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Introduction

> Reporters are not merely observers. They are also participants with a substantial degree of independent political power. The reporter… "can choose from among myriad events that seethe beneath the surface of government which to describe, which to ignore. He can illuminate policy…he can prematurely expose policy, and as with an undeveloped film, cause its destruction. At his worst, operating with arbitrary and faulty standards, he can be an agent of disorder and confusion. At best, he can exert a creative influence" (Hall-Jamieson, 95).

While it is often conjectured modern politics are mediated politics, it is less often surmised that modern policy making is largely mediated. It is scarcely possible to read a newspaper or watch television without being aware of government policy (Pal,1). New Public Management theory inserts the role of the media earlier in the policy process as a policy input, and elevates political marketing and communication within policy systems. Agenda setting theories also involve the media more fully in deliberative politics: framing issues, prompting action, and mobilizing consent. If the media are an increasingly important institution that mediates between the state and society then any contemporary policy analysis must explore how the media report and interpret policy, facilitate or obstruct it. (McNair,1). No other set of what Evert Lindquist and Les Pal have called 'third sector' policy players is as often assumed to be adversarial, or as formidable and yet no other is as mutually dependent (Pal, 1992:78).

For the purposes of this paper, policy relevant 'media' refer to the news media, that is, the genre of reporting about the every day activities of government on TV or in

print.[1] Technological change has transformed the nature of news gathering, enabled the creation of national newspapers in Canada, and changed the ways in which citizens obtain and use the news. (Interim Senate Report:6). In all advanced western democracies, there has been an explosion in the number of 24 hour news channels available to citizens from within and outside national borders. Yet with the rise of the Internet, which enables live, unedited access to government news sources directly, analysts have speculated about the demise of conventional mediated news sources. The Pew Foundation-Columbia Journalism School's 2004 annual review of US media has argued:

> The journalists' role as intermediary, editor, verifier and synthesizer is weakening, and citizens do have more power to be proactive with the news. But most people will likely do so only episodically. And the proliferation of the false and misleading sources makes the demand for the journalist as referee, watchdog and interpreter all the greater.[2]

Conventional news media continue to dominate most of Canadian citizens' information seeking. No other independent institution in Canada's policy networks has as high a daily reach. Fully two thirds—68%-- say they watch TV news daily (or about 21 million citizens). More than half—55%-- of Canadians say in polls that they are very interested in keeping up with the news. News and public affairs programming accounts for one quarter of all time spent on television. [3] Canadian TV news sources are overwhelmingly preferred (with an 85% share), while 35% do not use any American TV news source and Canadian adults spend 47 minutes reading daily newspapers on an average weekday. Just 35% never use a national newspaper. Digging below the rosy patina on the data Neil Nevitte and Henry Milner suggest about one in two Canadians (48%) actually have low literacy skills, with only about 30% actively consuming news and getting involved in civic activities. [4]

The media's most direct interest in policy is financial: often overlooked is that the commercial TV and print press derive much of their revenues from the news as a core part of their product or service. The media also easily outspend think tanks or interest groups on news and policy monitoring.[5] However, studies of North American print media market rationalization suggest editorial spending has not kept up with revenues.[6]

The link between expenditures, quality of coverage , retention of audiences and maximization of profits is just starting to be demonstrated.[7] What is known is that media profits are generous compared to many sectors.[8]

Despite such ubiquity in every day life, early public policy texts treated the media as a unitary actor, rarely including them in the policy analysis "dance". (see Pal first volume,71, Edwards, 7). Conversely, the media are often operationalised in policy models as a background policy determinant, 'mediating' public opinion (ibid, 21). If the academic consensus that the media are actors relevant in the policy cycle is dubious, the concept of the 'policy network' or 'policy community' as Paul Pross's "bubble diagram" of the policy community indicates, excludes the media altogether implying insufficient coordination, or proximity in the policy process(Pal, 2001, 243.) The direct role of the media in various stages of the policy process has often been considered sporadic, or apparently marginal (Howlett and Ramesh, 82, Johnson,) yet this paper argues that both their direct and their indirect role in modern governance is growing.

The first question to be addressed, then, is if the media can be conceived of as an independent policy actor, involved across a number of policy subsystems. This paper argues that if the policy community or policy subsystem is defined to include all relevant actors who have both *direct and indirect* interests in and influence over the policies produced (Pal, 109) then the media do have a unique independent status deserving critical study. It is thus even more important to review the type of policy interests and influences the media have compared to other civil society organizations. Would senior Canadian politicians share the White House's view of the political press as just another special interest group? Since theories about the effectiveness of policy networks notes the significance of variables such as stability of membership, degree of insulation, autonomy and resources controlled (Howlett and Ramesh, 150), so too do studies of the political news media in Canada need to explore them.

Media and New Public Management

What role do news media play in the policy making cycle? First, the media serve as an environmental scanning device—that is, as an information input to public policy formation. As policy problems have become more complex, with wider global interactions, demands for information rise exponentially (Pal, 2001, 245).The *Communication Policy of the Government of Canada* administered by the Treasury Board (http://publiservice.tbs-sct.gc.ca/publs_pol/sipubs/comm/comm_e.asp) argues that global media monitoring is essential to anticipate issues that arise and to formulate appropriate response strategies: "institutions must identify and track current and emerging public issues and trends reported by the media". To this end, the Federal Government provides a centralized media monitoring service which involves line department or agency registration, and line departments are compelled to include communications plans which identify media relations strategies as well as resource allocations annually to Treasury Board. As we will explore below, they also introduce Access to Information legislation which, in theory, opens government to the media to facilitate the media's independent role in public policy generation.[9] A part of the program review initiative, such reforms indicate a profound 'politicization' of government communication, which has been noted in other regimes.[10] Second, the media serve as tools of dissemination: they are useful in mobilizing consultation and citizen engagement, or in getting out the message in policy implementation. Governments may use media leaks on policy as trial balloons, or conversely as a means to bypass the senior public service. Policy makers may seek third party media allies to lobby for the need for fundamental policy change.[11]

To turn the bilateral relationship on its head, the study of news manufacture in the media analyzes how the policy sector acts as an input to the media: grooming strategic relationships, providing news releases, serving as informed policy sources for comment, and aspiring to virtually real time, unedited access to citizens. A number of US studies have identified how the majority of news stories are derived from situations over which politicians have complete control (Sigal, 1973 and 1990 cited in Bennett, 189). Increasing proportions of on line journalistic content, for example, draw on unedited

news releases from government. There are many colourful accounts of these strategic bilateral games of interest to policy entrepreneurs[12], but such instrumental management or media relations processes (as input or strategic public relations tool) are outside the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, a three way breakdown in trust, between government and public servants, the media and public, in tandem with declining levels of voter turnout, is widely observed in new public management theory across advanced western democracies.[13] Critical theory about new public management suggests that the cause is partly attributable to too much of a promotional or social marketing role ascribed to the media, reflective of a new instrumental 'public relations' mind set. This suggests there is a useful distinction to be made between mediatized and mediated public policy. Mediatized public policy is simply an extension of political marketing, while mediated public policy looks at the difference media can make in the policy process and policy outcomes.

