CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE NEWS MEDIA: A DEMOCRATIC OR A COMMERCIAL NEED?

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Abstract

The paper distinguishes between laissez-faire and interventionist models used to justify and implement cultural diversity initiatives in the news media. The laissez-faire model is characteristic of U.S journalism. However, due to the convergence of media systems and the widespread adoption of diversity management, the laissez-faire model may also become the prevalent model throughout other Western democracies, in Europe and elsewhere. The paper argues that the problem with the laissez-faire approach to cultural diversity in the media is that it relies on commercial instead of normative justifications. As a result, cultural diversity is mostly reduced to an *ornament*. Equated with accuracy and treated as a business asset, diversity serves, rather than challenges, the existing media system. By failing to open sufficient spaces for alternative social voices, business-driven media policies do not respond to the democratic needs of a multicultural society.

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Introduction

As discussions about multiculturalism have gained importance throughout Europe, North America and other parts of the world, cultural diversity has become a major concern also for journalism. News media are increasingly expected to recognise multiple ethnic constituencies and to take measures to represent these constituencies more strongly in the news agenda, the newsroom's workforce, and the audience. Common among these measures are initiatives to recruit more minority media professionals; to train reporters to be more sensitive to cultural differences; and to produce special programs or publications targeting minority audiences.

Whereas calls to bring cultural diversity into the news media can be heard across national contexts, they are not always justified and implemented in the same way. Following Stratton and Ang (1994), I distinguish between "laissez-faire" and "interventionist" ways to deal with cultural diversity. The laissez-faire model can be identified with the United States, where the state plays only a marginal role in the promotion and enforcement of multicultural policies.[1] "[I]mmigrants are left to themselves to find a place in the new society, under the assumption that they will be quickly absorbed into and by the established cultural order" (Stratton & Ang 1994, 128). This assumption also involves immigrants' absorption into the established economic order. Thus, in the United States the relationship between news media and cultural diversity is discussed as a normative ideal *and* as a business asset. Diversity is promoted as a source of journalistic excellence *and* as a source of economic profit. As a source of journalistic excellence, diversity is a condition for the media's fulfilment of their social responsibility. As a source of profit, it is a condition for media's survival in the marketplace.

The interventionist model, in contrast, underlies governmental efforts to distribute economic resources, ensure legal regulations, and engage openly in public discourse to promote certain multicultural goals. In this way, diversity remains largely contained within broader normative discussions about democratic participation and social inclusion. In the case of media diversity, interventionism justifies policies to secure minorities' media access and representation. Press subsidies for minority media and the allocation of public television and radio airtime for multicultural programming are among the policies with which the state can promote cultural diversity in the media beyond the diversity that may result from the dynamics of the marketplace.

This paper argues that interventionist policies to bring cultural diversity into the media are endangered. As a result, the laissez-faire approach may become the only way to deal with media diversity in Western multicultural democracies and, specifically, in Europe. Two broader trends point in this direction. On the one hand, there is a well documented tendency towards convergence in media systems (e.g., Hallin & Mancini 2004; Iosifides 1999; Sinue & McQuail 1986; Van Cuilenburg & McQuail 2003). On the other hand, North American practices to "manage diversity" are gaining importance in European organisations (Lorbirecki 2001; Wrench 2005) and are being promoted at the highest levels of European policy (e.g., Brussels Debate Highlights… 2008; Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services 2003; Making Progress in 2007). Both trends make a critical analysis of the U.S. journalism's approach to cultural diversity particularly relevant and timely for cross-national discussions about the media and multiculturalism.

The paper starts with an overview of the forces that make the laissez-faire approach to media diversity prevail over the interventionist model. Specifically, this overview focuses on recent changes in European policies in relation to the media and to cultural diversity. Subsequently, the paper outlines the defining features of the U.S. media system and observes important limitations in its capacity to foster diversity. The central problem has to do with how U.S. journalism's outspoken commitment to cultural diversity has been accommodated within a homogenising and hegemonic media system. The paper argues that business, rather than democratic imperatives, have shaped the way in which U.S. journalism defines and implements cultural diversity. As a result, the news media have failed to open sufficient spaces for alternative social voices. In that sense, the media have not fulfilled their democratic role in a multicultural society. The discussion finally argues that those who advocate for media diversity should be attentive to the dangers of letting economic arguments prevail over normative ones.

