Visibilizing the Invisible: Communications Work(ers) at the University of Toronto

Deconstructing the Tension between Power and Freedom in "The U of T Brand" Production

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"One of our goals is to break the cold, elitist image of the University." The Senior Communications Director at the U of T jokingly explains the stereotype surrounding the institution as he discusses the image-making process. As I sit at the back of the room, I look around the round table and those who are seated against the wall with me – a group of twenty or so communications workers of one of the programs at the University. Many have notebooks in on the table in front of them, yet for the entire 45-minutes of the Director's presentation, only a couple of them have picked up their pen to jot something down. On the other hand, many have their mobile phones in their hands – a woman who sits in front of me checked her mobile phone about three times, some are texting, and many are fidgeting. These observations immediately made me question: are these workers really engaged in the topic of discussion? What is the purpose of the Director in this meeting? Why is the Director, a representative from central communications team, present at a monthly meeting of faculty-based communications workers? Why do so many of the workers engaged on their phones during his presentation? In other words, what is the social relations of the communications workers to the central team, and to the University as an organization?

Defining "Communications Work"

Communications, media, or public relations work are often associated with corporatized organizations, involving highly professionalized skills and engagement with "immaterial labour". According to Maurizio Lazzarato, immaterial labour produces informational content, which involves skills in cybernetics and computer control, and cultural content, which involves "defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards...and more strategically, public opinion," which require "subjectivities that are rich in knowledge," thus highly skilled workers (1996).

Public relations and communication management scholars James and Larissa Grunig and David Dozier, describe how the development of this highly professionalized work, and the increasing necessity for communications and public relations divisions is due to the changing organizational structures:

> *Organizations are bombarded by demands from stakeholders both inside the organization and in their environments...As a result, organizations increasingly depend on someone who has the expertise to communicate with and build relationships with these stakeholder groups. The public relations profession has or should have the expertise to fulfill that organizational dependency. The purpose of public relations is to help organizations build relationships with the publics* [sic]...*by facilitating communication between subsystems of the organization and publics in and around the organization* (2002:7).

"Work" at the university is often focused around professors and other teaching and student services workers, and the students themselves, working for higher academic achievements and preparing for the "work life" after graduation. However, such notions of work at the educational institution need to be expanded to recognize corporate work structures. My choice of research site was driven by curiosity about the corporatized and professionialized sector of "work" which the University of Toronto greatly invests in. Although exact amount of funds which the institution invests in the "communications" departments is unknown, as an undergraduate student at the U of T for over three years, I have seen and engaged in various promotional content, whether from specific departments and faculties, or representing the overall U of T institution.

However, despite the highly visible content, or product of communications work, the work itself – therefore, the efforts and process, and the people behind planning, creating, and executing

the content – is often invisibilized, or rather hidden and unknown both to the outside public, and to members of the U of T community.

Communications Work: Freedom and Power

In light of post-Fordism, Lazzarato argues that workers are expected to become "active subjects," who have "a degree of responsibility regarding decision making" instead of being confined merely to tasks of execution. To be an "active subject" requires the subject to be free - to have agency over choices, activities, and interests. According to Nickolas Rose in *Powers of Freedom* (1999), "human beings are, in their nature, actually, potentially, ideally, subjects of freedom and hence…they must be governed, and must govern themselves, as such" (62). This statement alludes to two ideas: first, for subjects to be free, they must also be governed, or controlled; second, this exercise of governance is enacted by both an external entity, such as an institution to which the subject, or the worker is a part of, as well as the worker themselves.

According to Lazzarato, "modern management techniques are looking for…'worker's soul to become part of the factory.'" He argues further that "[t]he worker's personality and subjectivity have to be made susceptible to organization and command" (1996). The process of shaping the worker to be vulnerable to, thus submit to "organization and command" is through an exercise of governance. If workers are "active subjects" with a sense of agency, they have freedom; however, this freedom only exists because the workers and their work operate within a system of governance, or adopting Foucault's words, "relations of power." In his discussion of "power and freedom," Foucault states how power presupposes freedom - "power is exercised only over free subjects and only insofar as they are free" (quoted by Patton 1989:271).