Media in Political Theory

Normative theories of press institutions in western democracies note the apocryphal 'watch dog' or 'Fourth Estate' role of the press in preventing abuse of power by government consistent with classical libertarian views. Less romanticized, but no less influential is the social responsibility view where the charter right of free speech/media is balanced with responsibility in providing citizens with sufficient quality and scope of information to exercise their democratic rights(Nerone, 1995, 1). The former theory, which has a contemporary strain of discourse associated with the Fraser Institute or Alliance fragment of the Conservative Party in Canada, continues to be influential, but not dominant in Canadian political culture. The libertarian view has never been as well accepted in Canadian political discourse as in the US. It simply does not apply as easily to a parliamentary system with historically more limited ambit for third party lobbying by the media as it does to the presidential system. Studies of journalists' values in Canada have consistently placed them further to the left of the spectrum than the libertarian position on social issues [14], and analysis of the incidence and strategic intent of the press' use of Access to Information Requests[15], indicate less use of this legislation by the Canadian press than in other regimes. A minority of the some thousand filed by the media

annually are oriented to scandal, or whistle blowing, unlike what the news vortexes around either Shawinigate or patronage scandal cases of the 2004 federal election may suggest.

Two inquiries into the role of the print press in Canada have upheld a social responsibility view, and the modern practice of provincial newspaper councils was introduced as a means of professional self-regulation in response to this majority social pressure. [16] The goal of this social responsibility model is for the press to educate citizens and get them involved in public policy making. (Bennett:72), implying a fairly uncritical adoption of the model of contemporary participatory democracy as a theoretical underlay for media obligations (Pateman, Held, x).. Daily media coverage in this model, states David Johnson, is thus part of an ongoing accountability process through which governments are judged in light of expectations and possibilities and with respect to their ability to offer good public service. Studies have shown that many policy entrepreneurs in government share this social responsibility mission (Johnson 605). A 2004 survey of public attitudes toward the role of the media in society found almost one- in- two Canadians (48%) think the media help society to solve problems, compared to 31% in the US.(Canadian Media Research Consortium,26). By contrast, studies in the US which breakdown social activism into types like a "populist mobilizer' find just 1 in 20 journalists fill this profile. (Massey and Haas, 566).

As analytic frameworks, these 'meta-theories' about the press help policy analysts think through little more than the elite level of motive, incentives and strategic interaction among policy and media entrepreneurs in bilateral negotiations of power in cases of information about policy. They do not assist in analyzing media-policy [17]influence.

The second set of 'theories' about the role of politics and the media speaks to the paradox of declining civic legitimacy, with rising demands for services or a kind of 'will to trust' collective democratic deliberation. The media are often blamed as the messenger in contemporary speculation about declining political literacy, falling rates of civic engagement or the 'democratic deficit' in mobilizing elites around anything other than

special interests.[18] Or conversely, they are criticized for their independent and deleterious effect on democratic cultures, criticized for their focus on celebrity, creating passive spectators of the political spectacle weaving political morality tales, for sensationalizing or personalizing the news, or sliding democratic discourse down the slippery slope of infotainment.[19] They may be blamed for anti government obstruction, attacked as 'nattering nabobs of negativity', to quote Spiro Agnew, past US vice president. Or to quote Pierre Bourdieu: because the media are afraid of being boring, they opt for confrontations over debates, prefer polemics over rigorous argument and in general, do whatever they can to promote conflict(Allan, 189). A new ideologically veiled criticism calls journalists to account for their low level of policy literacy (Fraser Institute). A recent public survey of views about the media in Canada noted a very high public cynicism about the media's tendency to sensationalize. Again, normative in focus, proponents of these theories masking as diatribes rarely seek empirical proof, and are thus of little use to the policy entrepreneur.

What all these areas of study share is a conviction that conventional institutions for the aggregation of interests (like Parliament or the political party) are in decline and replaced by media as the rhetorical foci of our political culture, becoming a sort of surrogate opposition. (McNair: 95, Lewis). In post-positive policy analysis, one cannot overstate the importance of the role of the 'public media' in the policy process and the need to better understand it.

Media as Policy Actor

Neo-institutional definitions of policy actors start with a clear identification of rational self-interest, and of intent; neither of which easily applies to the fuzzy logic of the media. Unlike such special interest groups or think tanks, media do not tend to directly intervene with formal legal or representative standing in policy deliberations on issues unrelated to their immediate existence/regulatory arena, although they may be called in (criminal or civil) inquiries where they have third party evidence (Brian Mulroney and the Eurocopter scandal, involving journalist Stevie Cameron). They also do not tend to adopt advocacy positions except in their editorial opinion, which represents

a very small fraction of their total annual content production .[20] But the media nonetheless make demands on the political system (about the need to avoid laxity in parole cases which lead to tragic murders, in a recent example) but such demands are relatively rare in editorial coverage. As expressions of intent, often the call is to action, but not a specific form of action or specific alternative. Instead, the ideology of professional independence holds most reporters at arms length from the policy process in most policy sectors with the exception of communication policy, but they are nonetheless engaged in information exchange, policy learning and bargaining over access to confidential information through policy networks, through their continuing affiliation with informed sources and through their control over access to the public. Since the political press' stock in trade is problems, there is significant space for the media to play an important role in agenda-setting, but this implies an activist, independent, investigative role in initiating stories to meet the test in its strongest thesis. As we will see below, this again represents a very small proportion of the political press' overall content in Canada. They are nonetheless implicated in policy networks and susbsystems of policy communities at local, provincial and national levels, and increasingly looking outward.

As actors, the media function as a complex, plural constellation within each the several thousand media organizations in Canada. Only the convention of the editorial in newspapers expresses a unitary position for the paper on a public issue. The authorial tradition, while not as well advanced as in Europe, is still relatively strong in Canada, despite incursions in copyright law during the digital age. Most stories which originate in the paper are filed by independent journalists, although teams are beginning to emerge. Most papers rely on a range of commentators covering some of the political spectrum from left to right, as well as a range of journalists reporting news items with less interpretive content. The insinuation of journalists into the policy process, therefore, is more often at the individual and policy subsystem level and ad hoc, varying according to the journalist's social network capital.[21]

The biggest organizational restraint mitigating against such pluralism is found in the ownership structure, which provides loose coordination of news services, on line

research resources available and professional training. Staff supports such as legal services—are increasingly important to modern reportage. The past decade has seen a remarkable concentration of cross media ownership in Canada. [22] Overall, CanWest dominates the daily newpaper market, Rogers is the leading news magazine publisher, Corus dominates news radio and Bell Globemedia leads the English TV news market while Quebecor leads the French. (Interim Senate Report: 37). Quebecor and Bell Globemedia are most diversified in cross media ownership[23], while Astral, Chum, Corus and Craig are more concentrated on one media. BCE, Cogeco, Corus , Quebecor, Rogers and Shaw also operate Internet Service Providers. There are sharply different regional effects. In Vancouver, CanWest has 100% of the market share of dailies, and 70% of newscasts. Similar figures available for Toronto show CanWest has 11.5% of dailies, and 33% of newscasts. Bell Globemedia has 18% of dailies and 43.8% of Toronto newscasts.