The Reshaping of Media Diversity Policy

In their comparative analysis of media systems in Western Europe and North America, Hallin and Mancini (2004) distinguish between democratic corporatist, polarised pluralist, and liberal media systems. They describe the U.S. media system as "clearly the purest form of the Liberal Model" (2004, 228), characterised by a significant mass circulation and profitable press; a relative disconnection between the media and political parties; a highly professionalised workforce; and a low level of state intervention. The resulting relationship between media and politics in the U.S. contrasts with the situation in most European countries. The contrast is particularly strong between the U.S. and countries that have a polarised pluralist media system, such as France, Italy, and Spain. Not as strongly, but still significantly, the U.S. system differs from the democratic corporatist model found in North and Central European countries, including the Netherlands, Germany, and Sweden. Countries with polarised pluralist and with democratic corporatist media systems present significant ties between the media and political parties. As a result, audiences are segmented along political lines. Likewise, in most European countries public media, press subsidies, and other kinds of state intervention play an important role, while journalists are not always as autonomous from political parties and other special constituencies as in the United States.

Although Hallin and Mancini (2004) recognise important distinctions in media systems across the different countries they examine, they also underscore how current trends toward convergence weaken those distinctions. This is a phenomenon widely recognised by media scholars. Already in the mid-1980 Siune and McQuail (1986, 1), for instance, argued that "the spirit in which many [European media] policy areas are approached can be summed up by the term 'deregulation', imported to Europe from the USA." More recently, Brants and Praag (2006, 25) have predicted that "sooner or later, the modes and styles of American media will appear in Europe too." Typically, these changes in the European media landscape are discussed in terms of "privatization, internationalization, commercialization, and media concentration" (Siune 1998, 1). These developments affect diversity in the media to such an extent that diversity in general – not only cultural diversity, but also political, regional, linguistic, and other forms of diversity – "is said to be

the most vulnerable value at stake in the concentrated and deregulated European media industry" (Iosifides 1999, 154).

The second phenomenon affecting media diversity in Europe is more recent and not specific to the media. It affects all kinds of corporations, which have embraced diversity as a management tool, among other things, to improve their reputation; generate more creative and productive working environments; and expand their market share. Known as "diversity management," this approach to cultural diversity was developed in the United States in the 1980s and has become "a relatively normal business practice, at least among the bigger corporations" (Wrench 2005, 74). According to Roosevelt Thomas, the founder of the American Institute for Managing Diversity and a leading expert in the field, diversity management is "a new way of thinking about diversity, not as an 'us/them' kind of problem to be solved but as a resource to be managed" (1991, 10). In Thomas's view, corporations should replace the traditional notion of diversity, which focuses on civil rights, women's rights, humanitarianism, moral and human responsibility, with the "managerial" perspective in which "managers place priority on the interests of their corporations" (1991, 17).

Lately, diversity management has also become common practice in European companies (Lorbiecki 2001; Wrench 2005). Moreover, the "business case for diversity" has been advanced by European agencies that aim at fighting discrimination and at promoting cultural diversity. As a 2003 report for the European Commission explains,

> *Evidence has begun to emerge that a number of leading companies, and some small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), have set up diversity policies for business reasons i.e. to create improved wealth and to strengthen competitive advantage. The reputation of some of the businesses involved and the growing scale of the activity, suggests that there exists a "business case" to justify the investment of resources in the establishment of diversity policies. Identification of this "business case," and its dissemination to companies through public sector action could help to stimulate wider use of diversity policies by the corporate sector* (Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services 2003, 2).

In line with this view, the dissemination of the so-called business case became an important priority in the European Commission's campaign against discrimination in 2007 (Making Progress in 2007). It was also promoted in the context of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 (Brussels Debate Highlights… 2008).

At both sides of the Atlantic, diversity management seems as suitable for the media as for other types of organisations. In the United States, large news corporations – such as National Public Radio (NPR), The New York Times, the Tribune Corporation, and Gannett – have management teams in charge of diversity issues. Likewise, agencies specifically dedicated to the promotion of media diversity rely on business arguments. An example is the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, one of the most prominent institutions promoting cultural diversity in U.S. journalism. The institute's website has a section on diversity management, which includes a list of recommended readings as well tips to recruit minority employees.

Though relatively new, the business case for diversity in the media has already gained significant recognition in Europe. It can be observed, for example, in some of the most recent diversity efforts of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). One of them is the EBU's Diversity Toolkit. Aimed at journalists and media producers, the toolkit was published in 2007 by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights. It consists of a DVD with news clips broadcasted by public television networks from different European countries, and an instruction booklet, which includes a chapter on "Managing Diversity." According to the booklet, "[p]ublic service broadcasters should reflect the audience they serve, if they are to remain relevant and viable in an increasingly globalized world. This makes business sense and aids social cohesion" (A Diversity Toolkit 2008, 49). Similarly, the EBU stressed the business case for diversity in its third European conference on media and intercultural dialogue. The conference was organised in 2008 by the Dutch public broadcasting organisation. It was sponsored by the EBU in collaboration with public broadcasters from Germany, France, the Netherlands, the UK, and Belgium. Entitled "The Diversity Show," the event was promoted as "an inspiring international meeting and workshop for everybody within the media industry who regards cultural diversity not only as a fact of life, but as a creative opportunity" (EBU 2008). Two of the keynote speakers were: U.S. marketing consultant and bestselling author Stedman Graham and EBU president, Fritz Pleitgen. Graham – whose books include *Build your own life brand!*; *You can make it happen;* and *Diversity: Leaders, not Labels* – would talk about "*[d]iversity as a permanent business characteristic in the global environment"* (The Diversity Show 2008b). Pleitgen, in turn, would specifically focus on European media companies' "track record on managing diversity," according to the preliminary program (The Diversity Show 2008a).