The restructured condition of workers and their work described by Lazzarato about twenty years ago are becoming increasingly evident in the contemporary work society. Bringing

Lazzarato's insights into my ethnographic research, I argue that the relationship of freedom and governance, or power exists in both the positions of communication workers and the conditions of their work as operating within the university institution. If Lazzarato claims that a worker's subjectivity becomes vulnerable to "organization and command," deriving from my ethnographic research, this "command," which includes management of individual's responsibilities, social relations, and work objectives, is both demanded by and resides within the workers themselves.

This paper aims to contribute to the ongoing examination of the tension between power and freedom within contemporary work society, through an analysis of communication workers and work at the University of Toronto: How is freedom, as exercised by individual workers, or the work itself, governed by the University and its organizational goals? I have divided the analysis of my ethnographic research regarding this tension of power and freedom in three sections: first, I look at the work itself through enforcement of "template;" then I consider workers' relation to their various different, or diverse work tasks; finally, I consider their isolation, or individualization.

Methodology: Challenge of Access and Approach

My choice of research site is driven by my personal interest in communications work, as well as my experience with the content created and delivered by communications teams at the U of T, as previously mentioned. However, my choice of focusing on faculty-based communications work, which also led to work at central communications was due to a prior challenge of access to my original choice of research site.

Since my first year at the University, I have consistently interacted with the *Boundless* campaign, particularly through its banners of "highly successful" alumnus faces and names displayed around and within the St. George campus. I became curious not only about the

displayed individuals, but the campaign itself and its real purpose, which is difficult to decipher by simply looking at the banners. Throughout my preliminary research on the *Boundless* campaign website, my curiosity was further driven by the lack of information, or rather, the absence of names of workers or contact information for any communications-related teams on the website. The invisibilization of the actors behind creation and execution of the *Boundless* campaign contradicted the highly visible content of the campaign itself. With the accumulated questions regarding the campaign, I attempted to get access to talk with any workers at the Alumni Office who may be part of the campaign team. However, my attempt at pursuing this interest was met with obstacles which prevented me from getting my foot into the specific field site, whether hesitation from the front desk staff when asked for a contact information for this research, or absence of e-mail or voice mail replies from contacted workers.

Taking into consideration of the highly invisibilized, and "hidden" work of communications work and the workers themselves, I became aware of the boundaries of access to certain spaces at the University as a student. To continue pursuing my interest, I decided to open my possible research sites to the general "communications work," rather than narrowing my scope to a specific content, or project.

My research focuses mainly around my experience of job shadowing the Communications Staff of a specialized program (Program A) at a faculty (Faculty A), specifically three job shadowing opportunities, as well as a semi-structured interview. Additionally, I conducted a semi-structured interview with a Communications Officer at a different faculty (Faculty B), to understand another perspective on communications work from someone at a different faculty, and a Senior Manager in a department at central communications, to understand the perspective

of central communications[1]. I have also carried out an analysis of website content of appropriate

faculties and relevant documents, particularly communications resources presented by central

communications, and paid closer attention to wording of the documents.

This paper does not provide a full detailed analysis and evaluation of communications

work or workers at the U of T; instead I aim to offer an insight into the realm of communications

work at the U of T, while contributing to the broader study of non-academic work and workers at

the institution.

Freedom, Governed through the "Template"

Faculty-based communications work focuses around producing content about and for the

faculty, producing a particular image and narrative. However, the main goal of any

communications work at the U of T ultimately narrows down to maintaining and promoting "the

U of T brand." In the attempt of the institution[2] to manage a "pan university communication"

system, the image-making process of a faculty operates in conjunction with certain values and

narratives of the larger organization. In his discussion of "translation," Rose states that

"alignments are forged between the objectives of authorities…and the personal projects

of…groups and individuals who are the subjects of government" (1999:47). Although he situates

the discourse on a macro scale of government ("authorities") versus members of the society, this

particular relation can correlate with individual workers versus the University.