There is an hypothesis that the concentration of ownership structure of the media affects the operational culture for journalists, and the diversity of media content produced. In a survey of 125 journalists conducted by the National Guild of Canadian Media, Manufacturing , Professional and Service Workers/Communication Workers of Canada (TNG),79% noticed a change in the editorial content of the paper, and 44% noted a loss of local independence in editorial policy. (Senate Interim Report: 59). As well, some analysts conjecture that there is a decline in the importance of the national or provincial gallery, migration of political live and unedited coverage of question period to the Canadian Parliamentary Channel, and the emergence of a 'national chain editorial policy' at least among the Asper owned papers in the CanWest Empire. Finally, there are allegations of reduced editorial staff, reduced outsourcing to free lance journalists, and sharp reduction of editorial expenses to alleviate the debt accrued from acquisition. Nonetheless, the 2004 Senate Standing Committee on Transport and Communications' special inquiry into the status of the media pointed to a paucity of empirical information about the relationship between concentration of ownership, diversity and quality of news coverage, and has commissioned several studies forthcoming in the spring of 2005. (Interim Senate Report:99).

The principal media players to watch in the policy process, then, tend to be the larger ones who can invest resources and strategic planning in policy inquiries, as studies of business organizations have also found. But more than just scale of enterprise is at work. The biggest predictor of editorial news culture is if ownership is widely (Bell Canada Enterprises, BCE) or narrowly held (CanWest Global or Hollinger). Charismatic entrepreneurial publishers like Conrad Black or Israel Asper have made an indelible mark on Canadian politics, and in the Chretien era, it is fair to say government strategists in the central agencies personalized all of the Hollinger chain as an enemy (as indeed, the blocked peerage would signal) and Asper as a friend (so much so, an editor was fired for placing too vigilant a spotlight on Chretien's financial dealings in a Shawinigan golf course). Managerial media styles have long vascillated between the autocratic or authoritarian, and decentralized and autonomous in Canadian news history.[24] As David Taras states:

> A news room culture can (easily) be created: publishers can hire and promote reporters who fit their image and hold their views and beliefs. It can be created by more subtle means: the pecking order for important assignments, the degree of editorial supervision, the likelihood of advancement or promotion, the type of atmosphere hanging over the news-room that signals a way of looking over the world and a way of looking at the world and the parameters of what is acceptable. (48).

Unlike some regimes have considered, Canada has no movement to introduce "status of the journalist' legislation (like status of the artist legislation, or the convention of academic tenure) , protecting journalistic autonomy within the corporation of a swashbuckling entrepreneur. Such questions are not abstract. With the firing of Russell Mills of the Ottawa Citizen and Stephen Kimber of the Halifax Daily News, both of the CanWest chain they are all too real. (Media, Winter, 2002.).

As with any sector, there are a number of industry, trade and labour groups within struggling to shape professional standards, terms of employment and news culture. The principal industry ones are the Canadian Newspaper Association, and the Canadian Association of Broadcasters. There are a few professional associations for journalists, such as the Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) (www.caj.ca) but it is fair to say

they do not have the same social cachet as the Law Society, but a cursory audit of their history of conferences, public dissemination, and policy focus on their website indicates a growing activism. Unions such as the Canadian Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP), and the National Guild of Canadian Media, Manufacturing, Professional and Service Workers (TNG) which is an independent affiliate of the Communication Workers of America are only now responding to the challenges of convergence, diversifying their membership across print and electronic media and providing important links to international federations of journalists (www.yourmedia.ca).

Studies of journalistic values in unions have indicated as early as 1982 that journalists are self- defined as more left leaning than many other elites in society (Taras, 49), although this is now changing. A recent study by Miljan and Cooper in 1997-98 conducted a survey of 270 journalists and 800 of the general population asked questions about views on economy, social issues and national unity, and then looked at reporting practice. Despite the fact that American and European studies find journalists self-select left orientation, English speaking journalists in Canada are equally as likely to place their views on left as right. When probed for partisan loyalty, journalists are more likely to mention the New Democratic Party, especially in CBC radio. On economic issues, journalists differ little from the general population on views of capitalism or issuance of the public debt; but once again the CBC journalists are more left of centre. Miljan and Cooper find that private sector journalists more sympathetic to free markets and capitalism, suggesting that "Noam Chomsky's view that journalists are sympathetic to capitalism has some merit. They agree debt is an important issue and that there is a trade off between low inflation and employment, more so than the general population"(79). But journalists are more progressive on social issues, defining themselves as fiscal and not social conservatives. The authors produced a content analysis on economic news (134) which found a similar ideological tilt to the content of stories produced : on economic issues the personal views of journalists were closely reflected in the stories they presented, while CBC reports were more likely to support government solutions to problems. State the authors:

> these findings provide strong evidence that the individual views of journalists do influence the way they cover the news. When journalists have left of centre views on the economy, such as is typical at English speaking CBC, their reporting of economic issues is also left of centre. The more moderate views of private sector journalists and French speaking journalists was likewise reflected. 172

Ownership does result in hiring of like- minded people. Certainly, these contemporary data suggest that the increasing commodification, niche specialization and competition in media news products has had a concomitant impact on changing ideological precepts of news journalists. Yet as the Pew-Columbia 2004 Media Report states, "journalists' own politics are also harder to analyze than people might think… what does liberal mean to journalists? We would be reluctant to infer too much here".

There are two key indicators of professional and institutional maturation in decentralized media networks, which speak to its political capital in policy circles. The first is the existence of transparent, well-reasoned professional news standards, which are administered by press councils, are consistent with the Charter on freedom of expression, and develop informal 'organic law' or jurisprudence on complaints. In this regard, the Canadian press is advanced over many of its counterparts . [25] Press Councils, however, have often been criticized for their relative obscurity, and inability to promulgate precedent-built or organic rulings, and the calls for improving the ombudsman process have been escalating. Nor have editors accepted that the model of the press ombudsman may influence the way reporters and editors do their work, or assist in providing critical assessments of their news product (Nemeth, 37). The second main test is if there are independent think tanks or institutes which regularly monitor and comment on the quality of journalism and its interventions in public policy arenas annually. In this, Canada is far behind the United States which has institutes both on the left and right (FAIR or Fairness and Integrity in Reporting, and Accuracy in the Media or AIM) but also prestigious independent foundations (Pew Research Centre for People and the Press) and a number of prestigious university monitoring centres (Annenberg School and Columbia Journalism School). In the US, Pew and Columbia University have recently joined together to produce an annual report on the state of the media which offers a useful

compendium of content analyses, overview of trends, and surveys of editors and journalists to speak to the political climate. Nonetheless, there are two important recent additions on the Canadian media-politics monitoring scene. The first is the McGill Observatory on the Media and Public Policy, which together with the Institute of Research on Public Policy mounted an election coverage monitoring project (www.ompp.**mcgill**.ca/) and the second is an industry-financed Canadian Media Research Consortium which has produced the first report card on the Canadian media. www.cmrccrm.ca/english/reportcard2004/ 01.html) A joint venture by three universities,[26] the Consortium was founded through a commitment of $500,000 per annum for seven years ($3.5 million in total) made by BCE as part of the Public Benefits Package approved by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission when BCE purchased CTV. The impact of these relatively arms-length agencies on the policy-media press cycle is yet to be felt.