U.S. Journalism and its Incompatibilities with Cultural Diversity

What are the democratic implications of the growing supremacy of the laissez-faire model of multiculturalism for the news media? In order to answer this question, this section focuses on the basic features of U.S. journalism and on how these features affect cultural diversity. While U.S. journalism is outspoken in its commitment to cultural diversity, it is important to examine what this diversity means and how it is put into practice.

As mentioned above, two defining characteristics of the liberal media system are commercialisation and low political parallelism (i.e., the fact that the media and political parties are relatively disconnected). In the United States, both characteristics have been closely related to each other. The early and intense expansion of mass-circulation publications since the 1830s and throughout the 19th century quickly marginalised non-commercial media and "transformed the political role of the press" (Hallin & Mancini 2004, 203). This transformation implied a move away from open political partisanship and economic reliance on political parties and wealthy politicians towards both political and economic independence. In this way, commercialisation helped neutralise the press's political content and contributed to its lack of political parallelism. Instead of the diversity that may result from a range of diverse media outlets, the U.S. media system has traditionally privileged "internal pluralism." This means that "media organizations both avoid institutional

ties to political groups and attempt to maintain neutrality and 'balance' in their content" (Hallin & Mancini 2004, 29).

Because of its roots in commercialisation, internal pluralism does not only refer to strictly political issues. It also characterises the U.S. media system more generally. Examining radio formats in various markets, Glasser (1984, 129) for example, argues that "format duplication is the rule, not the exception." Thus, the most profitable format is rarely "underrepresented" in the market. "Inevitably, when consumer welfare is defined economically, instead of culturally, *variety* will be mistaken for *diversity*" (Glasser 1984, 140). In Glasser's conceptualisation, variety stands for superficial and idiosyncratic differences, while diversity refers to differences related to "the purposes and interests common to a class of people" (p. 140).

A "reduced product differentiation" is an inevitable consequence of the market dynamics of advertising-based media (Baker 2002, 27) and complicates these media's alleged political neutrality. Since there is a double transaction going on – audiences purchase media products and advertisers purchase those audiences – media production is shaped by the interests of both advertisers and audiences. However, in the negotiation between these two categories of interests, audiences end up being served insufficiently and inequitably. "[P]ossibly advertisers' most important impact on media is to increase the prevalence of media content relevant to their favoured audiences" (Baker 2002, 26). This means that although the U.S. media's political orientation may be rather undifferentiated, it does exist. "[The media] have essentially the *same* orientation – a centrist one … as well as one oriented toward the views of the white-middle class readers who are the preferred target of advertisers" (Hallin & Mancini 2004, 210). Moreover, this suggests that political "neutrality" actually operates hegemonically by privileging dominant interests over the interests of disempowered social groups. Advertisers' target market ends up having a relatively homogeneous profile: middle and high socio-economical classes are served at the expense of poorer segments of the population.

Although this has been the prevalent case in the United States, commercialisation does not *necessarily* oppose political parallelism. "Under the right political and economic conditions, opinion sells," explain Hallin and Mancini (2004, 286). This would account for recent "countertrends" in the U.S. media system, including the rise in popularity of openly partisan radio and cable television programs. In the last years, Republican and Democratic views have become sharply distinguishable in the U.S. news, according to the Pew Research Centre's *The State of the News Media* report (Ruby & Project for Excellence in Journalism 2008). However, the diversity of political views that actually find space in the mainstream media is limited. First, partisanship seems to be more or less constrained to the Republican-Democratic spectrum. Second, "the partisan divide" is visible in relation to a limited number of topics. According to the Pew Research Centre's report, in 2007, partisanship was evident in stories about the war in Iraq, but not in the coverage of the presidential election. "Nearly everyone tended to think there was too much early handicapping of the race, too little coverage of so-called minor candidates and too little coverage of what the candidates were saying" (Ruby & Project for Excellence in Journalism 2008). Even when opening spaces for more opinionated media then, commercialisation may impose important ideological constraints.

