose four of the participants because I had heard them speak, either publicly or privately, about their experience working with JHR and I believed they had spent time reflecting on their experience and would be able to articulate that well in an interview. One subject worked with me directly at LUV FM over a period of several months, so my relationship with him was different from my relationship with the other participants. A final participant was recommended to me by other JHR trainers.

Each trainer/volunteer was interviewed in Ghana after either having completed a six-month term with JHR or within the final few weeks of their placement. Each

Ghanaian participant was interviewed after having had the experience of working, in some capacity, with the JHR program.

I am also a participant and documented my learning experience through a reflexive and reflective journal, which I maintained throughout my time as a volunteer/trainer.

The participants came from various professional backgrounds – they were between the ages of 23 and 35 – and I would describe them as early to mid-career journalists. One Ghanaian participant was an editorial leader in her newsroom. The others (with the exception of one who was a student of Divinity considering a career in journalism) had professional working experience ranging from one to ten or so years.

The prior experience of Ghanaians working with foreign journalists also varied. In some cases, previous JHR trainers had worked in the newsroom, while in other cases it was the first time a foreigner had worked there. Thus, each trainer and journalist had a unique experience working with JHR. I wanted to represent that breadth of experience and background in the study, so I purposely chose participants from a variety of backgrounds who, I believed, would present a unique perspective on the program (using their skills for human rights education) and the experience of working with foreign journalists.

At the time the data were gathered, JHR trainers were working in newsrooms at papers, radio stations and at one television station. I wanted to include the perspectives of journalists and trainers from both print and broadcast media because I imagined the experience might be different depending on the local culture of the medium. For example, newspapers generally have more space available for stories, so reporters are

often able to produce longer and more thorough reports. Conversely, in private radio, stories are generally short news briefs and, in the LUV FM newsroom for example, the reporters were eager to learn how to create documentaries and to try new ways of presenting information.

The following paragraphs summarize the personal and professional background of each participant. I have assigned the pseudonym 'Efia' to one participant who chose to remain anonymous.

Dave Maas is an early career journalist from Arizona, though he had been working as a freelancer and reporter throughout his university years, and worked as a "cub" reporter as a child. He has a background in print and film and at the time of our interview he held degrees in Communication and Social Anthropology and was working toward a second post-graduate degree in Visual Anthropology.

Dave chose journalism because he loved to write, but he said he also realized it would be quite difficult to make a living as a fiction writer, unless one had another profession on the side. He saw journalism as a jumping off point for a career in literature and was interested in social justice and alternative publications.

During his time in Ghana, Dave was placed at a newspaper which had an established JHR social justice segment. He worked with reporters to produce content for that segment. He also volunteered at a community newspaper in the Budaburam (Liberian) refugee camp outside of Accra and helped them to launch a website.

I chose to interview Dave because of his experience working with both an established media house and a fledgling community-driven one, and because of the zeal with which he approached his job.

Efia is an early to mid-career Canadian journalist. She had worked in print, radio and television prior to her placement with JHR. Prior to her work as a journalist, Efia had earned post-graduate degrees in both English Literature and Journalism. She had also taught Canadian Literature at the post-secondary level.

With JHR, Efia worked for six months at a Ghanaian radio station training and coaching journalists – teaching them both basic reporting skills and feature story production. She also taught occasionally at the African Institute of Journalism and Communications and led a seminar in news writing for the news staff at her host radio station.

I asked Efia to participate in my study because I had heard her speak about her experience as JHR trainer and found her to be thoughtful and insightful.

Charles Takyi-Boadu is an early career Ghanaian journalist. He had been working in print for three years at the time of our interview. He holds a diploma in journalism from a tutorial college in Accra.

Charles had worked directly with JHR trainers and was recommended to me by two Canadian trainers who had worked with him.

Matilda Asante is a mid-career Ghanaian journalist and, at the time of our interview, was the news editor at the radio station JOY FM in Accra. As a student she had done practical attachments in print and public relations, but the bulk of her career had been in radio.

Matilda holds diplomas in journalism and international journalism, as well as a Master's degree in journalism. Her graduate research explored political bias in the Ghanaian media's coverage of the National Reconciliation Commission. She had also

taken a number of training courses offered by organizations such as the BBC and Reuters.

I asked Matilda to participate in the study because, while she had not been specifically partnered with a JHR trainer, the reporters in her newsroom had been and she had seen the evolution of the program in her newsroom from the beginning (approximately one year at the time of our interview).

Kofi Adu Domfeh is also an early career Ghanaian journalist. He was one of the journalists that I worked with at LUV FM and we produced two short documentaries together and we also worked to develop his news production, interviewing, writing and technical skills during my time at LUV.

Kofi was assigned to the business desk at the radio station, but had an interest in human rights journalism and a background in human rights activism – he worked with Amnesty International in Nigeria prior to starting his career as a journalist. He holds a diploma in Mass Communication from the Nigerian Institute of Journalism and he helped to establish a course in human rights reporting at the Institute while he was a student there.

I wanted to interview Kofi because of his unique background in human rights, and also because I found him to be very thoughtful about both the positive and negative aspects of his profession. I also chose to include him because he was the reporter I worked with the most during my time in Ghana.

At the time of our interview, Rachel Lindner was a 23 year-old American student of Divinity. She was working with JHR for the summer of 2005 and had a shorter placement than most trainers. She worked at *The Vision* newspaper in the Bududuram

refugee camp near Accra and described journalism as a potential career. I chose to interview Rachel because I thought she would offer a unique perspective to the study as someone who has not practiced journalism professionally, and because she was working with refugees. Rachel did not respond to my email request to review her transcript.

I am the final participant and describe myself as mid-career Canadian journalist. I have worked since 1998 for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, mostly in radio, but also in television. My print experience is limited to university and community publications. I interned in television at the Discovery Channel. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and English, as well as a Bachelor of Journalism degree.

Prior to my work with JHR I had volunteered as a literacy instructor and was an accredited English as a Second Language instructor. I had also worked with interns and new reporters in my newsroom, but had never trained journalists or taught in an official capacity. For me, working with JHR was both an opportunity to do that for the first time, and to see first hand how journalism is practiced in a developing country.

Information and Consent

I approached each of the subjects individually (in person, on the phone or by email/text) and invited them to participate in the study. Each was provided with a description of the research (Appendix A) and was asked to sign an agreement to participate (Appendix B).

I made clear to each journalist that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time. I also explained that they didn't have to answer any question posed to them. I explained to each participant that they could choose to be assigned a pseudonym in my final report, but that details about stories they had published

or broadcast, as well as information about their professional backgrounds may make complete anonymity impossible. One participant asked to have her real name excluded from the study.

The information letter (Appendix A) also explained that their interview and transcript would be in my possession throughout my time in Ghana and then stored in a personal filing cabinet for a period of five years, and that after that time the data would be destroyed. I explained to each participant that I would send each of them a summary of my findings.

Risk to Participants

I do not know of any risks that participating in this research would have posed beyond those normally associated with the participants' profession. Each participant had already agreed to take part in the JHR program and the interviews were about their perceptions of the profession they had already chosen and about their thoughts on using that profession as an educational tool. It is possible that participants may have been at risk simply because of the nature of their jobs as journalists and the stories they tell. However, this research put them at no greater risk than they had already agreed to take on.

Ethical Considerations

As noted earlier, I did not explain to all of my co-workers at LUV and NHYIRA FM that I was doing research on my experience working with them, or that I was keeping a research journal. I did mention it casually, but in no formal capacity. I did not want my colleagues to feel studied and decided that my first priority was the training I was there to

do, and that my research was secondary. I have obscured direct references to any individuals that I worked with at the radio stations to address that lack of disclosure.

Originally I had not intended to focus so closely on JHR as an organization. However, once I started analyzing the interview and journal data I realized the difficulty in trying to separate the experience from the organization. Had I realized this prior to gathering my data, I would have been more open about discussing the nuances of JHR's management and programs with participants.

Validity

The participants were purposefully chosen among the available (in Ghana between July 2005-March 2006) JHR volunteer trainers and trainees. They were information-rich participants. Five were chosen after I had heard them speak privately or publicly about their experiences, and the fifth participant was referred to me by other JHR trainers to whom I had described my research goals. The participants represent a maximum variation sample: each was chosen to add breadth to the research.

The data were gathered through semi-structured recorded interviews, the depth of which varied according to the information available. Data collection stopped when I felt I had reached a saturation point. The interview data were transcribed and triangulated through member-checking by participants.

My research journal was both reflective and reflexive: I recorded my thoughts and experiences on a regular basis and my learning from that journaling helped to inform my work as a trainer and my interview data collection.

Further triangulation occurred through data analysis – thematic coding was done visually and findings were analysed within the context of the theoretical framework (Chapter One) and the literature review (Chapter Two).

As a researcher/participant I had to bear in mind the influence of my own experience and bias on how I interpreted those interview data, and tried to limit that bias. However, as stated earlier, I believe it is impossible to completely separate oneself from interpretive data analysis, especially after having shared a similar experience with the participants.

Chapter Four: Participants' Perspectives

Dave Maass

Dave told me that journalists are watchdogs – though he said that is the easy and obvious answer. He also believed journalists to be entertainers, informers, and interpreters of information.

> You go out and see things, you report back to people who wouldn't be able to see them and conveying not just these facts or what was said, but a sort of deeper interpretation of feelings and sensations and also meanings that can be drawn from it.

With that role of informer and interpreter, he says, comes a responsibility to the reader – to be thorough, ethical and truthful in reporting.

Although Dave had worked for the mainstream media in the past, he saw his style of writing – often with his own voice – as being more suited to the alternative press because there is greater freedom in terms of writing style and content.

Dave had worked on human rights stories prior to his work with JHR and had produced investigative journalism, but also had an interest in crime reporting and music journalism. He expected to have the least experience in human rights reporting among his cohort of JHR trainers, but later found that to be a misconception.

Dave worked for six months at *The Chronicle* newspaper in Accra – which has an established relationship with JHR and a dedicated human rights or social justice section, the content of which is the responsibility of JHR trainers and trainees. Partway through his placement, he began volunteering at *The Vision*, a community publication in the Buduburam (Liberian) refugee camp. There he helped with basic skills training and helped to launch a website because the publisher didn't have enough money to maintain a paper version. Dave said he did this partly to help another JHR volunteer who worked at

The Vision and partly because he was feeling frustrated with his placement at *The Chronicle.*

Dave said he signed up to work with JHR because he felt the program offered him a way to "give back". He said "I'm an idealist and I want to help people and I think that journalism has a responsibility to go out and...find these thing that can actually make a difference by reporting them".

Dave saw his role with JHR as a facilitator or someone who could guide a journalist through the process of developing, researching and telling a story. He felt that JHR had the funding to help Ghanaian journalists do more in-depth stories – to send a journalist (or trainer) with a reporter to show them how to gather information, how to choose interviewees and conduct interviews, how to spend money responsibly when traveling for work. He also talked about debating human rights issues with reporters, to help them understand human rights issues.

Of his placement at *The Chronicle*, Dave said the reporters he worked with didn't take journalism or human rights reporting seriously, and that they did not have the drive to produce good journalism. He expressed a level of frustration with his posting at *The Chronicle* and a feeling of being responsible for driving the process:

> One of the biggest problems I've had with *The Chronicle* is...there's not as much enthusiasm as...I mean you can only help them as much as they want to be helped. But that doesn't sound right. You can only do as much with them as they want to do.

However, Dave also felt his work at *The Chronicle* did help in terms of skills development and human rights training.

Dave said his experience at *The Vision* was much better – that the reporters had a better grasp of human rights issues and more ambition to tell those stories.

Dave was critical of the experience in human rights reporting among JHR trainers. He felt there was a lack of knowledge about human rights issues and thus a misconception about human rights reporting. He felt some stories produced by JHR trainers and trainees were not authentically centered on human rights. He believed there should be more awareness among JHR trainers about human rights issues and human rights journalism.

> ...the other day I had a chance, finally, to see other articles done by prior JHR people...looking over what we've done this time I don't know how much of it has actually been relevant to human rights and so much of it that's been put out by JHR has been very broad...it's social justice and somebody being wronged is not the same as somebody having their human rights violated...we've had things with like handicapped people, and lepers and witches and, you know, just generally people who have been disgraced and you end up having these pieces that are always like there's a lot of prejudice against them, they're ostracized in the community. That in itself is not a human rights issue to me. But when they are being deprived of something that is an essential human rights such as freedom...health care or food or education or shelter...that's when it becomes a human rights issue.

Dave also believed stories produced under the guidance of JHR volunteers did not always clearly identify the human rights issue being dealt with and he believed an accompanying discussion or preamble would help to link stories with specific human rights issues would be valuable to the reader – that it would help them to understand their rights better and the rights being explored in the story.

Dave found newsroom resources at *The Chronicle* and *The Vision* to be lacking, specifically for transportation and communication.

Dave recognized 'soli' or 'solidarity' money (money given to reporters by the organizers of press conferences or media events) as a regular part of the practice journalism in Ghana, but did not believe it influenced reporters' work. He believed

reporters produced pieces critical of the same organizers who gave them money to cover their event.

Dave believed the Ghanaian media culture was very politically-oriented, but also believed this to be the case in the United States where he felt publications featuring stories about real people were often labeled as being left-leaning.

The kinds of stories Dave and other JHR volunteers were involved in telling which he felt had real impact were those that had the power to affect change. For example, he pointed to radio stories about human rights issues that had prompted organizations to step forward to help. He also referred to a story he worked on about the living conditions at the Krisan refugee camp near Takoradi, reporting on the lack of access to health care and employment and on police brutality toward refugees, as an example of a story that has the potential to affect change – to bring to the attention of officials that the refugees should be moved, or given better access to basic services.