A final indicator of media insinuation in the policy process is the reliance on professional media relations experts or media monitoring in the advocacy programs of interest groups or think tanks. The only proxy to the conservative AIM in the US is the Fraser Institute, which regularly releases ideological commentary on press media coverage. Most interest groups do not have sufficient resources to have regular media monitoring, much less media relations experts within, to get their message out. [27] The Fraser Institute has launched CANSTATS, a project to help the media communicate complex data to the public.[28] The left institute (Centre for Policy Alternatives) has no such resources available to journalists, but the CAJ is working to develop some. CANSTAT focuses on public health data, crime trends, and legal issues.

When it comes to generating their own policy intelligence (see below under investigative stage of the press cycle) the political press owners do not support their own policy research institutes or foundations which act in policy research unlike the United States (see the Knight Ridder Foundation), nor regular partnerships with outside institutions(such as the Caledon Institute, for investigation on social policy, for example). The commercial setting for most news research in Canada sets significant

constraints on capacity—and retraction of public spending on the CBC has had similar effects.

Unlike think tanks, universities or other professional consultants, reporters, columnists and editors rarely have much time for research on a story, and various newspapers and networks offer sharply different resources available to assist in background or policy research (See the discussion below under the investigative cycle). Levels of expertise also vary. While the education level of journalists is increasing (indeed, journalists are twice as likely to have a post-secondary degree as the general public)[29], it is not often specialized in a particular policy field, and the contemporary newsroom has a loose 'beat' system, usually defined by jurisdiction, and not substantive policy area. The most stable assignments for reporters and columnists would appear to be business. But in the past five years, health beats have emerged, with fairly long term assignments.[30] So too do levels of social or political capital vary sharply for political journalists in Canada. The rationalization of the media industry, together with a fragmentation of political news sources has meant it is harder and harder for trusted, credible national columnists to emerge[31], and many speak of a shrinking cadre of political reporters. There are few policy 'stars' in the firmament in English Canadian journalism, unlike Quebec or the UK and the US where they have more social status.[32]

While most journalists work in the private sector in Canada (and particularly in print), the presence of the CBC which remains the largest single employer of journalists in TV, (but shrinking as a proportion of overall journalists employed) suggests parallels with a public interest group for different policy intervention styles between commercial and public media which deserves further inquiry.

The Institutions of Political News Media in Canada

Political journalism involve the news editors, the parliamentary gallery, political journalists on the local, municipal , provincial, federal or international 'newsdesks', and the relevant newswire agencies. It covers daily newspaper, TV and the weekly newsmagazine sectors, and of the three, the most influential on policy elites tend to be the

print sectors. Daily newspapers present much more volume of news than an average telecast, and staff ratios reflect this. A study of Montreal and Vancouver markets conducted for the Special Senate Inquiry on the Status of the Media chaired by Senator Joan Fraser identified a higher employment ratio for French journalists, over English; a higher employment ratio in a competitive market (Montreal) than non-competitive (Vancouver) markets[33] and higher employment in print than TV.

The core political institution is the press gallery—which only moved out of the cosy, deferential world of Athens on the Rideau (a term coined by Alan Fotheringham) in the Parliament Buildings to across the street in the early 80s. Turnover in the gallery increased in the 80s and 90s, so much so that less than 40% last two elections. Membership is shrinking. A recent study has also found that the Gallery is outnumbered not only by politicians and their staffs, but also by government communication personnel and their lobbyists in Ottawa and in Victoria. (Fletcher, 386 and Rees, 13) suggesting the ease with which government usually may control the media agenda. In assessing the role of the Gallery in the successive Liberal Governments, Geoff Stevens has argued:

> Most of the people who report on the legislative process are poorly trained (if they are trained at all), lack comprehension of many of the subjects they must report on, and (as a general indictment) not only know less than the civil servants who develop policy, and the politicians who announce it, but, in many cases, the journalist knows less than his readers or listeners (Quoted in Taras, 75)

What is the relationship with Parliamentary actors? Traditionally, the most direct area of input into the parliamentary process is found in the use of media reports by Opposition Parties during Question Period. The potential influence of the media in Question Period rises as opposition parties gain official status and win research resources. It is also possible, but not yet systematically and empirically analysed, that potential media influence rises in minority government. Reporters rarely take standing before Parliamentary Committees. But there are other stages of news media involvement in the media cycle (see below). Indirectly, senior politicians meet with editorial boards informally and off the record. They attend annual press gallery social functions, but these are ‘low stakes’ involvements. On an ad hoc basis, policy makers may join juries for

special awards through their personal networks of influence. Says Bill Fox, an ex journalist and public relations strategist with Bombardier, "too often politicians and reporters engage in what is the equivalent in insider baseball—a dialogue that excludes the very public both are dependent upon" (McGrath, 391). Despite this occasional 'movement in concert' it is often speculated that the political journalistic culture, like the lobby culture in Canada is not as tight as it is in the US, with less frequent 'off the record' social contacts and mutual information exchanges as is the operating style in the US. The lobby culture may itself be sharply localized (with those based in Ottawa, and two or three of the active provincial press galleries), looser, and less socially stratified in Canada, for the simple reason that journalism schools are not attached to institutions where the leading lawyers or business students in the Canadian ivy league colleges attend in the dominant channels of academic recruitment to political careers. Journalistic ethics, to prevent perceptions of conflict of interest by accepting undue benefit (say by preferential access to budget information) police the boundaries of this kind of licensed autonomy or arms-length relationship. The journalist-politician link or journalist-public servant link then, is a weak, contingent one in Canadian policy networks.

Mediated Policy Making

The policy cycle is well known to analysts and need not be reiterated here. Less well known is how the policy cycle interacts with the press cycle. The press cycle involves the following stages: factual reportage, interrogation, investigation and interpretation [34]. Each successive stage requires greater resources, more analysis, and more refinement of policy positions. Stories move in and out of these stages, and indeed, a single story may not move linearly through all four. Very few are sustained in the media attention cycle, and even fewer make the interpretative screen. Epistemological constructivists further argue there are important spectacle or ritual components to the contemporary press policy cycle which are also strategic assets in "new public management" theory but this dimension is set aside for this paper (Johnson, 545).