The Professional Communicator. Media commercialisation in the United States, it was mentioned above, has historically been tied to the neutralisation and the homogenisation of media content. Another factor contributing to the relatively narrow and non-partisan news content in liberal media systems is journalists' high degree of professionalism. As Carey (1969) has explained in relation to the emergence of "the professional communicator" in the late 19th century United States, "Originally the development of this form of journalism was grounded in a purely commercial motive: the need of the mass newspaper to serve politically heterogeneous audiences without alienating any significant segment of the audience" (p. 32). The commercial motive was thus a necessary condition for the rise of objectivity as the dominant "ideology" of U.S. professional journalism (Carey 1969; Glasser 1992a; Hallin 1985). Not only did commercialisation favour political neutrality, but it also demanded higher levels of efficiency in news production. Journalists' professionalism, in short, cannot be understood outside the politico-economic model in which it exists.

The professional communicator described by Carey (1969) replaced the "independent interpreter of events" by leaving aside "advocacy and criticism" and adopting a series of standardised techniques (pp. 32-33). Instead of independently interpreting the world around them, journalists thus became *objective* transmitters of facts of which they allegedly have no control. The techniques to ensure objectivity, extensively documented in the research on news production in the United States, underscore both the uniformity of professional news making and its political detachment (see, for example; Gans 1980; Soloski 1989; Tuchman 1978). The result, argues Fishman (1980, 17), is "a uniform view of the world which can only be characterized as ideological."

The ideology of objectivity operates at basically two levels. First, journalists take objectivity and its routines for granted, as the natural way in which news is "gathered" rather than produced (Glasser 1992a). Secondly, the news journalists produce is assumed to be a neutral product, one which treats all social interests equally. According to the ideology of objectivity, journalists can and must free themselves from all "biases" tied to personal, political, or other interests in order to serve the supposedly superior and perfectly impartial "public interest," commonly translated into "the public's right to know." As a result, apparent biases in media coverage are seen as unprofessional.[2] Similarly, major flaws in news making are routinely translated into a lack of objectivity. This is, for example, how the 2008 report on *The State of the News Media* refers to the proliferation of unreliable online sources. Based on a survey with newspaper editors, the report concludes: "In a world where much of the new, fast-proliferating information available to the consumer stems from Internet sources that undergo little or no quality control, guarding the newspaper's objectivity and credibility is considered crucial" (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2008).

Significantly, the literature on the hiring and retention of minorities into U.S. newsrooms suggests that the alleged neutrality of professional journalism is not perceived as such by minority reporters. On the contrary, the mainstream newsroom seems to generate frustration among minority journalists. Their frustration would explain why so many of them quit the newsroom, which, in turn, is commonly cited as an impediment to have newsrooms that better represent the country's racial

and ethnic composition (e.g., ASNE 2003, Lehrman 2005, McGill 1999). Thus, while racial and ethnic minorities composed 34% of the total U.S. population in 2007, they accounted for only 13.5% of the workforce in newspapers, 6.2% in radio, and 21.5% in television (ASNE 2008; Papper 2007).[3]

The industry recognises that minorities face a "[l]ack of professional challenge and limited opportunities for advancement" in the mainstream newsroom (ASNE 2003). Critics, however, suggest that the dissatisfaction of minority professionals is also related to the limited scope for change in news practices and coverage (de Uriarte *et al.* 2003; Kelley & Mills 2003; Mellinger 2003). Wilson (1991), for example, argues that black journalists are confronted with the paradox of either writing "'Black' stories" or attaining professional success. Similarly, in his newsroom ethnography, Gans (1980, 194) observed that black journalists would leave the newsroom because "they could neither persuade editors that news about the black community was newsworthy nor could they find anyone with whom to discuss their interests in the culture and politics of the black community." For low-income black reporters working at magazines the situation was even worse because "they could not conform to the upper-middle class ambience" (Gans 1980, 348). In these accounts, minority journalists bring into the newsroom what Benson (2005) calls "skin-deep" diversity. In terms of "ideological diversity," in turn, their influence is fundamentally constrained (Benson 2005).

Professionalism, summarises Glasser (1992b, 134), "implies standardization and homogeneity; it accounts not for differences among journalists but for what journalists have in common." As a result, "it should surprise no one that a defence of the latter can be construed as an assault on the former" (p. 134). The norms of professionalism, thus, may allow some minority journalists to be part of the newsroom and some minority communities to become target audiences. However, the professional journalist is expected to leave particular interests aside, regardless of his or her own cultural identity and of cultural differences within the audience.