Within the post-Fordist model, Lazzarato argues "the capitalist needs to find an

unmediated way of establishing command over subjectivity itself" (1996). In this context, the

"capitalist" subject is a company, yet we can re-contextualize the concept to understand the

"capitalist" as the University, an educational institution which not only invests and profits from

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[1] Exact position, program, department and faculty have been generalized.
[2] The organization's goal is more explicitly carried out through the task of central communications team.

cognitive (intellectual) capitalism, but behaves also as a corporatized "non-profit" organization where non-academic (as well as academic) professionals work for pay. It seeks to expand its market share, while requires acute attention to its image on both the national and international level, therefore the need for communications workers. Referring to Lazzarato's statement: if the organization moves away from directly commanding workers on what to do, then the organization must shape or control individual workers' motivations and creativity, which ultimately become collective interest towards the main goal of the organization, the University. "As it is no longer possible to confine subjectivity merely to tasks of execution, it becomes necessary for the subject's competence…to be made *compatible* with the conditions of 'production for production's sake'" (Lazzarato 1996). In other words, the organization must ensure that its workers have autonomy, while simultaneously controlling the workers to ensure both the content of the work, and the motivations of the workers align with organizational goals.

My ethnographic research process did not allow me to examine the precise tension of workers' autonomy versus control, and the compatibility of their goals with the organization, which would require more prolonged observation and stepping over a more personal boundary into the lives of the workers. However, such conflict could be observed from the workers' work itself, therefore drawing assumptions of workers' engagement with the tension of aligning their motives with that of the University.

Since the inauguration of the current president, the University of Toronto as an educational institution has presented itself as dedicated to three main priorities: 1) "leverage[ing] [its] urban location(s) more fully, for the mutual benefit of [the] University and City," 2) "strengthen[ing] and deepen[ing] key international partnerships by means of a well-defined strategic focus," and 3) "re-imagin[ing] and reinvent[ing] undergraduate education" ("Three Priorities" 2013). These

priorities are enforced as the main basis for producing and promoting "the U of T brand." Although this task is mainly the responsibility of the central communications team, it is also dependent on faculty-based communications workers who are ultimately "supervised" by the central team to ensure alignment of these goals.

All three communications workers who I interviewed mentioned the three priorities as their "goals" or "mission" to follow when they work towards producing their content. The two faculty-based communication workers did not explicitly discuss exercise of control by the central team or the University itself, yet as I will show in this section, they did express the necessity of alignment, and were subjected to an event in which a central communications worker took up space in a faculty-based communications setting. As a side note, it is crucial understand the ambivalent position of workers in central communications: this large team of workers assume the role of acting as the main "voice" of the University, therefore acting as the "head" of all communications workers; whereas, these workers, similarly to faculty-based communications workers, are in a constant tension with the command and motives of the organization.

At one of my job shadowing opportunities, the Communications Staff expressed how the Program never created direct promotional materials to reach out to international students. However, with the University's increasing valorization of nurturing international connections and expanding to international audiences, and following a decision made by the Vice Dean, she and her team realized the necessity to bring international attention to their program. The project involved taking measures to increase the recruitment of international students, such as a recruitment video. The video was based around an interview in which the Communications Staff asked pre-written questions to a non-Toronto-based student in the program. The main motive was to "sell the program" which meant promoting positive experiences and benefits of being part

of the U of T community, with key words such as "foremost leaders" and "wide-range of opportunities." Not only the purpose behind the initiation of the project, but even the content itself correlates to the promotion of "the U of T brand."

Similarly, in discussion of particular templates in production of communications content, the Communications Officer at a different program expressed the importance of abiding by the "objectives" of the U of T. In order to establish a close relationship with central communications (in terms of relevance of content), the Faculty focuses on actively producing stories around one of the priorities – "city-building." This effort results in greater attention by the central communications and promotion on their respective platforms of stories at Faculty B. Although the Communications Officer and her team have control over how to approach and deliver stories from the activities occurring at the Faculty, they also make a deliberate effort to ensure alignment with the organization. Along with Program A's recruitment video, these two examples show the workers awareness of their position within a faculty, yet ultimately working for the larger organization of the U of T. Explicit articulation of how such awareness of alignment is enforced by central communications and the University are not made; however, it can be assumed that certain "templates" are present in the process to ensure alignment and coherence with "the U of T brand," which also becomes a process of command by the workers on themselves through self-management.