Reportage & Framing

The chief asset of the media's power in the policy cycle is drawn from its access to the public and its public reputation, consonant with social responsibility ethos. Public reputation is defined by Canadian citizens to principally revolve around norms of accuracy, impartiality and general credibility in basic political reportage. Studies in both the US and Canada have shown that 'trust' in the media as a source for political information is drawn from perceptions of accuracy, defined as avoidance of objective errors of fact, or subjective errors such as over-emphasis, under-emphasis, or other omissions (CMRC,12). Just one in three (31%) Canadians believe that news reports are inaccurate—lower than in the US.[35] This finding is rather surprising, given that content analyses in the US find that one in two news stories contain at least one error. But when the news media do make errors, 54% believe they will try to cover it up, cynical about media ethics. Given this level of skepticism, it is perhaps not surprising that just 53% think that the press will pay attention to complaints (higher than in the US). It may be conjectured therefore that Canadians hold post-positive news values. A similar incidence of Canadians (31%) agree that reporters' often let their own political preferences influence the way they report the news often while an additional 48% believe this sometimes occurs—just 21% then believe that journalists are impartial. But when assessed overall, Canadians consider the news they see to be often fair and balanced, with 42% saying it is sometimes balanced. Sensationalism is a big risk in the news: 92% note its structural tendency in modern reportage, and 63% agree that the more sensationalistic the report, the lower the trust. Canadians are under no illusions about the independence of news organizations: 76% see them often influenced by powerful organizations, principally politicians and government (42%) economic interests (27%), owners (12%) advertisers(4%) lobby groups (12%) or protesters (3%).[36] Corroboration for shrinking autonomy may also be found in studies of journalists which suggest that they see economic pressures are increasingly prevalent and identified as constraints on news autonomy. [37]

Given the healthy skepticism about trends to sensational entertainment or 'tabloid' journalism seen in the Canadian public, just how salient is policy in the political

news cycle? The simplest test if policy matters is to measure extent and salience of various policies in news content. A recent content analysis of 4 weeks of the political news agenda in the UK, found government dominating in leads. [38] By contrast, a study of 2004 election coverage by the McGill Observatory on Public Policy and the Media found 63% of 2400 news articles over 7 papers were strategy or process oriented, but just 42% of those were issue oriented(http://www.ompp.mcgill.ca/pages/reports/CumulativeReport(June25).pdf). The Pew-Columbia study found Government dominates about 1/3 of all front pages.

The key single supplier of news content in Canada is Canadian Press. Wire copy routinely fills one- half to one-third of newpaper content and is use is inversely related to size of organization (Interim Senate Report: 28). Such copy relies heavily on editing government press releases, with little underlying fact checking. Yet, there are signs that cooperative pooling of news reporting may be fragmenting. CanWest established its own news service and a national news centre in Winnipeg to provide national and international news to its 11 papers. It also continues to belong to The Canadian Press which provides news and pictures from its 100 members nationally with local, regional, national and international stories. Reliance on newswire or imported coverage in print is higher in the smaller markets. To quote Russell Mills, a noted editor and widely respected for his principled opposition to the Aspers:

> An increasing proportion of (original independent reportage) is being done by the very largest newspapers and the CBC. The mid-size and small papers and other networks have fallen behind, perhaps as a result of budget cuts that have left them without the resources to take on major projects. Today there is nothing remotely like the old Kingston Whig Standard of a few years ago, a small independently owned newspaper that won major awards regularly.

With the advent of the Internet, satellite and digital communication, the explosion of 'news bytes' has challenged the capacity of editors for selection. A key element of modern reportage (as well as modern public policy) is the way in which policy discourse is conducted as though it were neutral and objective (Pal, 66 ,McGrath, 380).Yet it is not. Unspoken news codes still prevail: selecting stories on their relative level of conflict,

relevance, timeliness, simplicity, personalization, unexpectedness, cultural salience, reference to elites, or negativity. (Allan,63; Hall Jamieson, 3).

Whether wire or originated copy, critics routinely identify a relatively narrow range of 'news scripts' in the cognitive repertoire of editors. One example may be found in the newscript for Martin's 2004 re- election campaign, which characterized him in the fight of his life, carrying on his father's legacy (risking all to grasp the crown?) as was seen in the *National's* TV documentary series on the leaders. A better theoretical example, asks how do reporters contextualize facts in policy debates? The dominant tendency is to focus on strategy. Even when policy is discussed, it is channeled through a strategic filter. Why? Studies suggest that reporters are much more comfortable making evaluative strategic statements than statements about policy (Hall Jamieson, 167). Brian McNair agrees:

> Political journalism is more focused on the style of politics and the performance aspects of political communication. It is more focused on the mechanics of news and Public Relations, the game, and it is more analytical and interpretative than in the past… evidence not of a dumbing down, but a response to the technological, economic and political environments which shape political culture. (171).

Nelson and Kinder (1998) have argued that a more useful concept in political analysis is framing, defined as molding public understanding of the causes of problems and the merits of alternative solutions. Framing describes the context in which an issue is placed and the means by which it is diffused (Miljan and Cooper, 30). Hackett and Zhao define news frames as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse (118). Frames are, it is important to note, inevitable: they are needed if you want to tell a complex story intelligibly. Frames determine what is included and what is ignored, depending upon a shared repertoire of concepts, notions of what exists, what is good and bad, what is important and what is related to what (Hackett and Zhao, 119). Elaborates Stuart Allan:

> At the heart of these processes of inclusion and exclusion are certain principles of organization or frames which work to impose order on multiple happenings of the social world so as to render them into a series of meaningful events. (Todd)Gitlin…extends this ethnomethodological notion of 'frame' to argue for a

> consideration of how the daily routines of journalism strive to naturalize the social world in accordance with certain discursive conventions. News Frames, he argues, make the world beyond direct experience natural: they are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters (Allan, 63)

Framing is the arena where government communication strategists struggle most directly with press reportage. In the 2000 Health Accord with the Provinces, for example, politicians sold this as new federal money (indeed, the predominant news frame picked up by news reports). But the public was concerned about access, and federal spokespeople failed to tune the policy frame to what people wanted, although the notable 'shortening waitlist' policy plank repeated by Martin in the 2004 election campaign endeavoured to make the link.

Acceptance of the idea of the importance of journalistic 'framing' suggests simple objectivity is "going out of fashion" in contemporary reportage, something which would be a worrisome trend to any but the post positive policy analyst. Yet many reporters are loath to surrender this traditional professional ideology, believing they should not be directly partisan and should present both sides of a controversy to allow citizens to make up their own mind. They operate under a whole series of contradictory rules and market imperatives—to be neutral, yet investigate, to be fair minded yet have edge, to be disengaged from politics yet have impact. (Hall Jamieson, 169). There is little critical self-awareness of the journalists' reproduction of ideology (McGrath, 384). For example, critical social theorists have often slammed the narrow definition of politics in much news coverage to exclude social movements, or to trivialize, polarize, disparage, or emphasize internal dissension in reporting alternative politics. Or conversely, they have noted how media electoral coverage persists in the exclusion of the Green Party from leaders' debates, extensive campaign trail coverage despite the fact it mounted more candidates than the Bloc in the federal election of 2004.

There is a new public journalism movement which is arguing for the return to the narrative, to context, to story telling in contemporary reportage. Gillian Steward, a respected free lance journalist and advisor to the Canadian Association of Journalists, is

making the case for a return to story telling in professional practice.[39] Steward is supported in this call by the Pew-Columbia study in the US, and a number of audience studies which suggest the context and narrative line is increasingly important in political cognition, assimilation and retention of key political facts. (Gamson, 1992. Lewis, 2003).