Liberal Resistance to State Intervention. U.S. media's capacity to host diversity is further weakened by its relative aversion to state intervention. In fact the U.S. system's limited space for state regulations brings it closer to the liberal ideal than any other system (Hallin & Mancini 2004). Under the banner of the First Amendment, the press is seen as the guardian of free speech against the state. Thus, measures to intervene in media markets by strengthening public media, subsidising minority media, or limiting media ownership generally fall outside common notions of what freedom of speech permits.

However, the view of the First Amendment in which "the state was the natural enemy of freedom" is misleading (Fiss 1996, 2) or at least contested. Some authors argue that it is precisely the need to assure the conditions for free speech that justifies state intervention (e.g., Baker 2002; Fiss 1996; Glasser & Gunther 2005). For them, the freedom of speech that democracy needs does not guarantee each citizen's freedom to speak. Rather, freedom of speech is meant to protect citizens' freedom to hear the widest possible range of perspectives. Understood in this way, freedom of speech should secure actual diversity of speech, including the diversity of voices associated with culturally diverse social groups.

In conclusion, the U.S. media system is a rather hostile environment for cultural diversity. Its market structure marginalises minority media as well as minority per-

spectives within the mainstream media. By definition, minority outlets are *alternative* publications that disrupt the monopoly that mainstream newspapers tend to have in most metropolitan areas. In addition, to the extent that they advance the interests of specific social groups, minority media contradict professional journalism's tenets of political detachment and neutrality. A high degree of professionalism among media workers and a strong resistance to state intervention further contribute to standardisation within the liberal media system. These attributes are also related to a structural bias in favour of dominant social interests.

Media's Corporate Formula to Make Diversity Compatible

The forces toward standardisation of media practices and content homogeneity in the U.S. media system beg the question of what U.S. journalism means when it claims to endorse cultural diversity. In other words, what kind of diversity is adopted in U.S. news media? To answer this question this section analyses the discourse that has dominated discussions about cultural diversity in U.S. journalism during the last four decades.

Calls for diversity in U.S. journalism are commonly traced back to the late 1960s. In 1967, after some of the worst urban riots in the history of the United States, a National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders was asked to investigate the social uproar, its causes, and ways to prevent something similar from happening in the future. The report by the Commission – known as the Kerner Report – included a special section on the mass media. While attributing the riots to the prevalence of white racism in society, the Commission found that the media had covered these specific events poorly and had neglected the life conditions of African Americans in general. Basically, the Commission established that there had been an "imbalance between reality and impression" (*Report of Advisory Commission* 1968, 202).

The Kerner Commission translated what it considered to be a problematic mismatch between reality and media portrayal into a lack of accuracy and professionalism:

> *We suggest that the main failure of the media last summer was that the totality of its coverage was not as representative as it should have been to be accurate. We believe that to live up to their own professional standards, the media simply must exercise a higher degree of care and a greater level of sophistication than the one they have yet shown in this area – higher, perhaps than the level acceptable with other stories* (1968, 202-3).

At the same time that the Commission argued for the strengthening of journalists' professionalism and accuracy, it accused them of reporting and writing "from the standpoint of a white man's world" (p. 203) The U.S. mainstream press, it stated, "repeatedly, if unconsciously, reflects the biases, the paternalism, the indifference of white America" (p. 203). Among other things, the Commission recommended that the media pay more attention and resources to the coverage of racial issues and recruit and promote more African American journalists (who, by then, constituted less than 5% of the workforce in U.S. newsrooms). The Commission further advised the creation of a non-profit and privately-funded organisation to prepare journalists for the coverage of urban affairs; help recruit and train African American journalists; and support continuing research on the media's performance.

Essentially, the Kerner Commission criticised the insufficient professionalism *and* the ethnocentrism of mainstream media, as if there was no problematic connection between the two. In this way, the Commission set forth a central tension in current U.S. journalism's efforts for diversity: Is diversity a matter of accuracy and a means to strengthen professionalism and the commercial success of a news medium? Or is diversity fundamentally at odds with the professional and commercial model of journalism and thus a justification for change?

Privileging the first approach over the latter, the industry welcomed the Kerner Commission's recommendation on recruiting more minority journalists as a way to enhance news accuracy. In 1978, the American Association of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) adopted "newsroom parity" as one of the association's key goals and set the year 2000 as its deadline for achieving complete parity – that is, a perfect match between the composition of newsrooms and the demographics of the communities they cover. The "mathematics of diversity" (McGill 1999) became an "obsession" in the newspaper industry (McGowan 2001). However, it has also been a source of frustration: In 1998, the ASNE had to postpone its goal to 2025, a date it may probably have to push back again.