Dave believed that a strength of the JHR program is in delivering basic skills training – for example, how to do Internet research or how to use technology to do their jobs. He said another strength was showing reporters how they could use journalism to spark a human rights debate.

Efia

Efia talked to me about a love of reading, learning and analyzing, and of cultures. She related this to her teaching and her background in English. Earlier, she had imagined working in communications and eventually that led her to journalism, which to her was a means of being in the community, talking to people and telling their stories.

She said originally journalism, to her, was about reflecting society. She also talked about the role of the journalist as educator, regulator, critic, entertainer, informer, and as the person who keeps government in check and holds people to account.

Efia came to JHR to teach and to see if international reporting was for her.

> ...a big reason why I decided to go on this volunteer thing with JHR is that I was doing daily news reporting which I thought I wanted to do. I thought I wanted to be a regional reporter, then a national, then an international. Then I realized that I really didn't like doing news...I'm a very deep thinker, a more analytical person, so it was contrary to what I find satisfaction in...

Efia was the first JHR volunteer placed in the radio newsroom in Accra where she did her placement. She said there were challenges to this – to figuring out how to fit feature stories about human rights issues into the daily demands of news reporting, and to figuring out how the program would work within the newsroom. She said it was a matter of developing a system and then of driving the process herself to make sure the features got done.

> So, I was really trying to work around that, but also to keep the ball going enough that we would keep the story and not forget it for a few weeks and you know, have no passion for the story after a while. So, to do that and also to keep my hands – to direct them and guide them in the story structure, but not write the story – that was tough. Challenging, I guess it was challenging.

Of her experience working with Ghanaian journalists, Efia said she found the newsroom did not have the same resources to work with that she was used to having in Canada and that the journalists themselves did not always prepare for stories as they should. For example, she said they would go to interviews without the proper equipment and that they lacked focus in their stories and allowed themselves to be sidelined by people in authority – that they didn't challenge interviewees enough.

> I feel I made a difference with the reporters I worked with one-on-one—with one reporter especially. I think I helped them focus on human rights-based stories, to the point where they were coming up with compelling story ideas on their own. Where I particularly feel I made an impact is through my instruction in feature-writing and radio editing. I noticed a big improvement in their writing style, and their ability to structure a story. They also learned how to edit a radio story, using lots of sound.

Efia also talked about the struggle of identifying what kinds of stories she and the Ghanaian journalists she worked with should be telling – what exactly a human rights story was. She said early on mentioning human rights seemed to put reporters off.

> I think when you get down to it, the mandate is reporting on stories where there is injustice and the constitution says otherwise...once I got over that hurdle, the reporters got over that hurdle and sort of let's do stories that talk about people in real life situations where there is some kind of injustice being done...I struggled with that because I thought are these the kinds of stories to doing because in a lot of the stories I'd read previously they would quote the constitution and I thought hmmmm is this the right kind of story to do? Of course it is.

After having had the experience of working with JHR, Efia said she believed more strongly than before that journalists are capable of putting issues on the public agenda.

> ...there's so many stories that don't ever hit the news,. Really, really major things that affect people's lives that are killing people – diseases or child labour, slowly killing them – that would never make the news if a journalist wasn't out there and trying to put it out there and on the agenda.

Efia believed the stories she helped to tell in Ghana raised issues of public importance, such as the illegality of homosexual sex and about the rights of people with disabilities. But she also wondered how it was possible to measure the real impact of the JHR program.

> How do you possibly quantify or measure what impact you're making? Yes, you can count the number of stories or articles you've written. I'm just raising my eyebrows and shrugging my shoulders because you don't know what kind of impact it's making.

At the time of our interview, about a month had passed since Efia had finished her term with JHR and she felt that should would like to work more in an outreach capacity, perhaps in development or educational journalism. She also talked about going back to teaching. She says some of the most important things she learned from her experience working with Ghanaian journalists were to slow down, to appreciate cultural differences and to lighten up.

Matilda Asante

Matilda came to journalism because she was attracted to broadcasting – initially to the glamour of television, then later to the immediacy of radio news. She saw journalists as being very influential – people who could "bring about change or make some kind of difference" and she said that was the deciding factor for her when she chose her profession.

To Matilda, one of the primary functions of being a journalist is to hold public officials accountable.

> ... a lot of public officials go unaccounted for and they get away with a lot of things and there's nobody to question or bring them to order or call them to order and I think as a journalist, that for me is my passion, because whether a country or its people will be better off or whether they will be poor depends on what policies are promulgated and how those policies are implemented by the public officials. So, I believe and it is something that I hold very, um, high that public officials must be accountable. I can't hold a whip to their heads or you know, if you like, take them to court. But I can question them about what they have done with the little money that was given them when I see that nothing has been done and I can investigate to find out if indeed, what they claim to have done, has been done. And, I think by doing that it makes a difference, not just for me because I also will be obviously a beneficiary of whatever social services are provided and the environment, but it also looks at the country at large and whether or not as a people we're making progress that I think we must make.

Matilda also saw journalists as disseminators of information and as educators. She also thought their role was to "highlight the failings of society and to flag them as such that those who have the responsibility to make it better will then be checked somewhat to make sure the work is done...".

Matilda identified a number of challenges to practicing journalism in Ghana, or to making her ideals about the profession a reality. She expressed frustration in telling stories or highlighting issues, then seeing nothing change as a result, but also saw, at times, the opposite happen – that stories were told which did prompt change, or at least got people talking about issues and asking for that change themselves.

> But I also take consolation in the fact that sometimes journalism is not all about bringing about the change that you want because sometimes by flagging the issues alone, you raise a certain level of consciousness which didn't exist in the past and so, over time the change might be slow, but over time you will begin to see people becoming more active, becoming more questioning, sometimes even more than the journalists themselves and, for me, I think that is the kind of empowerment that we need to give to people so that it's not just me as a journalist trying to hold somebody accountable only when I have the opportunity, but such that only a resident of a community can hold the local authority, for instance, to account and say this money was dispersed to you to execute this project. Why haven't we seen anything done about it?

Another challenge to practicing journalism effectively in Ghana, according to Matilda, is the low wages journalists receive. She said low pay can make journalists susceptible to being bribed to "put a slant" on a story. She also said that the low wages encourage journalists to leave the profession for other fields for higher pay, and this, she said, was why the "very best journalists...tend to move on after a few years". She felt that movement affected the overall quality of journalism in Ghana - that those strong journalists leaving the field for higher paying jobs hurt the profession and, that as a result there was a lack of training and confidence among working journalists and not enough

challenging questions being posed to public officials. Matilda herself was thinking about her future in journalism at the time of our interview.

> I am beginning to think that way, that I probably need much more than I am getting right now. I am going to be starting a family. How am I going to sustain them? I am patriotic all right, but I need to have a certain quality of life and perhaps if, I think this station is one of the very few places where journalists actually get paid very well. But, even so I am asking myself these questions. I can imagine what somebody in, you know, less paid medium would be asking themselves and that takes away the best people in the profession to pursue other careers which may not necessarily be what they want but they need to keep their needs met and they need to keep their families together.

In terms of the money collected by journalists to cover events – the "soli" or solidarity money - Matilda felt that it did compel journalists to file some kind of story following that event even if there were no "critical or important issues that are of interest".

> ...this is very subtle – they don't give you the money to say I'm bribing you. No, that's not the intention. The intention is to make sure, and also has, there's a cultural underpinning that once you invite someone to you function you should cater for them, so you would serve them drinks and if it is possible you can give them money for transport. But once that happens, you're, the journalist is somehow compelled to write something...

Matilda also felt there was another, internal, kind of pressure on journalism in Ghana. She said that there were "so-called senior journalists...trying to push certain agendas". She expressed discomfort with that practice, and a desire to see it end.

Matilda was a leader in her newsroom and was not paired with a JHR volunteer trainer, but did work alongside those trainers. She said their presence made her more conscious of human rights related stories, but she also felt she and others at JOY FM had been telling similar stories in the past, and not necessarily labeling them human rights stories.

> I give you an example...early last month we did a story about a young girl who had been defiled by her grandfather and it turned out that she was HIV positive as well. I sat here and interviewed her and her Auntie I did a very passionate story about it, I just did the story as I was told and it was so compelling that we had a lot of people, you know, volunteering to help raise money for her to pay her medical bills. We're still in that process. We've had ministries come up to us and say "we're the ministry for women and children's affairs, we want to take up her medical bills". We've had individual organizations come up to us. Was I thinking about human rights when I did that story? No, I was thinking about a story about a child who had been defiled and the story needed to be told. Well it ties in very well with a human rights story, but off the top of my head when I was doing that story I wasn't thinking so much as human rights. I was just thinking a human being that had been wronged and for me, I think that is what has been the underlying thing and the consciousness that has come with working with JHR because we used to do a lot of those stories, but we never really say separated them and said ok this is a human rights story and this is not, you know...

Matilda also said though that the influence of having a JHR volunteer in the newsroom helped to highlight the human rights angles to stories they might already be telling.

One of the strengths she felt JHR had brought to her newsroom was in feature writing and production which she felt broadened the scope of the stories being told and allowed more angles to be explored. Matilda felt that the higher production value on storytelling and the more thorough reporting had a greater impact.

> Yes, certainly, I mean if you told a story of say water shortage which, or the lack of access to clean drinking water and you had a sound of a child trying to, if you like, dip into a river...and you can literally hear the sound and then by the river banks you can talk to this child and say "but I see that the water is brown. How are you going to drink it?", She tells you I'm going to have it boiled or we're just going to put it down for the whatever to settle, it gives whoever is listening a mental picture of what you're communicating and that communicates the message far better than if you would just write a piece that says "ok, people in... suburb B or C are fetching water from a well because there's no pipe born water.

Matilda also felt JHR's presence in her newsroom had affirmed for her that journalism could be used to affect change, and taught her that situations which may be taken for granted as being everyday happenings are "actually great stories that you can tell and get people to do something about them".

In terms of working with foreigners, Matilda felt it had been a good and interesting experience, but that some foreign journalists had come with misconceptions about what Ghana was going to be like, and what the practice of journalism was going to be like on a practical level – the use of technology in the newsroom, for example. She felt that their experience working in Ghana had helped them to learn about issues in Ghana and gave them perspective...and that the Ghanaians had learned from the foreigners how to make feature stories and how to use multi-track digital editing.

Charles Takyi-Boadu

To Charles, the role of a journalist is to inform society, to defend the voiceless, to fight for causes and to tell people about the workings of government and the happenings in society. He believed journalists hold a position of influence in Ghana – that they have the power to access information and talk to people that ordinary Ghanaians would not. And, that because of that power they are able to influence decisions, their views are respected and that they themselves are somewhat feared because of the power they hold.

In his experience, being the defender of rights, or the voice to the voiceless, had been risky work – work that had in multiple circumstances led to threats against him – in one case, a death threat.

Charles saw the media culture in Ghana as being too centered on politics and too open to corruption. He talked to me about what he calls "black polythene bag"

journalists. Black polythene bags are used to carry pretty much everything in Ghana, and in this circumstance, Charles was referring to journalists who accept bribes, or bags of money, to alter their stories to reflect a certain bias. Or, as he described it, "they take monetary benefits from, from individuals and big men, big shots in society to cover up for them, sometimes do vile propaganda for them when those very individuals are committing grievous crimes against humanity". He said that the low wages paid to journalists in Ghana worsened the problem, though he stressed he would never accept a bribe.

> Well, journalism as I initially thought, I did not have monetary gains in mind. All I always want to do is to fight for people, feeble fellows, those who don't have voices, those who can't talk for people to hear their voices. So, those were the principles on which I stood to become a journalist. But then talking about expectations, I'm really down in spirit, dampened in spirit by the current breed of journalists and the journalism, journalism practice in this country because it's been, it's been, uh, rubbish to the gutters. Now, you can have, we have journalists in this country who have sold their conscience, not for only monetary gains, but then on the national agenda because the, the journalists in this country are not setting the agenda well, and you know as journalists we do the agenda setting for the country and now what they do most is to seek first what I call the political kingdom...Meaning that what they are much interested in is writing stories that has something to do with politics - polarization of the airwaves with nasty political talks, which are not beneficial to mankind, something which does not have any cause to the wellbeing of the people.

Charles said he does accept "soli" or solidarity money, but he believed it to be intended to express appreciation and that it does not "bind' him or influence how he does his job.

In terms of politics, Charles said its influence is not only too great – that the media houses are fixated on politics - but that the publishers or owners of those houses also exert their own political control over the content. For example, he said he believed

"development journalism" to be the most value to society and he wanted to do more of it, but said he was not able to and blamed that on the publishers' political interests.

Charles said one of the greatest challenges to practicing journalism in Ghana was the lack of resources available to do the job. For example, he said he did not always have access to the proper technical equipment to do his job and was reliant on public transportation to attend events and conduct interviews and he felt that was difficult and time consuming.

In regard to human rights reporting, Charles felt one of the greatest challenges was that the people who should be reading about human rights abuses (the people affected by them) are not able to afford the newspapers in which the stories are published.

> ...it does have an impact because people read them and those stakeholders – those who are responsible – read them and try to make amends. But the saddest story about these stories is that those who the stories are intended for – those the stories are written about – do not have access to those stories because most of these stories that we come out with are talking about human rights, maybe they talk about mostly we abuse the rights of people who are poor – those who can't afford the services of a lawyer, those who can't afford to buy newspapers so they don't have access to read it to know of what impact it is creating. But then basically it impacts on government to take action on the situation.