Interrogation & Whistleblowing

Liberal democratic theory about the watch dog role of the press, compels it to keep an eye trained on government in order to expose and thus prevent abuse. (Hall Jamieson, 24). Interrogation may be soft—that is, involving Ministers or officially designated spokespersons in talk shows or, conversely, Town Halls where citizens have an opportunity to directly question their leaders about policy, and may have been selected to represent different constituencies or sectors of opinion. Interrogation in the harder sense involves challenge, question, and whistle blowing. Major stories about politician's conflict of interest (Shawingate) secrecy (patronage scandal) and corruption (Radwanski and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner) or colossal incompetence (fast ferry fiasco in BC's NDP government) might never have come to anyone's attention if not for an anonymous public sector whistleblower who had the courage to act – either tipping off a House of Commons committee and prompting MPs to use their investigative powers or fuelling opposition questions during question period.[40] On the other hand, not all 'whistle blowers' are in fact heeded. Despite intimations of a cover up, the tainted blood inquiry took several years for newspapers to get on board, cited by some as unconscionable complicity (Miller).

An activist interrogation cycle in the political media is a mark of a generation of journalists raised on the myth of Watergate: the working hypothesis of which posits political figures of any sort are suspect; their images probably false, their statements designed to deceive. Canadian journalists were deeply influenced by this 'machismo' according to David Taras, who cites Trudeau's ridicule of Watergate envy to describe the cynicism of Canadian media and its desire to bring politicians down (Taras, 57). A

frenzy of scandal hunting ensued, but it was counterbalanced by a swing back to policy focus, or greater interrogation, according to Elly Alboim, past head of CBC TV news and now with Earnscliffe Group, a well-known public affairs consulting firm. Is there too much of a swing back to attack journalism? Too much of a pack mentality? The final regime in Prime Minister Chretien's era spawned an extraordinary number of scandals, aided and abetted by the Office of the Auditor General Sheila Fraser, whose reports triggered a series of relentless scandal hunts for two years prior to the last federal election. A significant proportion (30%) of access to information requests from the media look for wastage in government spending, or other egregious abuses (see below). And the politics of naming and shaming (Pawson) depend on how newsworthy or unexpected the story is, and degree of bite in provoking 'shaming sanctions' in the popular venues for political talk, and 'buzz' among opinion leaders. But given reporters remain seriously outnumbered and out-resourced by government communication strategists, most 'interrogation' depends on a policy analyst acting with conscience within government to bring irregularities under public scrutiny. And there are suggestions that the Liberal Government has been increasingly chilly one for whistleblowers.[41]

Whistleblowing occurs when a person in an organization brings to attention acts by someone in higher authority within the organization or outside of it, that are illegal, or contrary to the public interest. Two recent judgments, in Alberta and the Federal Court, have found that the right to blow the whistle is protected under the guarantee of freedom of expression in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, especially in the public sector. The Federal government has a whistleblowers' policy for the public service – but even the official in charge of the policy says it's not working, and needs to be reinforced. Unions have taken up the whistle blowers' cause. The British Columbia Government and General Employees Union, has a web site section devoted to encouraging BCGEU members to blow the whistle if the information serves a significant public interest such as exposing a breach of statute, danger to public health and safety or a significant danger to the environment. The information must not be of a frivolous nature, and the whistleblowing action must serve some higher purpose such as to expose crime or serious negligence, or to fairly debate important matters of general public concern related to the

employer. But in a telling revelation, even after these tests are met, the web site warns that potential whistleblowers have to ask themselves whether the wrongdoing is major enough to risk reprisals. ”Whistleblowers are often targeted for retaliatory investigations, harassment, intimidation, demotion or dismissal and blacklisting by employers," the site notes. "While a union member may be afforded certain protections and recourse under a collective agreement, are you prepared to risk such repercussions?” On February 17, 2004, The Standing Committee on Public Accounts met with the then President of Treasury Board, the Hon. Reg Alcock, to discuss matters related to Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of the November 2003 Report of the Auditor General of Canada. One of the topics of discussion was to extend to members of the Public Service of Canada "the same form of protection that they would have under a proper whistle-blowing regime in the absence of that regime." As a consequence of the incentives provided by the imminent election, on 10 February 2004, Mr. Martin’s government announced its intention to introduce legislation to protect disclosers of wrongdoing no later than 31 March 2004, but Parliament prorogued before it was introduced. It should be noted the Committee was unanimous in adopting a motion urging the government to introduce effective whistle-blowing legislation at the earliest opportunity.

> Perhaps one of the most famous case negotiating protection for whistle blowers in Canada involves Juliet O”Neill of the Ottawa Citizen who had her home raided by the RCMP in order to obtain information on her sources for a statement made in an article about the Mahar Arar case which linked Mr. Arar to training in Al Qaeda[42]. The National Posts’ Andrew McIntosh received a leaked memo in April 2001 which allowed him to break the Shawinigate scandal, a Business Development Bank of Canada loan to an Inn on a golf course which had Jean Chretien as an investor—raising the question if Chretien stood to personal benefit. In the court case, the media lawyers for the defense argued that important stories like tainted food, and the dumping of hazardous waste could go unreported if the principle of confidentiality were not upheld. An RCMP effort to seize the document was quashed by the Ontario Supreme Court but is currently still under appeal to the Supreme Court, meaning the reporter has lived with the case for over 4 years. The Post has spent half a million on legal costs, and has been joined in the appeal by the Globe, Bell GlobeMedia and the CBC(Media, Spring 2004, 31). Another famous case is Stevie Cameron’s run in over the Eurocopter affair, where she was identified as a secret RCMP informant, raising ethical questions about journalists cooperating with their sources.

For good interrogation to occur, the introduction of tough whistle-blowing legislation is an essential reform.

Investigation

Investigation involves policy initiation, commissioning of polls, or triggering of access to information requests. This is approaches the most advanced area in the press cycle where the media act as an independent policy entrepreneur. This stage of the cycle conforms most closely to the outside policy iniative model which has the press articulating a grievance, expanding interest and then creating sufficient pressure to act. The litmus test of how seriously an organization takes its obligations to inform the public on important policy issues is the investment in independently generated investigative journalism.

The costliest element of mediated policy making, this phase of the press cycle is also the one facing the largest legal and economic constraints.[43] Successful investigative reporting requires a supportive atmosphere. First, news executives must encourage its practice and be prepared to undertake the risks. Second, the legal protections must be reliable and strong. Finally, interested news consumers must read, respond, and finally subjects or targets must review and take action"(adapted from Greenwald, 5).

Canada has been spared quite the samee orgy of bad investigative practices in the US, where overuse of anonymous sources, deceptive undercover reporting, ambushing interview subjects and unnecessarily intruding into people's lives name a few. As a consequence the US media lose 2 in 3 libel trials, and pay average costs of $2 million(Greenwald).