The ASNE's diversity mission statement reads:

> *To cover communities fully, to carry out their role in a democracy, and to succeed in the marketplace, the nation's newsrooms must reflect the racial diversity of American society by 2025 or sooner. At a minimum, all newspapers should employ journalists of color and every newspaper should reflect the diversity of its community.*
>
> *The newsroom must be a place in which all employees contribute their full potential, regardless of race, ethnicity, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability or other defining characteristic* (ASNE 1998).

ASNE's parity goal has become a model throughout the industry. Broadcasting, magazine, and online associations have advanced similar targets and the different associations of minority journalists have supported these efforts. While some complain that the ASNE is moving too slowly, nearly everyone agrees that it is going in the right direction. Thus, the ASNE's mission statement can be read as the formula with which U.S. professional journalism in general has come to interpret and address cultural diversity.

Despite its general acceptance, three problematic issues are worth noting in the ASNE's mission statement. First, the ASNE statement presents diversity as a condition for professionalism. Translated into accuracy – into a tool to "reflect" the community – diversity is supposed to contribute to professional objectivity. For example, a well-known diversity initiative in the newspaper industry is a training program for journalists called "Time-Out for Diversity and Accuracy." Organised by the ASNE and the Associated Press Managing Editors, the program defines "diversity not as a value that is apart from our core journalistic values but as part of the core" (ASNE 1999). In this way, the initiative is aimed at strengthening professional norms, not at challenging them.

The second paragraph of the ASNE's diversity mission statement is even more remarkable in its effort to make diversity compatible with professionalism. It suggests that the diverse members of the newsroom should be expected to perform

as if there was no diversity. This expectation is clearly grounded in the guiding principles of the "professional communicator:" To the extent that reporters are mere transmitters of information, free from personal biases and other interests, their "defining characteristics," as the ASNE itself calls them, become inconsequential. It is important to notice the paradox here: ASNE claims that newsrooms must be diverse and it states, at the same time, that diversity should not significantly affect news coverage. Confronted with this paradox, black journalists ask themselves: "Am I a journalist who happens to be Black, or am I a Black journalist?" (Wilson 2000, 97), a question that seems equally applicable to Latinas/os, Asian-Americans, homosexuals, and other minority groups working in the mainstream media.

Finally, the ASNE statement points to diversity's marketplace appeal. Diversity, in the ASNE view, has to do with the industry's future economic survival. As the title of one of the panels in the 1999 ASNE Convention put it, taking diversity into account is responding to the "Economic Imperatives of Changing Audiences." Or, as Mark Willes – one of the panellists and at the time CEO of the Times Mirror Corporation – told his colleagues, newspapers' efforts to reach diverse readers are not only morally, but also economically driven. Willes explained that his company's diversity measures had significantly improved the papers' journalistic quality. "We're also convinced that once we match the marketing efforts to go with these editorial efforts, we can grow our circulation across Times Mirror by tens of thousands, perhaps even hundreds of thousands. In our mind, that's the power of diversity" (Willes 1999). Not only for Times Mirror, but also for the other ASNE members, minorities have become attractive target markets. These "emerging" audiences seem to be a key solution against the declining numbers of newspaper readers.[4] More than a matter of including historically ignored segments of the population, then, questions of diversity have been treated as questions of adapting to the changing consumer demand.

The same economic logic that underlies the diversification of newsrooms drives media corporations to get into the foreign-language market. Producing news for non-English speaking readers makes sense journalistically because "newspapers and journalists [have] an obligation to serve all the community," explained a second panellist in the 1999 ASNE Convention, the then publisher of the *San Jose Mercury News*, Jay Harris (1999). However, corporations take this obligation seriously only when ethnic audiences reach a "critical mass" (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2006). For example, while Harris himself was involved in the creation of a Vietnamese-language weekly – a unique initiative for media corporations across the U.S. – the project was only possible because it was based in San José, California, the city with the largest Vietnamese population outside Vietnam. As Shoemaker, Reese, and Danielson (1985) observed with respect to the media targeted at Latinas/os in Texas more than two decades ago,

> *Both social responsibility and market economic forces influence mass media content, with media owners balancing their desire to stay in business with the needs of the community. Yet the social responsibility forces in favor of media attention toward Texas Hispanics as an ethnic group which may have unique needs of information may be counterbalanced by the market economy forces which show that Texas Hispanics as a group have lower incomes than Anglos … and are probably therefore a less attractive target for advertisers* (p. 61).

Twenty-three years later social responsibility has converged with the "market economic forces." The attractiveness that Latinas/os have acquired for advertisers, in Texas and elsewhere in the U.S. (Dávila 2001; Gómez-Peña 1996), has generated an explosion of Spanish-language publications (Awad 2008). Only between 2002 and 2004, companies traditionally focused on the English market – including Cox, Knight Ridder, Tribune, Gannett, Hearst, and Freedom Communications – launched 81 Spanish newspapers (Whisler 2006). As stated in the 2004 report on *The State of the News Media*, "as the Hispanic population has grown in size and buying power a trend seems to be developing wherein large non-Hispanic companies are looking to tap into the Spanish-speaking market" (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2004).