An example of an explicit exercise of governance from the central team to faculty-based communications workers is one of the monthly meetings with all communication workers at the Faculty A which I had a chance to attend. As described in the introduction, the one-hour meeting consisted of around twenty workers and the Senior Director of Communications, who came to present various strategies used by himself and his team at central. He began with a discussion of

how to formulate and understand the University as a brand – a distinctive identity. He emphasized how projects which involve a small number of actors must also cooperate with actors outside of that project, and eventually conjoin on the overall objective of "supporting the U of T brand." The Director highlighted the need to "break the cold elitist image" of the institution. One effective method which he and his team use is to produce and deliver affective stories, such as narratives around families, or stories which induce a positive emotional response. An example he provided was how during the 2016 June Convocation, his team highlighted a story of a 79-year old grad (2016). A similar media strategy was used during the 2015 June Convocation with a major coverage of an international life sciences student at the U of T Scarborough campus who experienced many struggles, such as homelessness, yet graduated with honours, many awards and as "one of the university's most academically outstanding graduates" (Campbell 2015). This discussion of affective stories continued briefly amongst the communications workers after the Director left the meeting, as a few of them shared examples of how they used this strategy for their respective projects.

One of the main point of the Director's discussion was the "Strategic Communications Plan" – a five-page guideline on how to present proposals for any communications-related projects, and emphasized its advantage and his success in using it. According to the Communications Staff, most communications workers already have and use similar template to execute their tasks; thus, the "Strategic Communications Plan" is only an example. However, if communications workers are expected to already use and be familiar with such template, why did Director take the time to present and discuss the template? The template comes with headings and a brief description under each on how to go about writing the section to better articulate the purpose of the project. As I noted in my methodology, I believe wording is one of

the crucial aspects to examine in order to understand the purpose of a document, as well as of the presenter himself. One of the sections in the Plan underlines the necessity for the project to relate to the University's priorities: "The President has identified cities, undergraduate education, and global/international partnerships as three key areas of focus for the university – describe how this communications plan will *advance one or more of those priorities*." By inserting this section, the University, through the efforts of central communications, reminds the workers to always engage with and be aware of their ultimate goal to promote the three priorities. "Communications plans should reflect *our desire to tell the university's story in an open and transparent way*. We have much to offer our region, our country and the world – ensure that spirit is reflected in your plan." Although a familiar object, yet re-articulated by central communications, the "Strategic Communications Plan" is an explicit material example of the very tension of the workers' freedom and its limitations. Through this re-articulation, the communications workers are reminded of the "template"[3] which ultimately restricts creative freedom. This reminder is an exercise of governance embodied in the presence of a central communications worker at the faculty-based communications meeting, thus the "template" is presented not only as a material form, but immateriality through the social relations of the central and the faculty-based workers.

Freedom, Governed through Variety

According to Lazzarato, immaterial labour requires various different types of skills – intellectual, manual, and entrepreneurial skills – therefore, an ideal worker must be highly skilled, qualified and "rich in knowledge." During the three-hours of my first job shadow with the Communications Staff, it was clearly evident that her position required an engagement of variety of skills. As a one-member communications team at Program A, the Communications Staff takes

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[3] I put template in quotations to refer to the conceptual guidelines and goals that the workers are enforced to follow, not the actual material example of the template.

on diverse tasks and responsibilities which are usually often distributed to a larger group of specialized workers in other organizational and corporate settings. She emphasized that her position as encompasses diversity and variety: "I see myself as a generalist." She is not required, or expected to be in charge of particular set of tasks, but rather to extend to the entire scope of communications-related work. This includes both online and print promotional content as she engages in all aspects of planning and execution, such as acting as a line-of-contact and connecting appropriate actors for projects, organizing photo and video shoots, formulating interview questions, editing language of texts on the website and overall design, conducting staff, faculty and student surveys for input for website revamp, and creating PowerPoint presentations for the Vice Dean.