Charles had been working in the same newsroom with JHR trainers at *The Chronicle* for about a year and thought of the relationship as a collaborative one – that he had been "helping the JHR reps in the paper". Charles felt from that collaborative work that the use of journalism as an educational tool was effective.

> It's...better because you wouldn't have the platform to talk about human rights in Ghana as you want, so the JHR concept is one that should be lauded by everybody because it is devoted to championing the cause of human rights. It exposes abuse, abuses on human rights, uh, lack of uh, a lack of uh water, potable water and the rest of it, which are all fundamental human rights abuses because everybody should have the right

> to water and all those things. But then they don't have it. So, that is what the very things that JHR seeks to do so to me that's been one of the nicest programs around, around town.

Charles felt he had learned through JHR volunteers the "latest trends" in journalism such as the use of quotes in news stories. He also said he felt he had a better understanding of human rights since working with JHR and that he had come to see himself as an activist.

Charles had also worked with other foreign journalists (interns) in *The Chronicle* newsroom aside from his experience with JHR. He said there were some practical challenges such as language and accent barriers to deal with, and that, in some cases, interns or volunteers had a lack of reporting experience.

Kofi Adu Domfeh

Kofi cited two reasons for wanting to become a journalist: his love of writing and his attraction to radio which he said had become increasingly popular in Kumasi at the time he was choosing a career, with a "new breed of social commentators" working in radio.

Kofi was a unique participant in that during his post-secondary years in Nigeria he had worked as a social activist with Amnesty International and he credited that work for his attraction to human rights reporting and his desire to work as an "agent for change" as a journalist. In that sense, he said his target audience was not necessarily the people whom the stories are about, but rather the policy makers. "I'm supposed to be the link between the man...the public and the policy makers."

He also believed that journalists have multiple roles in society – to entertain, inform, and to educate. "You really have to educate. So, in as much as you are educating,

you educate yourself too, not to misinform or miseducate people." He also said a function of journalism is to reflect, however, he said that was challenging because of the difficulty in representing the full scope of opinions in society.

Kofi also believed that journalists should take their jobs to inform and educate quite seriously: "If you give them information, be it health, political, anything, anything at all, it must impact on them because perceptions are there. They may be negative or positive...so when you say the media is for change, it depends on how that media propagates their own agenda".

He said journalism is sometimes subjective and interpretive, but that neutrality, objectivity and fairness are important, although he admitted that neutrality is difficult when covering issues he feels more passionately about such as the environment. Kofi described a polemic piece he had once written to challenge the treatment of homosexuals in African society. And, he said maintaining neutrality or an unbiased perspective can be especially challenging when covering human rights issues.

> Human rights issues, sometimes you find it very difficult to not put yourself in the person's shoes...you can be biased. But sometimes the human feelings you can't throw them out. You can put your feelings in the stories, put yourself in the person's, the family's shoes – how do they feel, their daughter being defiled by an adult person. Those are feelings that are human, but of course as a writer try as much as possible to be neutral...

Kofi believed there were several challenges to working as a journalist in Ghana, and to human rights reporting. He said his newsroom was under-resourced, so access to basic equipment such as recorders and computers was limited and that the quality of the equipment that was available for reporters to use is poor. And, that his newsroom had too few reporters.

> So, the newsroom is very tight. For instance, I can see that in my newsroom currently, we are only two, with the editor three, on the whole platform. Though we are taking our major bulletin from our sister station, JOY Accra, the constraints are still there. Sometimes you need to coordinate, you have to contribute to the mid-day news, but the question is what time do you move out of the newsroom to search for stories, the one person you have to prepare for the, the headline news bulletins, you have to get something fresh on each bulletin. These are the concerns. So, you go out, you come back, prepare your voices, sit down, do your writing, editing. So, if you look at all these challenges, it becomes almost impossible for you to uh, say that I can make an impact.

Kofi also felt a lack of training - in technical production, gathering information using the Internet, and in the basics of journalism - compromised the overall quality of journalism.

> ...people sort of, I don't know whether it was because they are not well trained or probably competition allows them to do things that are not ethical, they want to rush on air. So, whenever an issue comes up, they'll rush to the studios and just say it, without looking at it professionally and looking at all angles. And that I think had, it had a toll on the general practice because anytime somebody said that we are media, he begins to withdraw, he doesn't want to speak because he knows that you are there to harm...you are only looking for bad news, or you are there to harm so anything he is going to say he is going to be very careful. That is, I think that is the most, harsh aspect of of it because if you are looking for information and the people are tight-lipped, I don't know how you are going to get those informations.

Kofi had personally experienced the challenges of human rights reporting in Ghana. It had been his goal coming out of journalism school to work as a human rights reporter, but stressed an interest in politics to get a job. Once hired he wrote a proposal asking management to establish a human rights desk, but he said his idea was not taken up and he, therefore, felt there was a general lack of enthusiasm about human rights reporting.

> I think...if you want to make an impact as an influence on other people, then journalism should be the tool. So, basically human rights is the main thing. But...you find out that a lot of people may not necessarily have the zeal or the, the enthusiasm to go into human rights fields because...it's a

> terrain that is very tedious and it demands a lot of things...especially in radio they would rather prefer being presenters or casters, anchors than to enter into real activities of journalism.

Kofi also said smaller stations had few specialists because there were fewer reporters. Instead, he focused on fitting a human element into his daily reporting, much of which is business or economics centered.

> I look for a way around. So, even when I was put in charge of the business desk, what I did basically was to look at issues that has to do with economic rights. Anytime I go for an assignment, what I usually do is...impart the common person, the average person whose business he or she is trying to do, the kind of problems they may be confronted with, what I can do to help them... So, I look at those issues and say how, what can I do? What can I do in my own little way to draw authorities' attention to these factors?

However, Kofi later said he was sometimes frustrated with the level of impact he felt from his work.

> Sometimes you, you feel like you are wasting your time. You know, that is another aspect. You, you are like, what am I doing wasting my time, you seem not to be seeing changes here and there, You go on air, you talk, talk, talk, you come back and it is still the same old problem. So, sometimes you feel like what I am doing doesn't even, is it worth it? That's something that's usually very painful and you feel like quitting. It's like some, nobody is listening, that's the feeling, nobody is listening. Because if, probably, genuine concerns come up, one would expect that effect chances, but you seem to find the same old problems and it is like all authorities feel like what is good for them is what they do and that is something that sometimes is very painful and can make the job something else.

However, Kofi also felt that as the media grows in Ghana it seems to become better at covering human rights issues and that people seem to realize they can turn to the media to tell their stories in hopes of some action by police or officials. Kofi also felt

though that the Ghanaian media had to work harder to hold those officials who do have the power to do something, or those perpetuating abuses to account.

> If someone comes to our radio station and says ok this is what has been done to me, inasmuch as I want to air the person's...quite all right I need the news...I think the next step is to go further and get the right authorities to act...because if you don't go to that extra level and you just broadcast without going the extra length of asking questions then I don't think you are doing anything."

In terms of his learning through the JHR program, Kofi felt the most valuable lesson was to dig deeper and to give the audience more context.

> ...what I learned most was...how to actually look for the salient issues. I remember sometimes when we interviewed people you go to the nitty-gritty about what really this thing is and that, that particular aspect was more like an insight to me. – that you don't have to look at the surface meaning of things. But sometimes when you go deeper you realize there are more to what probably you've been seeing. Somebody may accuse somebody of doing something, but until you go deeper, you realize that it is not, it may not even be as...you see it...the, production of documentaries or features was...a more effective way of enhancing my own way of disseminating information. What we usually do is to do the clear straight reporting. This man said this, these people are saying that, but the documentary aspect, rather takes you deeper. It allows you to feel, to have a feeling of what is really happening. For instance, I remember when we went to the um Edwenase Vocational Rehabilitation Centre. We talked to the inmates and looking to them, looking at their faces one-on-one, allowing them to speak on their own, looking at the kind of pressures they go through, where they live and under what circumstance. If you are doing a straight report, you may not have to go the dormitories and all those things. You may visit them, but you may not necessarily have to feel. You may just call them, interview the, what is your problem here, ok, is that all, ok. You put your problems across. So, that aspect of producing a documentary brought out the nitty-gritty of what people, the problems people face and that was an insight. I realized that if you could really understand the pinch, understand the pain that some people are passing through, then probably you can make a major impact.

Kofi said he found that learning professionally rewarding and that he had received positive feedback from colleagues outside his station for his work with JHR.

> ...we were at a forum, then he just came and had a 50 cedi coin. He just gave it to me and I said what is wrong with you? He said he had nothing, but that is the only thing he can give me as an appreciation, or just to commend me for that piece...I really felt it. He was like that was the best, the sound effects. I think though those were the things. You, you could, you could feel the theatre of the mind that somebody will be listening and will feel, will go through the same processes that those people you are trying to protect are feeling. That really made an impact.

Kofi also said he felt the documentary and feature production skills learned through his work with JHR (me) gave LUV FM an edge over competitors. At the time of our interview, he had also decided to take on the personal challenge of producing one feature length story each month, but admitted that would be difficult given the staffing and technical resources at his station.

Kofi said he also learned to write more concisely, using simple language "so that everybody, no matter the level of education can actually understand you. That was also a very good challenge."

Kofi did find there were some cultural and personal differences in the way we approached our jobs and he said that made working together challenging at times.

> Sometimes approach to our resource people, maybe here or there are sometimes that you have to go through the indirect way...you tip here and there." Also, In terms of our approach to work – "The aspect that I didn't like was timing. You know sometimes she would be on your neck – let's do this and, in as much as she knew the, the constraints in the newsroom, she would still want us to do something. But I later understood that, that was what she was. I mean she was here to do and she would rather probably not be idle, idling around when there is job to be done...those were the constraints that probably brought about the pressure.

Rachel Lindner

Rachel is a unique participant in this study because at the time of our interview she was a student of Divinity and had practiced journalism only as a hobby. She had gone to work with JHR because she was trying to decide if she wanted to pursue a career in

journalism and because she had an interest in human rights. She had worked with refugees in the United States and wanted an experience combining those two interests.

> ...I was doing a lot of work individually with refugees and it just it surprised me at like how little voice they have in the world. Like they don't have, they don't have political representation in their country, you know, but they don't have it outside either and they are really a voiceless community in a way that no other community I've met is, so um that's why I wanted to work with journalism in a refugee community.

Rachel spent the summer of 2005 working at *The Vision* newspaper in the Buduburam refugee camp. She helped to produce an issue of the paper – from story meeting to final production. Rachel was still forming her ideas of what role journalists and journalism play in society.

> I've gotten into journalism because I want to change minds and I want to effect change socially um, and I'm not really sure if that is what a journalist should be doing. I wonder if a journalist should just be educating people and letting them know what is going on...and allowing them to make their own decisions, but like I really think I'm interested in human rights journalism so obviously I have other interests, but so personally if I ever became a journalist it would be really important for me...I guess informing people of what's going on is just the beginning to social change, but I'd also like to direct social change as well, so I'm not really sure how I would do that.

Rachel's experience working with JHR at *The Vision* seemed to confirm for her that journalism is a possible career option, and that journalism does have a role to play in terms of educating and informing.

> I think just having a newspaper within the community...even if people from outside the community don't necessarily read it, having a newspaper within the refugee community empowers them on certain level...lets them know what is going on...the refugees I spoke to in Chicago and working at Buduburam, here in Accra has really confirmed this – it's like refugees have no idea what is going on. They don't know how resettlement works, they don't know how repatriation works, and everything is rumour based and I think that is really destructive for a community...just a lot of violence because of it. And, so I think on one level it is nice to have a community level newspaper...getting the stories out to the international community is important as well.... I guess I was kind of trying to figure

> out the same thing you are, which is like what role can journalism play in social movements and...how do those mechanisms work and...I'm nothing but encouraged, like I really, I really have had a great experience...

Even with her limited journalism experience, Rachel was able to identify some challenges to using journalism for human rights education in Ghana, at least in the newsroom where she worked. First, that not all the journalists she worked with had journalism training and their perceptions of how to do the job varied. For example, she said "...the editor is not very strict with his journalistic standards, so he'll publish things based on hearsay...". She noted that limited resources – financial and technical – made publishing the paper a challenge.

Rachel found Ghanaian news stories were written in a different style than she was used to – that they were often written in a sensationalistic fashion and that it was sometimes difficult to figure out what the story was about.

Rachel also found that her mandate with JHR sometimes conflicted with the kind of information she felt *The Vision* should be focused on.

> I'm supposed to focus on human rights based stories with my internship, but something that I've found is kind of interesting and I've been struggling with is within the refugee community, I feel like what's more valuable in terms of human rights is maybe a letter from the clinic telling them maybe what, what their rights are, or what will be paid for, what services are available to them. I feel like that's almost more valuable for them than a story on like, oh don't know, say refugees in Togo which is the last story I published, but so, I've been really having a hard time balancing Journalists for Human Rights' expectations with what I think human rights journalism should be because I think different levels of locality call for different types of human rights journalism...once you are in a human rights situation, then...pretty much any journalism you do is human rights journalism, right?

Chapter Five: My Experience

The Station

> *James: Bad stories about Africa. You've heard about them several times on great networks like CNN, like the BBC, lots of bad stories. You think they have cause to report on very good issues?*
>
> *ST: Um, I think that what you are getting at is that we tend to report on the conflict situations instead of just everyday life situations in Africa?*
>
> *James: What reason is there for you to report on the negatives rather than the positives?*
>
> *ST: Well...I've never worked as an international journalist so I can't say how they go about picking their stories. I would like to think that they, you know, try to present life as it is. A true picture of life in Africa.*

Within hours of my first day (July 22, 2005) at LUV FM and NHYIRA FM I was on the air doing a live interview on the afternoon phone-in show – *The Diary*. For one hour the fill-in host, James put some tough questions to me in their weekly "up close and personal segment". I include this excerpt and others from the interview because they illustrate both my perspectives on Africa, on journalism and my role with JHR as well as some common perceptions I encountered in Ghana about the Western media. Throughout this chapter you will also read excerpts from my personal journal which I used to document my own experience as a trainer.