Some of the absence of bad news about the status of investigative practice may be economic: Canadian journalists cited a lack of time for investigative research and a lack of expertise in technical fields such as medicine, leading to a decrease in the quality of information (Senate Interim Report: 60).. This concern is shared by commentators from both the left and the right:

> Much of the time, there is insufficient nuance given to news stories, such that critical qualifications are not included… economics reporting and commentary are especially rife with statistical errors. The portrayal of complex research often dwindles into a kind of public policy entertainment, where extremists on both sides are given voice to spout and opinion. (Neil Seeman, Director Research, Fraser Institute in Interim Senate Report: 61).

Kirk LaPointe, former senior vice-president of CTV News, who also oversaw the early days of the National Post as executive editor, has characterized the Canadian media as having "done a so-so job of distinguishing themselves" from the quality of journalism in assessments of the American media in the year since 9/11.[44] LaPointe suggested that the main problem with mainstream media is not corruption, censorship or suppression, but a lack of time for investigative work:

> We spend too much time covering and not enough time uncovering. If they aren't careful, newsrooms find themselves playing an accommodations role relying too heavily on press conferences and other staged events.

LaPointe decried the lack of initiative by reporters to seek out stories independently, noting that about 50% material found in newspapers is staged, another 48% "important stories you have to cover," and only 2-3% is completely original ideas by reporters or the newsroom.[45] The result is that reporters are largely being "passive recipients" instead of active, independent policy entrepreneurs, in this view.

But new cost-effective information technologies are shifting the balance more in favour of investigative reporting, as a special issue of the Canadian Association of Journalists' magazine called Media has reported. A multiple award winning Star series[46] on racial patterns of criminal arrests involving the Toronto police, sparked a national debate. Black activists in Toronto called for immediate action; Toronto's police chief and chiefs at other jurisdictions denied charges of racism and racial profiling; and the union representing Toronto's police officers sued the Star for libel, demanding $2.6-billion in damages. [Because of the legal action by the police, Star reporters and editors involved in the series declined to write or speak about the series for Media magazine.]

The Star got to work on the series in March 2000 when the paper asked the Toronto Police Services for information contained in that force's Criminal Information

Processing System (CIPS). Most forces in the country, including the RCMP, maintain a similar sort of database, which contains information on arrests and other incidents involving members of that force. At first, Toronto police denied the Star access to CIPS. However, after a favourable Ontario Privacy Commissioner ruling, the paper got access, the first time someone from outside the police community was able to review the records.

Canadian journalists still value investigative journalism as the summit of their profession. But, as Michael Schudson argues, investigative reporters rarely become as well paid or as consistently well known in public as columnists in journalism today.(Media,2004:4). Instead, the rise of independent documentaries indicates a new, less constraining genre allows more latitude both for interrogation and investigation (The Corporation, the xxx) The Southam Fellowship is awarded to journalists who want to take a research sabbatical to research a broader public policy question. A similar award is the Michener Deacon Fellowship. The 2003 recipient was Margaret Munro, a science writer for the National Post who took 4 months leave to examine the ethical challenges arising from the pharmaceutical industry's funding of drug research. The 2004 Michener-Deacon Fellowship went to Cecil Rosner, bureau chief for CBC English Television News in Manitoba, to research a book about the history of investigative journalism in Canada.

A good indicator of press intensity in the investigative cycle is found in the archives of one of the most prestigious and longest running awards (bestowed by the Governor General since 1970 but not well known among public servants) : the Michener award which recognizes news organizations for reports which have an impact on the public good. In the past five years, the Michener winners have been, La Presse, The Star, the KW record, and the CBC twice. The Michener recipient series investigated the following:

- **2003. La Presse** won for two series. The first drew a shocking portrait of care provided to the elderly in residential and long-term care centres. The second raised awareness about the wrongful treatment of patients at Saint-Charles-Borromēe hospital in Montreal. The jury argued that the reports forced authorities to act quickly to correct the situation.

- **2002. The Toronto Star** showed the Toronto police department treated blacks differently than whites in one of the world's most ethnically diverse cities (a series which took 3 years to develop and was published in October and November 2002). As a consequence of public outrage, the Ontario Human Rights Commission announced an inquiry into racial profiling, and former Lieutenant Governor Lincoln Alexander convened a summit of community leaders, creating sufficient pressure that the Solicitor General announced a review. The Toronto police chief announced a race relations outreach program.[47]
- **2001. The Kitchener Waterloo Record** won the 2001 Michener Award for uncovering serious misuse of public funds in municipal lease financing.
- **2000. The Fifth Estate**, CBC-TV. A series of six reports on police and the justice system included investigative coverage of the aggressive tactics of the Toronto police union in an assault on targeted municipal politicians.
  Two programs dealt with errors by police and prosecutors in the murder conviction 40 years ago of Stephen Truscott, including how police paid a criminal as a secret informant as well as a witness for the prosecution. The series prompted a f ull inquiry into the factors that permitted the Saskatchewan justice system to lay false charges, ranging from sexual abuse to murder, to proceed.
- **CBC Winnipeg**. Illegal election actions by senior Manitoba Progressive Conservative party members were exposed primarily due to dogged pursuit by reporter Curt Petrovich. Illegalities included putting up bogus candidates against NDP candidates.

A fuller indicator of overall investigative activity is found in the 6 honourable mentions submitted by organizations which are competing for the prestigious stakes each year. The Globe and Mail has received honourable mentions 4 in 5 years, indicating a high degree of annual investigative activity, and favourable peer review. The Toronto Star, and Winnipeg Free Press received 3 honourable mentions in 5 years. The Ottawa Citizen received two, and CBC News (Fifth Estate and Saskatchewan News) also two. Canadian Press received only one honourable mention in five years, and 9 other papers single mentions. Perhaps the surprise is the fact that the National Post received only one honourable mention over 5 years (and not for Andrew McIntosh's series) despite its carefully manicured reputation as activist journalists. Two trends may be observed: most subjects fall into the social policy area, or the area of fiscal abuse. Second, few nominations now include very long series (10 parts or more) or lengthy multi year investigations (as are legendary at The Star). Space does not permit a full examination of the policy areas where these stories are working, but in the four years where data are publicly available, it is possible to conclude that health, and social policy areas carry the most intensive, indepth policy engaged interaction.. In Health, the Citizen did two series

in four years, one on drug costs, and one on losing the war on drugs. The Toronto Star has had three series in four years on medical secrecy and nursing homes, and on 'blind faith' in the herbal remedy prescription area. In social policy, there were inquiries into the homeless (La Presse), Winnipeg street kids and on line stalking of children (Winnipeg Free Press) and a story on a troubled reserve (Edmonton Journal). Governance surfaced with three papers working on local abuses on city hall (London Free Press), Public Works scandals(Globe and Mail) and Freedom of Information (St John's Telegram). Security issues (On the trail of a terrorist: CBC National News) and prisons (Canadian Press) tie with Crime. Finance emerges with only one investigative honourable mention, involving board accountability and income trusts (Globe and Mail).