The variety of tasks also require the Communications Staff to be at multiple different settings. Each of my three job shadow opportunities consisted of different tasks and settings. The first job shadow involved a small meeting to discuss transferring a current print-based document into an online version, and an internal meeting with all communications workers at Faculty A with the Director at central team; the second job shadow involved filming of the recruitment video; and the third job shadow involved more office-based work. The unique position of acting as a "generalist" requires the communications worker to be a "jack-of-all-trades" – to exercise not only a diverse range of skills, but diverse interests and social relations. Lazzarato argues that in the contemporary work society which increasingly requires immaterial labour, "it is no longer possible to lay down and specify jobs and responsibilities rigidly" (1996).

The "generalist" characteristic is not unique to the one-member team, but rather many faculty or department-based communications teams consist of a small group of workers who are required or expected to perform diverse tasks using a diverse range of professional skills. The

Communications Officer at Faculty B described how a few years ago she was the only designated person within communications. Even with a recent appointment of another communications worker, she shares a similar range of tasks which include managing media relations, such as press releases, digital content, including website and social media, and internal events, such as pop-up lecture series, as well as nurturing community connections and donors. She views her position as an "editor," or a project manager who participates and takes responsibility for a variety of projects. Rose accounts for how "liberal modes of government" aim to shape workers, such as managers, to "exercise their powers in order to nurture and direct these individual strivings in the most appropriate and productive [manner]" (1999:90). Although the Communications Staff does not act explicitly in a managerial position, her understanding of her position as having managerial qualities, therefore having authority, or governance over several projects (and other workers) assumes an exercise of freedom which in part has been produced by the structure of her work relations.

However, the observation of both of these workers' "very busy" work life contradicts their flexible schedule. In organizing dates and times with the Communications Staff at Program A for an interview, or a job shadow opportunity, I would either be able to meet with her on the day of the request, or the day after. This was echoed by the Communications Officer, and even the Senior Manager. Although substantial amount of data around this particular flexibility could not be gathered due to limited interactions, deriving from the conducted observations this flexibility can be understood as correlated to the workers having control or autonomy over their work. On the contrary, this flexibility of time management further questions how their tasks are valorized and prioritized, therefore how much control the workers have over their work.

"When you work in communications at the University, you are telling stories of others, sharing voices and opinions of others," said the Communications Officer, expressing her difficulty in having her own voice in her work. The autonomy of these communications workers over their work comes into tension with the mere fact of how diverse their tasks are and how they are required to exercise a diverse range of professional skills. The nature of communications work in any organizational setting often erases or invisibilizes the names of the actors who participated in the planning and execution of a project. However, this invisibilisation, which ultimately removes individual ownership and replaces it with a general "Faculty" or "the U of T," is also the result of the workers' freedom to engage in different tasks.

With her responsibility as a mediator between actors for various communications-related projects, the Communications Staff has no individual ownership or voice, but rather the project is a representation of a general collectivist voice, or often times the voice of someone in a higher authority position. For example, in the first meeting I sat in, although the Communications Staff organized the meeting, connected appropriate actors and brought them together, and participated in the overall planning process of executing an online version of the document, she did not have authorship over the project. This conflict of lacking ownership is not unique to the field of communications work, yet as exercised within a university setting which encourages autonomous voice and individualism, it appears as a contradiction, especially as these communications workers work for and with academics and are engaged in promoting academic goals. Moreover, the conflict of ownership also questions how much freedom the workers actually have, especially with an expected responsibility of engaging in various different tasks and choices.

Freedom, Governed through Isolation

"Alone." In my interview with the Communications Officer at Faculty B, this word stood out the most. As a response to my question about whether she thinks she has creative freedom, her acknowledgement of having freedom and autonomy led to an expression of feeling "alone" and a desire to be more connected. Further heightened by the decentralized organization of communications work at the University, this affective response to an institutional structure which govern how her work and her position as faculty-specific operates in relation to other communications work and workers highlights the tensions that exist in the state of "being free." As a small team of communications workers for a specific faculty, despite the Faculty being an integral part of the U of T community, the structure ultimately isolates these workers from other workers external to the Faculty. Furthermore, this affective response questions the proximity of the work to the individual worker herself. The state of feeling "lonely" is a very subjective expression, offering a glimpse of how the boundary between the worker's work life and life outside of work are integrated; which relates back to Lazzarato's description of the modern manager's necessity for "worker's soul to become part of the factory" (1996).