On my first morning at the station, I met the staff at their weekly meeting. They were all African and mostly men in their 20s and 30s. There were so many names – all new and mostly foreign to me and I knew I wouldn't remember them all later on. Then I had a short tour of the station, which was small and basic– two studios, a news and sports room divided by a glass partition, administrative offices and a small, rudimentary technical/production room.

The newsroom had only three computers which all of the reporters and the producer shared. One of the computers had digital editing software (CoolEdit) on it. I later learned that only one reporter had used it regularly for work and most did not know how to use it at all. In fact, I had never used the system either, but it was similar to a program I was used to and there was a manual. So teaching reporters how to use the system, meant that I had to learn how to use it myself.

Another reporter also had his own laptop and recording equipment, which had been supplied by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to which he also filed stories to on a regular basis. That reporter also had CoolEdit on his computer for filing stories to the BBC, but he had only used it for basic editing and had never used it to mix multiple tracks of sound.

The other journalists relied on technicians to edit their material. I will explain later how this complicated my project and made things very slow moving in the first weeks.

After my initial tour and introduction, I took my first shared taxi ride (one form of public transportation in Ghana) with a reporter to the commercial district to buy an electricity adapter. It was my first real look at the city on my own.

JHR's country director had accompanied me to Kumasi the day before on the bus, and took me to meet the mother of the family I would be living with, then I was on my own. The mother had driven me to the university (where she worked) in the morning and had drawn me a map showing me how to get to the radio station and home again at the end of the day via "tro-tro" which is essentially a minivan or minibus that has been overhauled to fit about 22 people inside. Tro-tros are a crowded, and cheap form of

transportation, and even though I knew they were probably very unsafe, I used them every day and found them to be an efficient form of transit and a great insight into Ghanaian life. Tro-tros and shared taxis are also how my Ghanaian colleagues reporters got around to do their work.

So, it was my first Ghanaian shared taxi ride, my first time in a West African market, and then suddenly I was on my own to find my was back to the station. Then I was on the air being asked to account for all the western media's coverage of Africa in its entirety (LUV FM, 2005).

When I listen again to that interview now I'm surprised how coherent I sound because there were times in that hour when I felt unsure of myself. I wanted to make an impression on my new colleagues and I was unprepared for some of the questions. It was also a rare experience for me to be interviewed rather than being the one doing the interviewing.

> *James: Because always it is just about killings. It's just about rape, it's just about wars, and not talking about the development that they see in Africa. You think that it is good enough? Because if somebody should travel here to the US and Canada as well, we kind of witness all these. It doesn't serve anybody good to be reporting on that one always.*
>
> *ST: Well, maybe that should be one of our goals while I'm here then is to tell stories about interesting people doing interesting things instead of all negative all the time.*
>
> *James: Exactly, so you are here to change it then.*
>
> *ST: Well, I'm here to help you do your jobs and to learn from you and hopefully I have something to offer you as well.*

After the interview was over, I stepped out of the studio into the hallway and was met by a very large African man wanting to know who I was and why I was on the air. It turned out the management of the station had not known about my arrival. They had

heard about JHR from colleagues in Accra months earlier, but were not expecting me. That meant it fell to me to explain who I was, why I was there, what I hoped to accomplish, what JHR was about and to suggest how we might accomplish our mutual goals.

My Purpose and JHR's Mandate

> *James: Let's talk about why you really came down to the country. You came on the ticket of the Journalists for Human Rights Association...what is their objective?*
>
> *ST: Their objective is to increase awareness about human rights issues in various countries. So, essentially they place people like me, from various countries in developing nations such as Ghana, and to work in local radio stations and to help bring, or put documentaries to air that will help the public to understand about human rights issues and to help them understand what their own rights are.*

Seemed pretty simple, but I think my own reluctance to appear to be the knowledgeable Westerner showing up to tell them what to do, influenced how I phrased things. I remember saying that I was there to help them do their jobs and that we would learn from one another. I was more direct with management about my understanding of JHR's mandate - to help improve the skills of journalists so they can tell more and better human rights stories - and my role.

I had already decided that I was most comfortable working one-on-one with reporters. JHR had no curriculum for us to work with. We had been provided with human rights background information (Kelsey & Peterson, 2003), but nothing on how to train. There had been a week-long orientation in Toronto for volunteer trainers, but I did not go because I could not take time from my regular job, and I understand there were no training guidelines distributed there. When I arrived in Accra, I was told by JHR country director that every placement would be different. So, I understood I had both the

flexibility and an onus to make things happen. I decided that coaching – kind of field producing/instructing - would work best (based on what I had heard from previous volunteer trainers) so, asked management to allow me to work with one reporter at a time and go through the documentary making process from story idea to final production with them. Management agreed, but also wanted journalists to improve their overall skills not just in human rights reporting. There was also a desire for as many staff members as possible to benefit from what I had to offer.

For some reason though, explaining the same concept to the reporters I was to work with did not work as well. It took weeks to get across how it would work and to get into a routine.

> August 2nd - I have finally gotten through to my colleagues exactly what I'm doing here. Every time I've thought they've understood, it turns out they've not. All this time they've thought I was going to be making documentaries myself and that they were supposed to help me with contacts and to tell me where to go and how. Now I think they understand it is supposed to be the other way around – I'm there to help them create their own documentaries. I told them to think of me as a producer and this look came across their faces as though it finally sank in.

Even after I felt I had that understanding of my colleagues, there were still a number of challenges related to the fact that I was the first JHR trainer posted there. Reporters had the demands of their daily news assignments and being paired with me meant extra work for them. To work with me, meant they would have to change the pace of their days, have someone tag along on their assignments and give them input (sometimes input they might not want to hear). There was also confusion about who management would like me to work with and in what capacity. I attribute this confusion and the time it took to work out how things would work to the fact that it was a new relationship between JHR and the LUV and NHYIRA management.

> October 3rd - They wanted to know what the reporters have learned from me. They explained that they are evaluating the company's relationship with JHR. I had just sat through a long staff meeting that focused largely on advertising and generating revenue (this is a common theme at meetings). That was fresh in my mind, so I focused on the skills the employees were learning – interviewing, multi-track editing, story focus, writing – and explained how improving those skills would improve the quality of their programming. I also explained that I was teaching the reporters the value in having a human element in stories – that when people hear regular people on the radio, they'll naturally want to listen to the radio more. I felt like I was selling a product (me) and not talking honestly at all about the value in increasing coverage of human rights issues in Ghana. I felt like I was fighting to salvage a relationship, being asked to justify my existence in their newsroom, and at the same time wondering if it's my place to do that...the conversation turned to human rights and it became clear that's not the reason they've agreed to have me in their newsroom.

This was all learning for me too – I thought I was there to help reporters to tell human rights stories, and from the direction I had been given from JHR, I understood that to mean feature stories about human rights. And, that was very much how I presented it to the reporters I was to work with. I told them I would teach them how to make documentaries, and that all the stories we told would be about human rights issues because that was the mandate of the organization that had placed me at their station. However, I also agreed with the station's management that skills development was important. I believed this be especially true because those new skills would be imperative if the journalists were to tell better human rights stories.

> September 7th - It's not the mandate of JHR, but I do see the value in skills development. I know other JHR participants agree that without building the skills, it's tough to walk in and say we're going to produce features on human rights. I'm actually getting quite a bit of satisfaction out of helping with day-to-day producing and showing people how to edit. There are such different skill levels here, it's a challenge.

As it turned out, maybe half of my time was actually spent working on those human rights stories I had imagined. The rest of the time was spent working with reporters to develop their basic skills – storytelling, interviewing, writing, gathering sound, story and technical production. I also spent time helping to develop a new radio program (not about human rights). I worked with the producer/host on focus and the use of sound and actuality in a program; doing research and developing question lines for live interviews; and how to get the voices of more real people on the air. I also taught a technician how to use multi-track digital editing to create more textured promotions and commercials.

From the beginning, some journalists were more interested in working with me than others. Some even seemed apprehensive about working with me. (I think partly because JHR had not made my mandate clear and they were not sure what I was up to. I also think it was partly apprehension about working with a foreigner). The willingness to work with me also varied from reporter to reporter and over time relationships developed and the reporters were more open to working with me, even seemed eager to work with me. But, a good portion of my time in the first couple of months was spent trying to figure out how to best make the program work. My first project worked out really well, but the next reporter I tried to work with avoided me until I asked to be assigned another to work with. I didn't want to force her to do something she was not comfortable with. The next reporter I worked with was an intern and was really keen to work with me and she had a lot to learn so I was excited to work with her, but then management asked that I focus on working with their staff reporters. So, I stopped working with the intern and

moved on to work with a staff reporter who seemed to have very little interest in reporting at all.

> August 25th - Very frustrated and feeling like this program is fatally flawed. Did JHR consider that the reporters may be perfectly happy doing things their own way and may not want to learn new skills from foreigners? Why do we think we have all the answers for people? My reporter doesn't want to work with me – it's all over his face – he sees me coming and looks tired. The first time he listened to the tape I gathered, he lost his notes; the clips he didn't write down the names he gave his clips, so those were lost; now he says he doesn't know where his own tape is – it's somewhere on one of the recorders he says. This is an absolute nightmare. I'm still trying to figure out which is more important, teaching new skills to reporters, or getting human rights stories on the air. It would be easy for me to turn out a bunch of stories on human rights abuses because there are so many out there to be told. But that's not our goal, we're to teach local reporters to tell the stories themselves.

That turned out to be an isolated case and that was not my experience with the rest of the people I worked with at LUV and NHYIRA FM.

I then worked with a reporter I knew had an interest in human rights. He normally covered business issues, but was interested in human rights reporting and had talked to me about a couple of stories he wanted to produce. Management agreed, but with a condition – if we produced one feature length business story, then we could take the time to work on one feature length human rights story

And, so it went with my time in the newsroom. Once the mandate of JHR and my role as a trainer had been established, there would be negotiations throughout that time – for time, for reporters, and for stories to be told.

Complicating things even further was that my understanding of how to deliver the training and JHR's mandate didn't necessarily correspond with their ideas in Accra. At times I felt constrained by the notion that we were to teach them how to make documentaries, then it seemed I had taken the mandate too literally at times too.

> August 17th - I'm also wondering why JHR has chosen docs for a format to tell these stories, They don't even use mics (microphones) in this station (except one reporter) because they find them too bulky to carry around. I wonder if there is a better way to explore the issues. But then this is a chance for the reporters to learn new skills, and to me that's a really important element to this project.
>
> September 23rd - I've also found out that my colleague in Accra has been turning out many more stories, but they are very short. I haven't heard them, but it sounds like they are long news stories, not what I would consider documentaries. I called the JHR country director and asked what he considered a doc and he put the question back to me...In the end he said I should be putting shorter items on the air...not what I've sold to my colleagues at LUV FM. They seem keen to learn how to make docs – they already know how to make news stories.

I found during my time working with JHR that there was not a lot of communication with the organization's office in Accra or other JHR trainers, most of whom worked in Accra. Those trainers had the benefit of regular group meetings to discuss story ideas, to share experiences and to brainstorm about how to make the program work better. I was not part of those discussions. I think as they tried things, found that they did not work or might have a better way, they discussed them and modified their approach. Meanwhile, on my own, I was married to the idea that I was to help them learn how to make documentaries about human rights issues and felt that the other work I was doing on the side wasn't part of JHRs mandate, and even though I was happy to do it - to teach the skills - I wondered if it was how I was supposed to be approaching things. I had also sold the reporters and the news editor on the idea of making 'packages' or short documentaries and that's what they wanted to learn. (This lack of communication was also felt on a practical level. For example, JHR began offering a monthly budget for story production - mainly for research and transportation –

which I later discovered from another volunteer. Until then I had been using my own money for some things and the station's limited budget for others.)

The Stories

James: What will be your very first story?

ST: My first story here?

James: Exactly.

ST: That's up to you guys. Those are your stories.

The first story I helped a reporter produce was about illegal African immigrants begging on the streets in Kumasi. A reporter pitched the idea in a story meeting and I had seen a family of North Africans on the streets outside the station and had also wondered about them. The kids were on the streets, wandering through traffic begging for money. They would approach cars and hold their hands out, or up, to the windows hoping the driver or passenger would put something out for them. Once I saw a driver roll up his window while a child hung onto it, trying to stop it from going up. It was heartbreaking, but what was even more heartbreaking was seeing that child's father (if that's who he was) sit in the shade safely off the street waiting for those kids to bring back the money. I went with the reporter working on the story to interview one of the children.

> August 2nd - The boy turned out to be not so young, he says he's 15 and not from Chad, but Niger. He was very reluctant to talk very much and answered...questions with yes, no or one or two words. He was very uncomfortable. A small crowd started to gather around, I think because they wanted to know who was being interviewed, and that made the boy's discomfort even worse. By the end he had sat on the curb with his hands on his head and looked cross and embarrassed. The image of him sitting there and hearing the bits of his story – it was all very heartbreaking. He said his family had walked from Niger, and that they'd lived in Nigeria and Abidjan before now. They make about 20,000 cedis a day begging on the street and give it to their father who uses it to feed the family. They live in Zongo (I'm told this is the Muslim area of town)...asked him if he

> was happy – no. Had he eaten today – yes, rice. Where did he sleep – didn't say. How did they get across the border – they walked. This boy's life is incredibly sad. He's got no home, not enough to eat – he's very small and does not look 15 – and everyday he's out there begging. I was pretty overwhelmed and deflated by the end and I thought this is just one person's story. How many others are out there living this life? How many people in Canada even? I wish I had written this soon after that interview because even just a few hours later, the impact has softened, and that too is sad. I want to listen to the tape. When I left work his sister looked at me like I'd done something very wrong. I wonder if she thinks we'd taken advantage of her brother.

