

# 'I Can't Wait Til I'm an Actual Journalist': How Students Begin to Become Journalists

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## **CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Date





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## **ABSTRACT**

This research investigates the ways in which students in an academic, practice-based journalism program acquire the traits and dispositions of journalists. It draws on the framework of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, including his concepts of field, habitus and capital. It applies a thematic analysis to student blogs, developed out of the pedagogical tools of reflective journals. I argue that teaching journalism needs to go beyond matters of ‘technical rationality’ to encompass processes that enable students to perform a role and negotiate their way to becoming journalists.

The research explores the experience of a first year student group as they come to terms with what they understand journalism to be while taking their first steps in accomplishing practice-based journalism assignments. The thematic analysis of the ‘blogs’ shows that students undertake an emotional journey in their learning. They experience a range of feelings, from fear to elation. I argue that the notion of emotional capital can be usefully be added to the concepts of cultural and social capital in understanding and researching the development of journalistic habitus through education. While it may be possible to gain education at a distance, arguably experience can only be gained firsthand through practice-based education. I argue that the reflective journals can give an educator a glimpse into the students’ world beyond what can usually be achieved in a group seminar or tutorial and enables links to be made between the practices of journalism, journalism education and researcher.