The condition of isolation is a physical isolation enacted through limited interaction with other communications workers. The Communications Staff is one of twenty other communications workers at the faculty. Although she attends monthly meetings where all these workers come together, she is still physically isolated by the organizational structure of her precise position as part of Program A (such as her office location), and her lack of team-based interaction with the workers. Moreover, the isolation is more evident as a distance from, or a separation from communications workers outside of appropriate faculty or department. The expression of "loneliness" derives from this precise physical isolation. The structure of

communications work at the University is organized to individualize faculty-based work while creating spaces where faculty-based workers do not necessarily have a to, or given structural obligation to interact with workers outside the faculty. According to the Communications Officer, unless through particular collaborative events or research projects, the communications workers do not actively engage with each other. Moreover, meetings which bring together multiple faculty and department communications teams into one space usually occur only once a year, when the central team have important announcements of any new changes. Despite many communications teams at the University, with each faculty and department having its own set of workers, the workers themselves are isolated from each other, thus an isolated worker within a large population.

According to Rose, the fundamental dialectic of modern society relies on "maximum individualization and maximum freedom" which develop at the price of "maximum fragmentation, maximum uncertainty, maximum estrangement of individual from fellow individual" (1999:66). Rose's description effectively captures the isolation, which operates through individualization within the structure that defines faculty-based communications work. Firstly, "maximum fragmentation" is evident through the physical isolation, which results in "maximum estrangement," therefore lack of interaction and knowledge of the work, projects and content being created at other faculties and departments. The "estrangement" can also be understood as simply an unfamiliarity of the workers with each other. However, these "costs" ensure workers have control over their work. In other words, the feeling of disconnection resides in a system that promises individual autonomy of the worker. The physical isolation of the workers is to ensure development of autonomy within the faculties.

On the other hand, this observance of isolation from the perspective of faculty-based workers contradicts that of the central team. The central communications team assumes more authority over overall communications work at the U of T, due to their position as producing and promoting the institution's "brand." During my interview with the Senior Manager, she expressed how her team's motive is to provide "support" for other communication teams on campus. Central communications assist faculties to reach their goals and ensure they are successful. Throughout the interview, she emphasized the "interconnectedness" of communications work at the University, as a collective whole. Including an ongoing communication within her team and other teams at central, she and her team are always engaging with faculty-based workers whether for smaller media-related projects, or to stay up-to-date on emerging stories and current goals.

How can workers be isolated, yet simultaneously be connected? Are social relations of faculty-based workers different than those at central communications, despite both "groups" working within the same organizational structure of the University? Rose argues that "individuals…must come to recognize and act upon themselves as both free and responsible, both beings of liberty and members of [the] society" (1999:68). In other words, workers must exercise self-management – a state of autonomy – while maintaining collectivity and cooperation with other workers. From the perspective of central communications, this collectivity is evident through physical interaction (including digital communications, such as e-mails); however, from the perspective of faculty-based workers, this collectivity is inherently the collective goal, therefore not their unique individualized goal, or the purpose of their work for "the U of T brand."

Limitations of Research

In this section, I would like to note possible gaps and unanswered questions that arose throughout my analysis of my ethnographic research, and outline possible next steps to further substantiate my research. Due to the limited research period, my understanding of communications work and workers at the U of T is based around three communications workers whom I had a chance to job shadow and interview, and the work happening at the specific faculties. Furthermore, I would like to highlight the limitations within the gathered data as well.

The diversity of work – the various tasks and responsibilities – of the Communications Officer and the worker at central communications could not be accurately measured through a one-time interview. During my research process with the Communications Staff, she described to me her various tasks, yet through the job shadow experience, I had a chance to observe the nature of her work, including her busy schedule and how her work involves being at different spaces and interacting with wide range of people, whether her colleagues, students, and contacting those outside of the Faculty. Deriving useful data from this experience, I believe my understanding of the other communications workers would be richer if I had the opportunity to job shadow them as well.