That story aired internationally and I think it was a good place to start. Child labour is a well documented problem in Ghana and this story looked at the reality of the situation from a child's perspective.

That turned out to be one of the easy stories in terms of emotional impact. One thing I came to learn is that I do not necessarily view hardship and death in quite the same light as the people who see that hardship and death all the time.

> September 29th - Went out today to work on a story in Offinso – just outside of Kumasi. It had been covered in the news last week while I was sick, but I thought we should explore the issue more in depth – gather some tape and put the issue on the air for a phone in show. The story is about a young man who had apparently been suffering from some sort of mental illness. He'd become convinced that there was treasure buried beneath the floor of his room and was digging a hole there. The community people we interviewed said on the day of the incident he was looking for blood for a sacrifice for the hole to help him find the treasure. I'm getting all this from the reporter I was with who was translating, so I hope it is accurate. Anyway, he went out and killed two women with a cutlass. Apparently he took them, or followed them into the bush and hacked them to death. When people in the community discovered what happened, they grabbed him, beat him to death and set his body on fire by the side of the road. Again, it had been covered last week in the news, but I think there are issues that warrant further work. Was he mentally ill? If so, did anyone know, or try to seek help for him? Were there any warnings (some reports say there were)? Why did the community take the law into their own hands? Did they know he was mentally ill (if he was)? What happens to a group of people who beat a man to death and set his body on fire? How does the community feel about it?

I was in for a few surprises. First, no one outside the family expressed any remorse for this man. The family member who talked to us said he didn't stop the mob out of fear. People said there was no point in turning him over to police because there would be no justice. One man said he knew of others in the area who had killed and were let go by police. The community doesn't want the man to have a funeral there because of the murders he committed. Instead (today was the funeral day for the two women) they lit a fire at the spot where they'd burned him, and said they were burning his ghost. I found the lack of remorse incredible. Even more incredible is that no one seemed to disagree. When I got back to the office I talked to some of the reporters who had covered the story last week. One had taken pictures on his cell phone and showed them to me. He said the body was still burning when they arrived. He also had a picture of one of the women who had been killed. I think that I view death in a very different way than my co-workers. I admit, I have very little experience with death and have seen very few dead bodies. I think if I had seen what they saw last week – two women hacked to death and man's body burning at the side of the road, I would have been pretty upset about it, but the reporters didn't seem upset. I talked to one about why and she said even she was surprised that it didn't upset her, she said it was normal. I don't think she meant the incident was normal, but that a dead body is normal. Maybe I'm too sensitive, but it seems like there isn't the same view of human life here. I guess if you've seen a lot of dead bodies and if mob justice is a regular occurrence, then it might seem normal.

Again, that seems to be one of the biggest challenges to doing this job, is that the reporters don't seem to see the stories as the human rights issues that I do. But then maybe that's not fair – I'm told they did include the police in their story last week talking about why mob justice isn't right, so they obviously recognize it, maybe it's that they don't get emotionally involved or react emotionally, which seems odd because it seems to be a very animated society.

One thing that bothered me as time went on in Ghana, was that I also became somewhat desensitized to things that would normally have bothered or shocked me before. In the first month I was there, I went to a slum to interview some 'kayaye' or female porters for a piece about child labour and access to education. I saw where they lived and it shocked me. I went home that night and realized that 20 girls would sleep in a shack the same size as the bedroom I slept in. I brought the reporter I worked with on that story back to that area so he could get a real sense of the place – to see and feel the

poverty and conditions the girls were living in. He didn't seem surprised at all, and that surprised me. Then just weeks later I went to a place where women and girls were living in even more deplorable conditions, and I didn't feel much of anything at all but sadness.

> September 15th - Went out Tuesday night to gather more tape for my freelance kayaye girls item. I wanted to see this place I heard about last week where 700 of them live. They kept calling it the racecourse, so I wasn't sure what to expect. It was an old slaughterhouse turned factory (ironically for school materials) that had three very long dark rooms and one smaller one. When I got there the girls were bathing and cooking after work. People here aren't as modest about their bodies as we are in North America, so it seemed a little odd for this man to be walking me through, showing me the place, introducing me to some of them while they're half undressed. I don't know which is the odd society though - we're far too uptight about our bodies, I think. It was a little disturbing to me that I wasn't hit with any great sense of sadness or dismay at their living conditions. I don't even know what I thought, but I know I wasn't surprised and I should have been. They were bathing and cooking and sleeping in these big rooms with dirt floors. Some said they hadn't made any money that day and one woman said all her savings had been stolen recently and that she was starting from scratch. She was drunk – you could smell it off her – and that struck me as a little strange, I don't think of Ghanaians as drinkers, though I know they do. I've never seen a woman drunk in public here before. Many of the stories I heard from the women and girls were similar to what I'd heard before - they'd never been to school and were doing this to make money. The most heartbreaking thing, I think, is that some of them were so young and beautiful. In another society they'd be pampered, but here they've been left to fend for themselves and they're much too young to do that. During my interviews someone knocked over a coal pot and burned this baby who was toddling by. The baby was screaming and the women were throwing water and powder on her/him (?). So dangerous, but it's a normal part of their life. My guide talked about finding kids dead in the buildings because they weren't properly cared for. I don't know if I'm getting tougher or what, but I think two months ago that would have been hard for me to hear.

In all, we created just five short documentaries and current affairs stories about human rights issues in Ghana. They explored child labour and trafficking; access to education, justice and health care; and, mob or instant justice. For the most part, these were the first documentaries and feature stories the reporters had produced and it was a

matter of working through and learning each step along the way from story idea to development to gathering information and interviews to production. In most cases the stories aired locally and nationally and one was sold internationally to another media organization. With two of the stories, we first aired them on a local (Ashanti region) radio show called *Nightbeat* and invited guests to explore the issue further and to take calls from the public. I did not notice a huge participation rate in those call-in shows, but I believe it is important to give people the chance to react and respond to the issues. For each of the longer form stories I worked with the reporters to create shortened or news length versions to send to Accra to air on Multimedia's national newscasts. Throughout my time there we also worked on separate news stories about many of those issues mentioned above as well. And, as I mentioned in the previous section there were also stories unrelated to human rights that I worked with reporters on to help with skills development.

> December 14th - I was very pleased yesterday when a reporter came to me with a feature story to vet. He'd initiated it himself, did all the interviews, gathered sound and wrote the script. I felt like jumping around the newsroom, or hugging him. The story is not about a human rights issue, but it is interesting. It's about the number of business that get away with not paying taxes, and how the government is trying to stop it. So, even though it's not about human rights, it did make me feel like I've had some sort of impact in the newsroom and have helped someone learn something. This reporter is now able to package his own short docs for radio, and is obviously interested in doing it. I think there was only one other reporter in the newsroom doing any similar feature stories before I arrived.

Working with Foreign Journalists

Part of the reason the scope of my work did broaden so much into areas outside of human rights and into general skills development was that it was a challenge getting

reporters' time to work on our projects. It was not possible to work exclusively on our projects, but rather the reporters fit them into their spare time.

> *James: You have been doing much more news and documentary like you said quite earlier can you tell me some of the challenges of course in the country of...in Canada, does it seem to be the same?*
>
> *ST: I think that the challenges to being a journalist in Canada are probably similar to the challenges here. Most organizations don't have a lot of money to work with and that seems to be the biggest constraint...you know you have these great ideas, you want to go out and make these impressive documentaries and then you find out that there's no resources to back it up so you kind of have to chip away at it and try to get it done and you never end up putting as much time into something as you really want to. That's probably the biggest challenge.*

The reporters I worked with for the most part had great story ideas. Some ideas, I could tell, they had probably been waiting for a chance to work on and I empathized because that is what happens to journalists in Canada too. We have good ideas and really want to work on them, but the demands of daily news reporting often force us to put those ideas on hold, sometimes until they're done by another reporter or competitor, or sometimes until the story is no longer current.

In Ghana, as a trainer or field producer, it frustrated me to see reporters want to work on something bigger and broader than daily news, but not have the time. But I was also frustrated by feeling that I had come to help, but there didn't seem to be any willingness at times to break out of the daily routine.

> August 8th - I left work today in utter frustration. It wasn't very good form, I know, but there's just no cooperation...I left a note saying he should give me a call when he's decided whom I will work with. Otherwise, I'm just sitting there, or doing the work myself, which JHR says is a no-no. A previous JHR participant had her own stories on the air and I'm starting to understand why – she was probably quite bored. Ironically, this is the same kind of issue I deal with at work in Canada. Editors claim to like story ideas and support them in theory, but offer no time or resources to

> get them done. Then, when the stories don't come to fruition, it's the reporter's fault for not pushing the editor hard enough.

That wouldn't be the only time I left work out of frustration and I'm shocked that I would do that. I would never do that in Canada, but in Ghana I would leave because I was so frustrated and so tired of waiting that I just could not stand it any more. I had to get out and get some work done myself because I could not handle sitting there waiting for someone to have the time to work with me, or to be assigned to work with me. And, the times that I did leave I would be hit with this guilt – I had gone to Africa as a volunteer, and I knew there would be cultural differences and challenges and I obviously wasn't handling them very well. I was not supposed to do the work for them, yet at times that is exactly what I ended up doing – hoping to kick start some interest or keep our momentum going on a story. Then sometimes I ended up working on my own freelance stories to break the monotony of waiting.

There were also significant differences in how the reporters I worked with approached their jobs. For the most part, when working on larger projects with me, the journalists were very keen and ambitious.

> August 4th – We…had our first story on the air tonight. It's the one about the Niger immigrants on the streets – the kids in and out of traffic begging, sleeping on the streets at night. Ghana immigration officials are considering a new camp for them (thought they made it sound more like rounding up vagrants and putting them in a "concentration" camp rather than providing a safe place for them to live). I had drafted a sample story outline for him to use as a guide since it was his first doc. I thought we would interview more families and try for more detailed information about how many live in Ghana, how they get into the country, why they choose Ghana, what is their status (illegal immigrants?) but I was out of the office for part of the day and when I got back he had put the story together without those additional elements. I would have rather had them, but I was happy he'd taken the initiative and time. He didn't know how to mix on more than one track, so he'd voiced it outside on the street where the family begs. I was very pleased with this – that he'd thought about the

> sound elements we'd discussed....I am very happy though to have the first item on the air. It will give me a chance to use it as an example – to walk them through the steps and talk about how we may have tried different approaches, or treated the story differently, plus it will give me a chance to get some feedback from them.

That enthusiasm was often matched and even exceeded by other journalists I worked with. But there were also periods of time when it seemed being paired to work with me was more of a hardship than a chance to learn. For example, at one point I lost a journalist I was working with for hours and later found out he had been napping in the back room. So, there were days of frustration and boredom mixed with periods of very fulfilling work and progress.

> August 17th - It seems I have one good day at work sandwiched among long drawn out ones. On the drawn out days I'm torn between wanting to do the research and start the stories myself, or leaving out of boredom. Today I opted for the latter. I have a cold and am worn out from the last few days, so I left mid-afternoon. Last week things started going a bit better. I went out to work on a story that I started gathering tape for (the carrier girls). My intention was to get the tape to use as an example of interviewing in the field and really just to kick-start a project with a reporter. I brought the tape back, had my current work partner listen through and pick out the interesting parts of the tape, things he could imagine becoming part of a documentary. Then he took the initiative and started writing a script. He has a really good sense of how to tell a story, but there were some problems. We started going through it line by line and I was challenging him on how he knew some things to be fact when they hadn't come up in the interviews I gathered. Then I slowly realized, it's because he KNOWS girls like this...he'd just never done a story on them. He told me they call them kayaye (sp?) girls – carrier girls. He says some have come to live at his building where they have relatives and that they sleep out on the terrace because there's no room in their relatives' apartments. He says they come to Kumasi with no skills and no sense of how to find work, so relatives send them down this path, which apparently to them is a quick way to make money. We re-worked the script and talked about the additional elements we would like. One thing I find interesting about his writing is that there was no distance for him, or neutrality, he was asking what could be done, or should be done about these girls (why they don't go to school, their living conditions). My instinct is to write that out of the script, to make it more neutral, but then

why do we do that? Maybe I should let them go with what they are comfortable with.

The lack of neutrality really took me by surprise. There was none of the separation from a story that we are often expected to have in Western news and current affairs reporting. Once, at a public meeting, a reporter I worked with stood in the middle of a press conference – not to ask a question, but to offer his own opinion on the subject. Another time a reporter interviewed a colleague – another reporter – and planned to use it as a man-on-the-street type of perspective. But clearly he was not just a man on the street – he was a co-worker and had a relationship with the reporter. We had a conversation about it in the newsroom and some agreed the reporter should not include the interview because listeners might recognize the reporter's voice and know it was not just a man-on-the-street. But for me it was an issue of ethics – I disagreed with passing off the interview as a man-on-the-street perspective, when it was not. And, I was not used to journalists offering their perspective on issues being covered by their colleagues, unless they are clearly identified as columnists or editorial writers. In the end the journalist went back to the streets and gathered new material for his story and months later told me he agreed with my perspective.