The Managerial Turn: From Diversity to Ornament

As explained earlier, corporate media in the U.S. have not been alone in making diversity compatible with the demands of commercialism and professionalism. Together with other business organisations, they have endorsed the managerial approach to cultural diversity. Note, for example, the resemblance between the ASNE diversity mission statement and the diversity management philosophy advanced by diversity management expert Roosevelt Thomas (1990, 109):

> *The correct question today is not 'How are we doing on race relations?' or 'Are we promoting enough minority people and women?' but rather 'given the diverse workforce I've got, does it work as smoothly, is morale as high, as if every person in the company was the same sex, and race and nationality?' Most answers will be 'Well, no, of course not!' But why shouldn't it be, 'You bet!'?*

Because the diversity management approach began as a model for managing human resources, its most obvious translation to the media industry centres on newsroom employment. However, as discussed above, the creation of "ethnic" media follows the same logic. Not surprisingly, in a book called *Redefining Diversity*, Thomas himself has expanded the notion of diversity to "the entire spectrum of strategic issues that modern corporations face" (1996, 3-4), including the diversity of consumers.

The managerial approach to diversity corresponds to what Lugones and Price (1995) call "ornamental multiculturalism." Ornamental multiculturalism subverts diversity by ignoring its historical and structural underpinnings and reducing it to *ornament*. It celebrates the variety of food, music, art, and literature associated with cultural diversity, yet it accommodates them within a given political and economic system that remains unchallenged. "A society is culturally pluralistic in an ornamental sense when the many cultures are inactive in informing the personality, character, beliefs, and values of worker/citizens and the structure of the economic and political system" (Lugones & Price 1995, 105).

U.S journalism's diversity measures are ornamental to the extent that minorities are invited into the newsroom, but are not given the opportunity to take an active role in the (re)definition of news making practices and values as well as of the news media's politico-economic structure more generally. "Invitations" of this kind are assimilationist in the sense that they aim "to bring formerly excluded groups into the mainstream" (Young 1990, 164). Moreover, they perpetuate social

inequalities because "assimilation always implies coming into the game after it has already begun, after the rules and standards have already been set, and having to prove oneself according to those rules and standards" (1990, 164). Accordingly, in the case of journalism, the "diverse" reporters who actually remain in the professional newsroom are considered to be those better assimilated into the dominant culture (de Uriarte *et al.* 2003; Kelley & Mills 2003; Wilson 1991). Furthermore, these reporters' presence in the newsroom does not guarantee diversity in news coverage. On the contrary, there is evidence of "an increasing ideological narrowing, de-politicization and trivialization of American news during the same period when employment of minorities and women has increased" (Benson 2005, 9).

Ornamental multiculturalism uncritically upholds the dominant procedures and norms of the institutions which, in turn, uphold the existing social order. Its opponents instead propose a "critical" kind of multiculturalism (e.g., Chicago Cultural Studies Group 1992; Estrada & McLaren 1993; Giroux 1993, Turner 1993). Critical multiculturalism *criticises* "the ideological apparatuses that distribute power and resources unevenly among the different constituencies of a multicultural society" (Palumbo-Liu 1995, 2). In order to translate this critical approach to questions of journalism and cultural diversity then, it is necessary to acknowledge two key issues that ornamental multiculturalism neglects: the presence of structural inequality in multicultural societies and the ideological role played by the news media.

For ornamental multiculturalism, *multiculturalism* is basically a descriptive term, used to typify a society where multiple cultures co-exist. From this perspective, the justification for bringing diversity into the media is simple: In a society composed by multiple cultures, the media should reflect that diversity both in workforce and in news coverage. This is precisely the kind of responsibility assigned to journalism within the liberal media system: Politically balanced and detached news should accurately reflect reality.

For critical multiculturalism, in contrast, *multiculturalism* has above all a normative dimension. This means that critical multiculturalism does not simply account for the existence of culturally diverse groups, but it also recognises unequal power relationships among these groups and, furthermore, it is committed to the eradication of those inequalities. More specifically, critical multiculturalism aims at structural changes to ensure that the needs of minority groups are equitably addressed. Aware that "needs are conceptualised in political struggle over who gets to define whose needs for what purpose" (Young 1998, 59), critical multiculturalism pays special attention to the discursive practices and institutions through which certain needs are articulated and recognised as valid. In doing this, critical multiculturalism must necessarily pay attention to journalism. From a critical perspective, the role of the news media is not to reflect a state of affairs (such a role would presuppose the existence of ideologically-free media). Rather, the media have to generate discursive spaces for more equalitarian dialogue among diverse social perspectives, thus contributing to the existence of more equal relations among culturally diverse groups.