My scope of research could also have benefited from interviewing other workers in the respective teams of my interviewees. Taking into consideration the responses of the Communications Officer, it would be helpful to understand the scope of communications work at the Faculty B if I interviewed other communications workers and had the chance to see whether certain responses, such as her expression of "loneliness" are echoed by her colleague. Similarly, interviewing other communications workers at the faculty, thus one of the other twenty or so workers who work specifically for the faculty (rather than for Program A) would be useful.

Throughout my analysis, I often correlate central communications as the organization, the University itself, which ignores any possible recognition of tension of workers at central and their condition of "freedom." Therefore, interviewing and job shadowing more workers at different divisions at central communications would have provided a better understanding of the workers' perspective on their work and their relations to the University. Getting in touch with the Senior Director of Communications at the U of T and learning his perspective of his work, his role, and the overall communications structure would also provide richer understanding.

I would like to highlight the absence of any expression of disconnection from the Communications Staff at Program A regarding her relations to other communications workers. She emphasized the "decentralized" structure which she did not provide critique; rather, she noted that it provided her with space to exercise creative freedom towards her work. Moreover, I would like to highlight the risk of generalizing communications work at the U of T due to each workers' unique subjective perceptions, expectations and understandings of work.

Communications Work: Inherent Tension of Power and Freedom

Freedom is the name given to the agency, the autonomy, the control which the communications workers have over their work and themselves within the organizational structure that govern their work and themselves. This organizational structure is enacted through the system of decentralization which is expected to support centralized collective goals. According to Rose, "freedom [is] a set of practices, devices, relations of self to self and self to others," and it is "always practical, technical, contested, involving relations of subordination and privilege" (1999:93). The notion of "freedom" expects the individual to "be free" from any interference of governance or control, however, it is impossible to remove power relations from an understanding of freedom. As analyzed from my ethnographic research, freedom itself

involves self-command, therefore individual autonomy, which in turn is governed by the institution – in this case the University – that had shaped this sense of freedom. "Freedom must exist for power to be exerted" (Foucault, quoted by Patton 1989:272), therefore "[f]reedom is the name we give today to a kind of power one brings to bear upon oneself, and a mode of bringing power to bear upon others" (Rose 1999:96).

The moment described at the monthly meeting of faculty-based communications workers, a particular interaction between the Director of Communications and the twenty or so faculty-based workers is an example where power relations were at play. When the Director jokes about "the cold, elitist image" of the University, he not only posits his presence as authoritarian, but his power as a representative of the educational institution. But, what do the actions of the faculty-based communications workers say, as they fidget, check their mobile phones constantly for the time or to text? Although the nature of their work requires a constant check-up on their mobile phones, as noted by the Communications Staff, the one-sided "discussion," but rather a one-person presentation denotes a particular tension between the central communications, or the University, and the faculty-based communications workers, as well as what the presence of a central communications worker symbolizes at the University.

To fully deconstruct the action required further research, yet I would like to argue that this moment is also an example of the tension between power and freedom – where as a representative of the U of T, the Director enforces governance, in a casual manner in a formal setting, and ensures alignment, coherence, consistency of "the U of T brand" among its autonomous, individual workers. The Director is also an autonomous worker who has self-commanded, therefore internalized command onto himself regarding the motives of the University. During the last bits of the interview with the Senior Manager, she expressed how she

"always believe[s] in what we're doing at the University." She "believe[s] in the mission" of

encouraging higher education, and this mission is ultimately a form of "public good." Although

workers at central communications assume the role of governing faculty-based workers through

various means, such as enforcing "templates," they themselves are workers of the University.

The expression of satisfaction towards her work and the goals of the institution, which she is

required to follow, have also been internalized, or come into alignment with her personal beliefs

and values. This recalls back to Lazzarato's argument, "[t]he worker's personality and

subjectivity have to [become] susceptible to organization and command" (1996); in other words,

the worker must carry out the institution's goals through the process of achieving her own goals.

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