Reporters' writing style also differed from what I was used to. It often seemed to be more like what one would read in a newspaper, rather than the short, active-voice sentences we typically use in radio writing. Initially, there were debates among the Ghanaian journalists I worked with as to which style was preferable.

One real cultural hurdle to making the JHR program work in the newsroom, was the concept of time. Reporters worked, by our standards, very long days. They started at eight in the morning and worked through the evening until seven or eight. But they also

took frequent breaks and were much more social than colleagues at other places I have worked at in the past. It was not unusual at LUV and NHYIRA to see groups of people gathered in the parking lot or stairwell outside socializing or even just standing around watching the world go by and being together. Or, I might see someone napping on the job, or dancing and singing in the newsroom. So, I knew quite early on that the workplace was going to be quite different from what I was used to and I actually thought that was great. What a better way to work with dancing and singing in the newsroom. But I also knew that one of my biggest challenges was going to be learning patience – I was so used to going to work to work. Eventually I came to appreciate those times when absolutely nothing got done in the newsroom, but when I learned an awful lot about Ghanaian life. However, it was difficult for me to make the transition and I wish it had come easier. There were times when I found an ambivalent attitude toward getting things done, was more than I could handle.

> August 8th - Today I also realized that the story we thought went to air last week, still has not aired. The reporter knew there was a problem in the Accra end, and thought it wasn't his responsibility to fix it. He would rather have his story languish and be forgotten, than pick up the phone and straighten it out. Very frustrating!!!! I found this out by over—stepping my bounds (I think) and calling their news editor.

Sometimes compounding my frustration was knowing that the newsroom was more than capable of doing stories quickly and making sure they got on the air. For example, there was a story that broke while I was there about a politician who had been charged with smuggling drugs internationally. The story was on the air very quickly, with a live report into the morning show from the politician's constituency.

> November 21st - I'm also trying to get some time with the other reporter to work on the story about access to health care for rape victims. Today that

reporter is covering a story about an MP allegedly caught dealing drugs in the US. Pretty big story here.

November 22nd - So this afternoon I found myself sitting in the newsroom with three reporters. One was editing, one was writing and one was sleeping. I don't know where the rest were. The tv was on, music was playing, the managers were in their offices, the sports guys were getting ready for their show...(I heard) the MP story had been picked up by the BBC. I don't know if that's true, but if it is, then I think that it's also the international media that picks up the sexy stories and ignores the humanitarian ones. How come a seven year-old girl dying after a rape, or a man beaten to death aren't as newsworthy as a politician arrested for drug trafficking?

But I was not alone in my frustration.

November 22 - I've talked to one reporter a few times about how frustrating he finds working in this system – not having time to work on more in-depth stories, filing stories to the network that never get played, being assigned too many stories in a day, having to work from eight in the morning until seven in the evening with no overtime. I know they aren't paid very much to do this job, and I wonder how they do it.

One thing that struck me as being different from news reporting in Canada, yet in a way somewhat similar, was the approach to follow-through of stories. Often we get so wrapped up in day-to-day reporting of events that we either do not have time, or the willingness, or we simply forget, to follow up on stories that really deserve more attention. We may for example report that PEI's fishing industry is so desperate for workers that one plant is bringing people in from Russia to fill the gaps. We may do that initial story, then for various reasons, not follow up to find out how that worked out – or whether it is a larger trend. In my experience in Ghana, that failure to follow-up was exacerbated by many of the same reasons as in Canada – the number of reporters, resources, the daily demands of news gathering, new stories coming up while others get forgotten – but what stood out for me in Ghana were the *kinds* of stories that would be left with a simple news report and no further exploration or follow-up.

For example, the instant or vigilante justice story I mentioned earlier - about the man who had been killed after he had killed two women in his village. The initial news story was done – several reporters went to the village to cover it – it went national…but then no further stories or research was done. No one tried to follow up and find out who did it, whether charges followed, how common the trend of instant justice had become, what could be done about it. When I came back to work I asked a journalist to work on the story with me to explore the story further and we went back to that village to talk to the people who lived there about what happened. We also went to the police to talk about what if any charges had been laid against the people who had beat the man to death. The people we talked to were very candid about what happened and their feelings about it, though no one we spoke with admitted to having taken part. We put together a story with the elements we gathered and aired it during an evening call in show and invited guests to participate. The reporter told a super- compelling story exploring the idea of mob justice through this one incident and then a guest from the police service fielded questions from the public.

I thought by telling that story and following up on it and exploring the issue in more depth, it would have some impact in terms of how similar events might be reported in the future, but that was not the case.

> November 22nd - The reporter who worked on the lynching story yesterday was assigned to a different story today. No one went back to the police to see what, if anything, came of the situation. We don't know if anyone was charged, if the other two men were ever found, or if the identity of the dead man is known. It's like it never happened.

Another striking similarity between working as a journalist in Canada and working in Ghana, was access to information. However, in Ghana it seemed exaggerated. One Ghanaian colleague told me it was one of the biggest challenges of his job.

> September 25th - He's a good journalist - takes his job seriously, asks the right questions - and unfortunately suffers the same frustrations many reporters feel. Often people, especially in government, do not want to let information out that should be public. Even when it is supposed to be officially released, people are still reluctant to hand things over to reporters. In Canada we have access to information legislation that theoretically helps us work around those difficulties. I'm told similar legislation is coming to Ghana, but not yet. When we went to visit one city official last week we were told the city's official plan and annual budget were not available to us. The woman said we could send a letter requesting the documents and maybe the request would be granted. We tried to reason with her, but she wasn't budging. She said there have been problems with the media in the past – that was her explanation. After, my partner was understandably frustrated and agitated and said it was a typical response from a government official.

Human Rights Reporting

In my experience, perceptions about human rights varied within the newsroom. The stories we worked on during my time there were stories suggested by reporters; however, a reporter might suggest a story and not have time to work it. I therefore, would try to interest another journalist in working on that story. Or, I might suggest a human rights follow-up to a story that had already been reported.

> December 14th - My hopes to do more work on the lynchings in the city have not panned out. Reporters were not assigned to follow up on them. I had hoped to produce one more feature this week with another reporter and at first he said he was interested in pursuing this story. But then he changed his mind. I'm not sure why. He only said he wanted us to work on another story he'd already gathered tape for – on the brain drain - so again, not necessarily about human rights issues.

In some cases, I found journalists very agreeable to tackling certain human rights issues, while in others there seemed to be some disagreement about the value of telling

the story or maybe some disagreement about whether a story was about a human rights issue.

> September 15th - One of the toughest parts of this assignment is getting reporters interested in human rights stories. Things we would find appalling in Canada are so common here that they are accepted...A reporter had pitched me this really important story about parents of sexual assault victims accepting cash rather than go to the police. That reporter is too busy to pursue the story, so I've been trying to convince others to do it. But the reaction is – yes it happens, but the parents need the money for hospital bills for their daughters. They don't seem to grasp the injustice of it all, or maybe they just don't see the point in telling stories about things that everyone already knows happens. But I think it is important – if you just let things go on unquestioned, it's going to continue to be accepted.

I also remember talking with a Ghanaian colleague about instant justice and him saying that he too would beat a suspected robber because it would act as a deterrent to future thieves, and because he didn't trust the police to do their jobs.

However, for the most part the stories that we told together during training were those that the Ghanaian reporters pitched themselves. So, normally it was not an issue of convincing them to work on human rights stories because they were already interested.

'Soli' and Other Economic Issues

> *James: If you go out to cover an event...who kind of funds your trip and everything that has to do with your news reportage? Who funds it, the station?*
>
> *ST: I get paid by the CBC.*
>
> *James: Well of course you have your salary, but who funds the trips?*
>
> *ST: You mean if I have to take a taxi somewhere?*
>
> *James: Exactly.*
>
> *ST: The CBC.*
>
> *James: The CBC does it.*

ST: Yup.

James: Now if you go to the grounds and you finish with your reportage, the organizers give you something, just for transportation, do you pick it? Does it exist in Canada?

ST: Uh, that wouldn't happen in Canada.

James: It does not exist?

ST: No.

James: But if somebody gives it out to you, would you accept it?

ST: No.

James: Why?

ST: Um, because we have journalistic policies at the CBC that would get me fired if I took that money actually.

James: But is that wrong? You came in to cover an event for me and I thought you did great work, so then have this for lunch or supper, have it for your transport, is it wrong on a friendship basis? Does that amount to selling your conscience?

ST: To me it wouldn't be acceptable, but that's my own personal opinion. I'm not sure what the practice is here.

James: Would you pick it then?

ST: No I wouldn't take it.

James: Not at all?

ST: No.

James: All right, what about refreshment, if you are refreshed on the grounds?

ST: You mean would I have a glass of water?

James: Water, drinks, everything.

ST: If I was really thirsty and I needed a glass of water I would probably ask for a glass of water.

James: Then you shouldn't have taken anything at all if you thought that taking an amount of money being offered by an organizer was wrong then.

ST: I think that water is different than taking money.

James: Have you had a chat with Ghanaian journalists about what happens over here? On covering events and whatever they receive back?

ST: No I haven't. Is that common?

James: Well, I haven't said so, but probably in your six months you will come to find out.

I did come to find out, and it did not take long, that money changes hands in Ghana in ways I had not seen before. It came up the first time when I saw a reporter hand an interviewee money and I was thinking I did not just see that...but I had. I was really uncomfortable with it and later talked about it with the reporter. It was a casual conversation. I did not want to judge, but I also explained that I was not used to seeing that and that I would probably get fired from the CBC if I were to offer money or anything else in exchange for an interview. I am not sure how he felt about that conversation.

Money came up in a different way at my first press conference. I was by myself, doing research for a story and when I arrived, I signed in with the organizer. Then at the end of the meeting she offered me an envelope of money, which I refused. I later learned that it was standard practice. Reporters would go to cover an organized event and then receive an envelope of cash on their way out.

> August 24th - I realized that the reason I was offered money the last time is because I signed the register when I arrived. So, this time I did not sign. But when we were leaving the woman handed the reporter I was with two envelopes of cash. I noticed and told her to keep one. She looked shocked and the incident sparked a discussion with the reporter. He says this time he made 100-thousand cedis, but that sometimes it can be as high as 500-

thousand (about $70 Cdn and more than he makes in a day – in fact he says 100-thousand is more than he makes in a day). He said the cash was for transportation, and I pointed out that our transportation only cost 15-thousand. He laughed it off and said it's not just for transportation and that it is normal and doesn't effect his reporting. After work I told my landlady about it and she said that she used to work for an NGO and that they provided the money for reporters in hopes of a favourable report. She called it "soli" or solidarity money. Another woman I met with an NGO says it is part of the culture, that the reporters expect to be paid for anything they cover.

Whether a reporter should or should not accept 'soli' was a little vague. Officially, reporters at the station were not to accept it. Yet, I did see money change hands. Those with whom I talked about it did not believe it influenced their reporting and explained that it was part of their culture – that it was more of a token, or a thank-you, for attending an event. In the beginning, to me it was very wrong, and I could not see how it could be that the reporters were not influenced by it. At the very least I think it must be an incentive to cover an organized event, rather than work on original journalism.

There also seemed to be a bit of a double standard.

October 12th - The show was supposed to be a two-hour call-in on the Offinso situation and on what they call "instant justice". I was worried it was too much time for one topic, but they assured me there would be a lot of interest in the topic. But one of the guests didn't show up. He was with the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice. The show producer said he'd asked for money or Guinness in exchange for his participation and the producer said he would only pay his transportation to and from the station. We were all duly appalled that a member of the human rights commission would demand money for doing his job. They were even set to call him and record him demanding money. I don't know if they did, but it's a sticky situation. Reporters here take money, or soli, all the time. It seems a contradiction to say that one person will be influenced by money and shouldn't be accepting cash on the side and not the reporters themselves. I brought this up to the producer and he said it's against company policy for reporters to take soli, but I've seen it happen. I don't know if management and producers are blind to it, or if they just say what they think is the right thing to say.

There was another common, informal exchange of cash - the money to thank someone for his or her time or efforts. Over time I came to understand that giving money to say 'thank you' was a cultural norm, not just in the journalistic community. One day driving with my landlady a man flagged her down to tell her she had a flat tire. For days after, when we drove by that spot, she would look for him to give him money to let him know she appreciated his help.

I also understood that there is in general a greater feeling of responsibility for one another in Ghana than I was used to. It was normal for a person with money to give it to those who did not, especially if there was some sort of connection – a friendship or family. I think my status as a Western woman also created an expectation that I had money to share. And, it is true we make a lot more money in the Western world, and most of us do have some to share. So, it became difficult for me to rationalize my hard stance on not giving money to interviewees after a while, partly because of the need I could see – and the feelings that were inspired by that obvious need - and partly because of that cultural expectation to share.

> October 22nd - I felt quite bad for him and thought it probably took a lot of courage to talk to us – especially to me. I also felt quite badly for the little kids in his housing compound who looked very dirty and I imagined the kind of life they're going to have after growing up there – in makeshift housing in one of the worst parts of town...I felt like I should be doing something for him, so I asked...if we should offer to buy him lunch...(the reporter) said sure. And, then it was strange, but I suddenly got that meant I should give him money. So, I asked...how much and he said whatever you think. I asked if 20,000 was enough and he said it was fine. So, I gave the guy 20,000 cedis. When I first came here I would never have given someone money for their time or for an interview. I would have thought it was totally unethical. Now, I feel like it would be insulting to ask a beggar for his time and story and not give him something in return. It's the same as the little kayaye girl I interviewed. I felt like the only thing I had to offer her was cash, so I gave her some, Is it unethical? I'm not so sure where I stand on it all now.