Conclusion

As processes of media liberalisation accompany discussions about immigration and multiculturalism in Western societies, the question of how to address cultural

diversity in the media gains growing importance. This paper has argued that the answer to this question must differentiate between normative and economic motives. Moreover, the paper argues that normative motives must be prioritised over economic ones by adopting an interventionist as opposed to a laissez-faire approach to cultural diversity.

The laissez-faire approach operates ornamentally. Ornamental policies are not a weak kind of critical multiculturalism or a first or shy step in the right direction. Policies that *manage* certain aspects of culture to support existing institutions and serve the interests of those who are already in power, are a force against critical multiculturalism and, thus, against social justice. This means that the kind of media diversity that democracy demands must be distinguished from the kind of media diversity that serves media's commercial interests. As discussed with respect to the U.S., the uncritical celebration of the apparent correspondence of democratic and business interests reduces diversity to a business asset. The result strengthens the existing structure of media production, but does not secure a wider diversity of voices and social perspectives in the media.

In Europe, laissez-faire initiatives to bring diversity into the news media are relatively recent. However, there is already some evidence that their impact may point in the same direction as in the United States. Particularly in reference to British and Dutch public broadcasting, for example, Leurdijk (2006) explains that minority programs are being replaced by "cross-cultural" programs, tailored to the general audience and designed according to "the same logic of prime-time programming" (p. 42). The result offers "less space for niche tastes, preferences, subjects or angles that are more difficult to digest. It favours popular genres and young urban audiences at the cost of information and commercially less interesting audiences, such as first-generation immigrants" (p. 42). Likewise, based on an analysis of the Prix Europa Iris award for multicultural television, Horsti (2008) concludes that European media have recognised minority groups, but have failed to effectively include them in society. In her view, "journalistic practice could prompt and orchestrate debates rather than present consumable differences for the majority audiences" (p. 24).

Furthermore, an analysis of the European situation today must pay special attention to the socio-political context within which diversity in journalism is being discussed and implemented. Significantly, current initiatives to diversify European newsrooms, make journalists more sensitive and attentive to cultural differences, and address diverse audiences coincide with strong "calls *contra* diversity" throughout large parts of the continent (Vertovec & Wessendorf 2005, 13). Accompanied by new and more restrictive policies towards immigrants, these calls have fuelled discussions about the "end of multiculturalism" (Feteke 2004, 21; see also Joppke 2004) and "a shift to neo-assimilationism" (Kofman 2005, 455; see also Grillo 2007). Thus, an assessment of diversity initiatives in the media (and elsewhere) must necessarily take into account the extent to which these initiatives support – or counter – neo-assimilationist agendas. The EBU's Diversity Toolkit helps illustrate this point. The introduction to the chapter on "Managing Diversity" explains: "The 'D' word [i.e., diversity] is one that is beginning to take a negative connotation. Why not see it as a chance to be innovative, to welcome new ideas, new angles, and in so doing increase our audiences? This is the moment to branch out, expand, vary

our programmes and broaden our horizons" (A Diversity Toolkit 2008, 89). This way of dealing with cultural diversity is problematic from the perspective of critical multiculturalism. A critical approach aims at challenging diversity's negative connotation, not at adapting to it by making diversity *management-friendly.*

In sum, diversity in journalism must be defined and implemented according to democratic, not to business principles. Assuming a coincidence between the two may be detrimental to social inclusion. Considerations of whether diversity is profitable for the news media industry should lead not to strategies to manage diversity, but to interventions on the market in order to secure the kind of diversity that social justice demands.

Notes:

1. Stratton and Ang (1994) use the distinction between "laissez-faire" and "interventionist" approaches to cultural diversity to characterize the U.S. and the Australian case. This distinction is also helpful to compare the U.S. and European countries, particularly with respect to the media.

2. For example, this is the case with Fox News, which has been widely criticized for its conservative partisanship. The arguments of both Fox News and its detractors reinforce the value ascribed to political neutrality. With slogans such as "We Report. You Decide" and "Fair and Balanced," Fox accuses other media of bias.

3. Similar reasons may explain the under-representation of women in U.S. newsrooms. In 2007, women composed 37.4% of the workforce in newspapers, 39.9% in TV news, and 24.4 % in radio news. In supervising positions, these numbers are even lower for both women and minority journalists (ASNE 2008; Papper 2007).

4. The decline in circulation of daily newspapers has been a main concern in the industry since the emergence of electronic media, especially television (see Bogart 1991).

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