I also eventually came to realize how important 'soli' was to reporters in terms of supplementing their income. One reporter told me that he made about 200 USD per month. He said he would like to get married and start a family, but didn't feel his salary was adequate to do that. It hardly seemed fair to judge people for accepting money on the side, when they made so little compared to what I make for doing the same job in Canada. I know the standard of living is different, the economy is different, but still, it was costing me about 500 dollars a month to live in Ghana – between transport, rent, food and recreational travel – more than double what the reporters were making each month and much more than the average Ghanaian family. So, it is fair to say my position on 'soli' and money given in gratitude softened over time.

> October 25th - Been waiting for days for my reporter to have time to work with me on a story. Now I've found out he's been assigned to cover a hairdressers' training seminar. Arrrggghh! I think I'm going to start offering to cover his news assignments so he'll have time to work on features. I think he already knows how to do a news story, so it's not like I'd be taking anything away by doing that – though I suppose he'd get money from the organizers.

Throughout my time working with the LUV and NHYIRA reporters, resources were an issue. The station had agreed to pay for public transportation – shared taxis and tro-tros - for reporters when they worked on stories with me. While their public transit system was efficient, it also was not how I was used to getting around to do my job and I found it to be much more time consuming that I was used to. At the CBC, we go out to the parking lot and take a car, or call a private taxi. In Kumasi, it was waiting on the street or in line at a taxi stand for room in a shared taxi, or taking tro-tros, which followed established routes, to get around the city. Getting out of the city to do stories was even more challenging. Later when JHR began giving trainers a subsidy to work on stories it

became easier to get around as we were able to hire private taxis or in one case, rent a car. For example, a reporter and I traveled out of the city to find the parents of a young girl who had died after being raped. We were not sure exactly where the family was, but we knew the general area. It would have taken days on public transport to do that story without a subsidy and the journalist would not have had the time. But because I had money to work with, we were able to rent a car for the day and drive from rural village-to-village looking for those parents. It was a day-long excursion, rather than several days.

As I noted earlier, the newsroom had only three computers to share among the reporters and only one of those was equipped with a digital editing program. At times, I saw reporters wait for hours to get a technician's time to edit their tape, or to voice a story.

Reporters also shared recording equipment, and much of it had poor sound quality. I had brought equipment from home, which made it easier to get things done because it was always available for us to use. But that is not a long-term solution.

I also frequently saw reporters struggle with limited budgets. For example, the news and sports teams shared phone cards to make calls (including local calls) from the station and once the time on those cards was finished, they either had to use their own resources, or they were not able to make phone calls. The Internet connection frequently went down as well which forced reporters to go to local cafés to do research instead.

Even hygiene could, at times, be an issue when city water at times was not available.

Chapter Six: Analysis and Learning

In this Chapter, I revisit the themes first identified in Chapter Three:

- Beliefs about the profession of journalism and how those beliefs may have changed over time
- The experience of using journalism for human rights education
- Challenges to using journalism for human rights education in Ghana
- The experience of working with foreign journalists

I will further explore the themes, informed by the data collected from participants, including my own research journal, and make suggestions for future research and curriculum development. I will also discuss my own learning and professional development.

Beliefs About Journalism

The beliefs about the role of a journalist, or the function of a journalist in society were both common and different among the Ghanaian and North American participants.

I decided on a career in journalism because I enjoyed writing and believed journalism was a way to make a career writing, but had never seen myself as a journalist who wanted to 'make a difference' or create some kind of social change. Upon reflection, however, I realize that throughout my career I have chosen to tell some stories because I believed a situation to be 'unfair' and I believed people should know about that 'unfairness'. Having worked with JHR I now feel journalists have a responsibility, if we are able and it does not threaten our lives, to explore issues of societal importance with the goal of highlighting perceived unfairness or wrongs, or human rights abuses.

Those feelings of wanting to create change, or to highlight certain situations in society were common among the participants. However, in general, participants described having started their careers with much more simple notions about the profession than they currently had. For example, a love of writing, an attraction to radio or television, the enjoyment of seeing one's name in the paper, or as Efia described, performing the function of "reflecting society" had evolved throughout their careers into a belief that the journalist has a multi-faceted role. Some of the descriptors used were informer, interpreter, educator, entertainer, watchdog and 'agent of change'. Participants described a sense of power or responsibility to hold public officials to account, to give regular people a voice and to ask the questions those people may want answers to, even so far as to defend people and or to fight for causes as Takyi-Boadu described.

While participants seemed to agree that journalists do possess a certain amount of power in society in the sense that they are able to help shape public opinion and have access to officials that regular citizens do not, they differed in their opinions of how great that influence was, or whether the stories they tell have the power to create real change. Domfeh, for example felt Ghanaian journalists do not go far enough in terms of seeking accountability: "I think the next step is to go further and get the right authorities to act...if you don't go to that extra level...then I don't think you are doing anything." Other participants said they felt some stories they had produced helped to spark change, while others did not. However, as Matilda Asente commented "sometimes by flagging the issues alone, you raise a certain level of consciousness that did not exist in the past... over time you will see people becoming more active, becoming more questioning...".

So, the idea that journalists are 'agents of change' or at least have the desire to effect change was common to both Ghanaian and North American participants. As I interviewed each participant after having worked for JHR for several months, I am not sure how great those feelings were prior to their experience with JHR or whether it was a new discovery. But at least two participants told me that after having worked with JHR they felt more strongly that the media has real power to influence or to effect change. As Asente described:

> I've learned that you can make a change if you want to, if you are determined to. I've learned that stories which ordinarily that you can gloss over, things that you see and you take them for granted as oh this happens everyday, are actually great stories that you can tell and get people to do something about them. I've learned that, if you set your mind to anything, if you are determined to make a difference, you will.

Experiences and Challenges Using Journalism for Human Rights Education

I believe all participants in this study had unique experiences working with JHR because they had different relationships with the organization and worked at different media outlets in Ghana. They also came from different backgrounds and likely approached their jobs in a unique way. This study aims, in part, to explore their experiences using their craft for human rights education and participants described a number of strengths in this regard, as well as challenges.

There were shared fears among trainers, myself included, about whether the stories being told during training fit within JHR's mandate. For example, I worried at times that my interpretation of a radio feature story or documentary might not be the same as JHR's. I also wondered if I spent too much time on skills development and not enough on human rights reporting. Another trainer talked about feeling unsure if the

stories she and her trainees were working on could be considered human rights stories because they did not directly refer to the human rights defined in the Ghanaian Constitution. And, another trainer criticized other trainers' knowledge of human rights issues and suggested a more direct link within stories to the human rights issue being explored. I am not sure if JHR has modified its program since the time these data were gathered, but perhaps more concrete definitions of human rights, human rights reporting and feature story and documentary production may be beneficial. Perhaps JHR trainers could also benefit from a course in human rights reporting, as has been suggested for journalists in general (Kaplan & Mohamedou, 2002).

I felt the journalists at LUV and NHYIRA were already working on some human rights stories within the regular context of their jobs without my guidance. For example, one of the first news conferences I attended with a reporter was about child labour, and the first human rights feature story I worked on was an expanded version of a news story a reporter had pitched on his own to his producer. I also found the Ghanaian participants in this study saw a value in telling human rights stories, but maybe as Matilda Asente pointed out, they may not have classified them as being human rights stories before working with JHR. That said, it was the perspective of another trainer that the Ghanaian journalists in her newsroom seemed turned off by human rights reporting and that she had adapted by focusing on 'injustice' or people-centred stories. I also noticed that not all employees of the radio station viewed certain issues within a human rights context. Another participant (volunteer trainer) commented that he did not feel the trainees (Ghanaian journalists) took the social justice issues he wanted to work on seriously.

Almost every participant in the study noted a fixation in the Ghanaian media with politics and suggested that it is a deterrent to increasing human rights coverage. Asente felt that even within the media there are political pressures from senior journalists to "push certain agendas". The two other Ghanaian participants said that they have had difficulty convincing management or publishers to allow them to work on more human rights stories.

More than half of the participants, myself included, shared the perspective that resources – human, technological and financial - in newsrooms posed a serious challenge to improving journalistic standards (and therefore telling better human rights stories). As Dave Maass said:

> ...you take for granted the ability to make phone calls to anyone at any time, to be able to check the Internet for things, to be able to get a ride from here to there and be able to have your own computer that you can work on at any time. That's not how it is here and it that really seriously affects what news comes out.

I noticed in the LUV and NHYIRA newsroom that sharing recording equipment, computers and editing stations affected reporters' efficiency, as did fluctuating Internet connections and limited budgets for phone cards.

I found also that reliance on public transportation made gathering interviews and doing research a greater challenge – a perspective also raised by Takyi-Boadu.

Ghanaian participants said that low salaries acted as a deterrent to improving the quality of journalism in Ghana because they say it has led to high turnover in the industry and two Ghanaian participants suggested they were thinking about leaving the industry because of low salaries. Two also suggested that low salaries make Ghanaian journalists susceptible to bribes, while the third Ghanaian participant said that his low reporter's

salary did not compare to other media salaries (a radio show host, for example) and that made him feel devalued.

As my placement progressed, I became more intrigued by the practice of accepting 'soli' or solidarity money from organizers of press conferences because I suspected it encouraged journalists to cover more organized events at the expense of working on original or enterprise journalism. This issue was not central to my research and came up in data gathered later in my experience, but not the early interviews. The participants I did raise the issue with – Ghanaian and North American – did not feel that accepting 'soli' influenced *how* a reporter chose to tell a particular story, but one Ghanaian participant suggested it may encourage journalists to file stories following news conferences they have attended – that they may feel a sense of obligation to file a story because they have accepted the money. It is interesting to note that Moore's (2006) findings offer a very different perspective in that she found "in some cases...they specifically sought out the most profitable stories...To cover any story that didn't pay *soli* required a much stronger commitment and level of sacrifice on the part of the journalist" (p. 40). I found a great attraction to covering what we may call 'agenda' news. These are stories that are not original or enterprise journalism. Rather they are often press conferences designed to get a particular message or information out to the public. The Ghanaian media is not unique in its attraction to covering 'agenda' news. In Canada we may cover organized events or press conferences because we think the audience or reader may be interested in the content, or because there is pressure to quickly generate enough content to fill shows and newscasts and they are easy stories to get on the air – the information is handed to the journalist with little research required. I believe in Ghana

there was a further attraction to covering agenda stories because of the practice of giving out 'soli'.

Interestingly, several of the economic challenges noted above have been observed by other trainers and researchers in various parts of the world (Clarke, 2002; Cleary, 2003; Napoli, 2002; Okigbo & Pratt, 1997; Zeitlin, 2002).

Another economic challenge to using journalism for human rights education was pointed out by Takyi-Boadu when he noted that "those who the stories are intended for – those the stories are written about – do not have access to those stories...those who can't afford to buy a newspapers...". I believe Domfeh echoed that feeling when he said "we target the, mostly the educated...So when I am doing a story...the person that is affected may not necessarily hear because they may not be listening..."; however, Domfeh noted those who are listening are the ones who have power to affect change.

Domfeh also cited the challenge of accessing information from government, which he attributed to a mistrust of the media. (I found this myself as a freelance journalist in Ghana in that it was a challenge to get even basic public information from government.)

The issue of prior training was raised by both Ghanaian and North American participants. As noted above, Maass felt JHR trainers could be better versed in human rights reporting. Domfeh felt the quality of journalism in Ghana suffers because of the level of technical training among Ghanaian journalists, a perspective I believe is reflected in Obijiofor's (2003) study on technologies and journalism practice in Nigeria and Ghana.

Working with Foreign Journalists

As noted in Chapter Five, I struggled at times with what my role at the radio station should be. I did not want to seem to be aggressively imposing my views, or telling people they were not doing their jobs properly. I believe I was lucky in that those I did work with were, for the most part, open and interested in human rights reporting and in

learning new skills. However, as I also noted in Chapter Five, there were many practical challenges – such as the demands of daily news reporting and the popularity of politics and agenda driven news - to working with any individual reporter exclusively on skills development or human rights reporting.

A common feeling among North American trainers was that they were responsible for driving the learning process, or that they (myself included) had to push journalists to work on our projects or wait for them to have time to work on those projects and that was a source of frustration. Conversely, it is interesting to note that Domfeh felt the greatest cultural difference in working with me was that he found me to be too pushy and felt I could have been more understanding of the pressures of daily news combined with working on our projects.

It is also interesting to note that some participants did not necessarily view the relationship as trainer/trainee, but rather that it was more collegial. Takyi-Boadu refered to "helping" the JHR volunteers and Maass described himself as a "guide" in the learning process. One of the reporters I worked with called me his "teacher" when he introduced me, while others would say that I was from the CBC and there working with them for a time. I thought of myself as a producer, trainer or a coach, though I did see the reporters and producer I worked with as both colleagues and students. Asente found the learning between JHR volunteer trainers and the journalists in her newsroom to be reciprocal – that the Ghanaians helped foreigners to understand Ghana and its issues, while the JHR volunteer trainers helped reporters to become more conscious of human rights issues and to learn about human rights reporting and radio feature production. These varied

perceptions of the relationship between JHR trainer and trainee are also reflected in Moore's (2006) study.

While both Ghanaian and North American participants described differences in working with foreign journalists, only one described having had a negative experience. As noted in Chapter Four, Dave Maass felt the journalists he worked with at *The Chronicle* were not serious journalists and his frustration with his placement there led him to work more with *The Vision* newspaper. Less critical comments came from Efia who noted that Ghanaian journalists were not always prepared for interviews and field work. She also felt Ghanaian journalists did not challenge authority figures enough and that perspective was shared by Ghanaian journalists Domfeh and Asente. In only one case did I feel a Ghanaian journalist I worked with did not take his job seriously, though there were times that I felt journalists could have pushed authority figures harder for information and been more challenging. I do not know if this is a reflection of training or practice, or perhaps even culture.

One Ghanaian journalist expressed frustration in feeling that JHR trainers have little knowledge of what kind of technical resources are available in Ghanaian newsrooms prior to their arrival. As noted above, another felt that working with a JHR trainer added extra pressure at work. And, a third found language and accents and lack of reporting experience to be barriers to working with foreign journalists (however, I believe here Takyi-Boadu is including foreign journalism interns who have worked with him at *The Chronicle)* I also encountered language and accent barriers in the LUV and NHYIRA newsroom; however, these were manageable.

Ghanaian journalists felt they had learned journalistic, writing and technical skills from JHR volunteer trainers. Asente said reporters in her newsroom were creating higher impact journalism because they had learned to broaden the scope of their stories and focused on higher production value in their radio stories such as including the use of natural sound. Takyi-Boadu said he had a greater understanding of human rights and had learned new writing techniques. Domfeh said the documentary and feature production skills he learned were valuable in his job, but he said his greatest learning was to "go deeper" or to bring out the "nitty-gritty" of an issue.

I noted in Chapter Five that one aspect of the Ghanaian media that took some getting used to was the exchange of money between journalists and interviewees, and between press conference organizers and journalists. Domfeh also referred to that when talking about his experience working with me when he said "sometimes approach to our resource people, maybe here there are sometimes that you have to go through the indirect way, or, or you, you tip here and there and all those things."

My Personal and Professional Development

When I embarked on this research, I was rethinking my ideas of objectivity and neutrality in journalism and I was struggling with the possibility that by working with JHR, I would go beyond my idea of neutral storyteller to critical researcher and journalist. By this I do not mean that *thinking* critically would be new because we should always be doing this as journalists, but that I would have a critical approach as a researcher, journalist and trainer because we would be working toward a goal to improve human rights reporting in Ghana.

In some ways, the stories we told in Ghana were not different from those I like to tell in Canada – they were focused on real people and explored issues we (I and my Ghanaian colleagues) believed to be important. What was new to me were the issues we explored. I had never before encountered mob justice or child labour. I had never worked on stories about child rape victims not being able to afford health care or access to the justice system. It is hard to think there are two sides to a story about a family not being able to take their child to a doctor to prove to the police and the courts she has been raped, but there are – the doctors believe they spend enough time traveling to, and testifying at, trials that the fees they charge rape victims are warranted. So, in that way, we still practiced journalism in much the same way that I was used to – we presented multiple perspectives on any given issue to fully explore it and present the audience with the information they may need to understand the issue and form their own opinion about it.

I suppose where I may have crossed from journalist to activist was in the choice of stories we told. But again the stories we worked on were the same kinds of stories I too would have gravitated toward as a journalist working in Ghana, and they were stories pitched by the journalists I worked with. Therefore, I do not believe that my worries about stepping into a new role were warranted. Several of the people I interviewed for this research made this same point – that these are the kinds of stories they would normally be drawn to or want to tell, but they may not have ever labeled them as human rights reports. Our training then, was to help the journalists to learn new skills, and to help them learn those skills within the context of this specialty field of reporting – human rights.

Neutrality, or lack of it, intrigued me throughout my time in Ghana. Seeing reporters freely offer their opinions in a public setting, or insert their opinions into their journalism was foreign to me and it took getting used to. However, as noted in Chapter One, I do realize that we all have opinions and they likely do sometimes find their way into our work by the issues we choose to report on and what information and people are included in those stories. I hope our audiences realize this as well. As Dave Maass described, a journalist is "conveying not just the facts or what was said, but a sort of deeper interpretation of feelings and sensations and also meanings that can be drawn from it". And, as Kofi Adu Domfeh said, when covering human rights issues "sometimes you find it very difficult to not put yourself in the person's shoes...you can be biased. You are human, naturally you feel...we try as much as possible to remove ourselves from the story and do what is necessary." As I discussed in Chapter One, balance is a commonly used method in the Western journalism world to address the issues of neutrality and objectivity: we believe if we are fair and balanced in our reporting, then we are being objective and neutral. Yet, as I also discussed, true objectivity is a challenge in that we all have personal opinions and in that we may not be able to ignore those opinions when gathering and presenting information. While some of the Ghanaian journalists I encountered sometimes blurred the line between opinion and journalism, maybe those cases were simply a more overt assertion of opinion than I was used to, or that we in the Western media care to own up to.

When I read through my work journal now, I realize that there were many frustrating times, but I also know those were balanced by some of the most joyous times I have had in my career. One reason I wanted to work with JHR in Ghana was to see if I

would enjoy teaching or training and I am very pleased to say that I loved it. As a reporter, I used to wonder how producers derive any satisfaction from their work because it is often behind the scenes and they do not get as much credit as a reporter does. But in Ghana, I worked with some journalists that made me realize why producers probably do enjoy their jobs. They get to help develop and guide the research and story telling, and they help journalists to learn and grow. All of those feelings of frustration after days of waiting for reporters to have time to work with me would be replaced with happiness and excitement when one did have time and we would work together on stories – their story ideas - which I felt were really important to get on the air.

I found the journalists that I worked with had great story ideas and were open to developing those ideas and trying new approaches. With the exception of one reporter I worked with, they never disappointed me with their desire to do a really good job. One was an incredibly gifted storyteller and an amazing interviewer. He wasn't afraid to challenge, and I never saw him back down when he wasn't getting enough information. Another reporter had a great natural way with his contacts and a really keen desire to learn. I remember listening to the first piece we had done together air on the radio and being so happy and proud of him.

As a first-time trainer I learned to be careful when evaluating skill levels and to focus on developing those which were weaker. It was also very satisfying to see journalists learn new skills and to be excited to learn them, and to see their strengths shine through. During my last few days at the station, a reporter came to me with a completely written short documentary. It included all the elements we had worked on – he had interviewed a number of sources, focused on the people actually affected by the

issue and made use of natural sound. He also written a real story that looked at the bigger picture or the full context of the issue. The reporter had not told me he was working on the story, he just presented me with the final script to vet, and it was probably one of the proudest moments I had working there. That same reporter had impressed me immensely when he offered to come in on weekends to work on our projects because he didn't have time during the week.

I also felt that I helped the people I worked with to learn other skills. For example one colleague told me he had been complimented on his English speaking and writing skills. He thanked me for that and that made me realize the other indirect learning that happened. I also noticed journalists I had worked with passing on their knowledge by coaching others I had not worked with directly.

My learning happened throughout my time in Ghana, not just at the station with my Ghanaian colleagues, but through this research as well. In terms of professional development, my experience with JHR using journalism for human rights education in Ghana and doing this research was beneficial. I hope will be useful as I make the transition from full-time journalist to journalist and teacher.

Conclusion

This study is a qualitative exploration of journalists' experiences using their craft for human rights education in Ghana and working with foreign journalists. It also examines Western trainers' experiences teaching Ghanaian journalists new skills and, conversely, Ghanaian journalists' experiences learning those new skills.

At the outset, I wanted to explore the following research questions:

- What have journalists in this program learned from applying their skills to forward a human rights agenda?
- What has been the experience of Ghanaian journalists working with Western trainers/mentors in this program?
- How, and to what extent, has this experience influenced my perceptions of journalism?

To summarize, I found that participants want to, and believe they have the power to, effect change and to influence perceptions about human rights in Ghana; that there are challenges to using journalism for human rights education in Ghana, including, but not limited to, economic challenges; that skills development is imperative to improving the quality of human rights coverage in Ghana; and, that working with journalists from different cultural backgrounds can be both challenging and rewarding.

In terms of my personal and professional development, through this experience, I refined my own ideas about journalism. I confirmed my belief that journalism which explores issues in depth is not only more rewarding than 'he said/she said' journalism, but it is also more useful and valuable to the audience or reader (of course there are exceptions to this – breaking news and survival information, for example, are very valuable). It was my first experience using my craft specifically for an educational and critical purpose. It was also my first time working as a trainer and my learning will influence my future career choices. As a researcher, this study also confirmed for me the value of exploring experiences.

The study adds to the existing body of research on development and human rights in West Africa; the practice of journalism in Ghana; and, working with and training

foreign journalists. It also offers a unique perspective on the practice of using journalism for human rights education. I hope it will also be useful to JHR in terms of program development.

However, the study does not measure the extent to which JHR has increased and improved coverage of human rights issues in Ghana. This could be a valuable tool. The study also does not measure the impact of human rights reporting on the audience or reader, nor does it evaluate change associated with human rights education, whether that is change in policy or practice. I believe this is an area where further research is warranted, as Moore (2006) also noted.

Several participants, myself included, mentioned feeling unsure of whether our work fit into JHR's mandate. I do not know what changes JHR has made to its program in Ghana since this research was conducted, but I believe curriculum development and/or a training guide could be beneficial. Perhaps more concrete definitions of human rights reporting and feature story production might be beneficial.

Among the cohort of volunteer trainers I went to Ghana with, some had little or no professional journalism experience, and in some cases were working in media new to them. I believe to make the most of this training program - to teach Ghanaian journalists new skills - the trainers should have more working experience and formal education that those they are training. Moore (2006) also made note of this as a criticism levied by Ghanaian journalists in the program. I do recognize the value in giving Western journalists experience working in a foreign country; however that is not my interpretation of JHR's mandate.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Information Letter

I am conducting research, as part of the Master of Education program at the University of Prince Edward Island in Canada, on journalists' perceptions about their occupation and their thoughts on using journalism as an educational tool. The research is supervised by Dr. Graham Pike, Dean of Education at UPEI.

I hope to interview several journalists (Canadian, American and Ghanaian) for the study and would like to invite your participation. If you agree, I will interview you about your thoughts on your occupation and about your experience using journalism as to increase awareness of human rights issues in Ghana.

Your participation in the study would be voluntary and, if you agree to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time and may refuse to answer any question posed to you. If you do agree to take part, I will interview you for about an hour. The interview will be recorded and later transcribed. You will then have the opportunity to review the transcript for clarification or revision. If you choose to withdraw from the research at any time, your interview and transcripts will be destroyed.

If you prefer, I will not use your real name in my report, however you should be aware that contextual information such as stories you have published or broadcast and details of your professional background, might reveal your identity. Your participation in this research will put you at no greater risk than you face in the course of your duties as a journalist.

Your interview data will be in my possession and will be viewed by me and possibly by my thesis advisors in Canada. Upon my return to Canada, the interview data will be stored for five years in a filing cabinet in my home. After five years it will be destroyed.

The final research will be presented in a narrative form, which means it will read as several journalists' personal stories, including my own. The final paper will be presented to the Education Faculty at the University of Prince Edward Island.

Any questions about the study can be directed to the researcher, Sheila Taylor, at [redacted], or to the supervisor, Dr. Graham Pike, Dean of Education at UPEI (gpike@upei.ca). Any ethical concerns about the conduct of this study can be addressed to the UPEI Research Ethics Board (lmacphee@upei.ca), 902-566-0637.

Appendix B: Participants' Letter

I _____ agree to take part in a qualitative research study conducted by Sheila Taylor (University of Prince Edward Island MEd Candidate). I understand my participation is voluntary. I have read the attached description of the study and understand its intent.

I agree to be interviewed for up to one hour. I understand I may withdraw from the study at any time and that I may choose not to answer any questions posed to me. I understand I will also be asked to review the transcripts of that interview and will have the opportunity to add/correct/clarify information at that time. I understand that if I withdraw from this study, my interview data will be destroyed.

I understand that while I may ask for my real name to be omitted from the final report, my identity may be revealed by contextual information I provide such as stories I have published or broadcast and details of my own professional background.

The researcher has described to me how my information will be stored. I understand that the final study will be available at the University of Prince Edward Island library and that a summary will be available at my request.

I know of no risk in participating in this study.

I understand that I can keep a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

I understand that this research has been approved by the UPEI Research Ethics Board and that I can contact the board by email (lmacphee@upei.ca) or phone (902-566-0637) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix C: Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your personal and educational background.

2. How did you come to choose a career in journalism?

3. What did you think journalism would be like before you started working professionally?
   b. What has your experience been?

4. What role do you believe journalists play in society? Why?

5. What are the challenges to working as a journalist in your country?

b. (For North American journalists) What are the challenges to working in your country?
c. (For North American journalists) How do they compare to the challenges of working in Ghana?)

6. What sorts of journalistic stories do you believe are of the most value to society?

7. Describe the experience of using your journalism skills to teach the Ghanaian public about human rights issues.
   b. Tell me about the kinds of stories you produced in this field.

8. How has the experience of using journalism to increase awareness of human rights issues influenced your perceptions of your occupation?

9. What was it like working with foreign journalists?
   b. What were some of the challenges?
   c. What did you learn?

10. What have you learned through using your skills for human rights education?
    b. Will that learning effect how you do your job in the future?

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University of Prince Edward Island
Research Ethics Board
Certificate Of Approval

Title of Proposal : **Journalism and human rights education: North American and Ghanaian practitioners' learning**

Protocol Number : **1000547**

Name of Investigator: **Ms. Sheila Taylor**

Date Submitted : **27 June 2005**

Effective Date : **30 August 2005**

Signature : [redacted] Date : Aug. 30/05

Chair, Research Ethics Board

cc:

Dr. Katherine Schultz, Vice President, Research & Development, UPEI

Dr. Graham Charles Pike, Education