If deliberative models of 'citizen juries' are a key institutional indicator of advancement in participatory democracy (Held), then it is a shame that the practice of media self regulation in this country is so murky. Media companies do not get good marks on the transparency of their corporate governance. Prestigious recognition from the National Newspaper Awards, the CAJ Awards, and the Michener Awards involve mostly journalists in their juries. A more reliable qualitative probe into the difference investigative journalism can make may be found in juries which involve experienced elites in other areas of policy subcommunities. The Justicia awards for legal reporting are sponsored by the Canadian Bar Association in partnership with the industry. Two recent awards went to Kirk Makin of the Globe and Mail for a story January 11, 2003 entitled the scales of justice critically examined zero tolerance policies in domestic abuse cases and a certificate of merit to the Toronto Star team which did the series on race and crime in Toronto. A second story by Tasha Kheiridddin on CPAC explored Metis rights on two cases (Blais and Powley) before the Supreme Court of Canada. Another article on residential schools was cited in 2002. The award recognizes "outstanding journalism that fosters public awareness and understanding of any aspect of the justice system, valuing criteria of accuracy, effectiveness in explanation, informational value, insight and originality". CBC's the *Fifth Estate* was also a past Justicia award winner for its day long report together with the Star on the state of Canada's prisons (2001). As Don Abelson has concluded for his study of Think Tanks, it is difficult to determine coherent patterns

to these much recognized investigative series. But what is also apparent, is that specialized interaction between departments, agencies and news media can lead to interesting precedents in evaluation of the media-policy cycle.

By informing Canadians about the policy research that affects them, the media plays an essential role in the policy development process. In an very interesting initiative, which began in 1999, the Canadian Policy Research Initiative instituted a ' Canadian Policy Research Award in the Media' which awarded Sean Fine, Alanna Mitchell and Andre Picard. The Globe team under Fine explored family policy in Canada, a central concern of the social cohesion network. The winning elements involved a cross Canada regional comparison, international comparison and original poll. Two other reporters were singled out for their lifelong career record in the development and use of research that contributes to public policy development. Andre Picard was singled out for his extensive career reporting on *Tainted Blood*, and '*call to alms'* charitable health research spending while Alanna Mitchell was honoured for her work on earth sciences and climate change. The following year (2000) the CBC Radio team of Maureen Brosnahan, Scott Dippel, Christopher Grosskurth, and Curt Petrovich were singled out for their series *Health Canada Grapples with HIV/AIDS and Intravenous Drug Use*; Andrew Coyne of the National Post for *Andrew Coyne's Alternative Budget.* Mary Janigan of Maclean's for *Stretching the Medicare Envelope*. Finally, Stephen Hume of the Vancouver Sun won the 2001 award for *An Energy Odyssey,* a 13-part series examining energy policy issues in Canada. While innovative, the initiative has apparently been dropped, and unfortunately, the composition of the juries never released. While apparently abandoned, the Policy Research Initiative which reviews both the quality of investigative contribution and the substantive outcomes from the intervention, combined with a more open and accountable peer review system in the Michener awards, is an important one of its type to improve both the quality and craft of policy entrepreneurship in the media.

Editors and journalists will argue that such competitions and evaluations by juries uncover only the tip of the iceberg in their full investigative activity. Edward Greenspon the editor-in-chief at the Globe and Mail who is noted for opening the veil over editorial room decisions (most notably in the last election over the new room decision to call

Martin the winner after the 2004 Leaders' Debate on a CBC election documentary called Reality Check), has indicated the Globe and Mail ran a four part investigative series on bike gang consolidation in Canada in the summer of 2004, pointing out the "woeful' resources of Crown prosecutors. Subsequently, the Ontario Solicitor General established a permanent major case prosecution team on biker charges, leading Greenspon to note "it's always gratifying in journalism when your efforts inspire results"[48] And certainly, papers across the country seem to be jumping on the bandwagon on crime wave reportage.[49]

Perhaps one of the more interesting policy inquiries has been into the impact of retrenchment of the Federal Access to Information Regime to a Culture of Secrecy, investigated by reporter Ann Rees, formerly of the Province. Again produced on a kind of sabbatical leave, Rees' series, subsequently published in The Toronto Star, documented an amber flag warning system, which manages risk of Federal Access Requests. Since requested records are often contentious and politically damaging, they often become disseminated to the Opposition party. A 2000 Task Force Review, was appointed after Chretien took the Information Commissioner of Canada to Federal Court to prevent release of his daily agendas, related to the scandal of the Human Resources Development Fund. A National Post story (filed well before 9-11 when security concerns offered a trigger for further closure of access to government information) documented the direct attempt by Prime Minister Chretien to stop a members' bill which would widen the ambit of the legislation, a process roundly condemned by the non profit freedom of information advocacy group called Open Government Canada, led by Duff Conacher. Information Commissioner John Reid filed a report in 1999 which failed six federal departments on compliance with Subsection 2(1) of the *Access to Information Act* creates an enforceable right of access to records under the control of a government institution in accordance with the principles that

- government information should be available to the public;
- necessary exceptions to the right of access should be limited and specific; and
- decisions on disclosure of government information should be reviewed independently of government.

As well, Article 4.1 of the "Government Communications Policy", in the *Treasury Board Manual* explicitly states that institutions should respond to public enquiries outside the *Access to Information Act* whenever it is possible to do so (i.e. no exemptions apply or only a cursory review of the records is required). Departments are to employ Access Coordinators. Yet nonetheless the Public Service Act's Oath of Allegiance continues to require public servants not to disclose or give to any person any information or document that comes into her knowledge by reason of being civil servant, *except at being legally authorized or required.* Thus, secrecy remains the residual, or paramount value. Despite concerns to broaden the Access law to cover Crown Corporations (significantly implicated in the Patronage Scandal, but outside the reach of the press), to decrease the number of exemptions, significant problems remain with timeliness and breach of fairness. A comparative filing for information of drug tests, for example, has found the Federal Drug Administration can comply in 5 weeks, while Health Canada complies in 5 months. Secondly, evidence suggests a two-tier treatment, disadvantaging questions from the media, flagging them with the same degree of political sensitivity as an Opposition request.

Whether due to a chilling environment, or lack of resources, Canadian media do not seem as active to avail themselves of Access to Information tools as in other regimes. John Grace, a former Privacy Commissioner, has noted that there are more than 20,000 formal access requests every year after 2000(compared to some 10,000 in 1990); but most of those are not filed by journalists.

In a study commissioned by the Task Force to determine the extent of frivolous adversarial media use of Access Requests to damage the government of the day, professors Paul Attalah and Heather Pyman conducted a random sample of stories drawn from 1985, 1990, 19995 and 2000.[50] They conclude that journalistic use is increasing but still at just 12% of all requests or about 2200 in 2000, with the most coming from individuals, and business. Access-triggered news stories are both more numerous and complicated. The rise in use is attributable to increased experience with the Act, they argue, journalistic professionalism (with the CAJ publishing a tip sheet and how to manual) and triggering events such as the Somalia inquiry, the tainted blood scandal, and

the HRDC job grants story. The National Post made a crusade of Access Stories in its initial bid for market share and reputation, and indeed, is credited for stimulating a more activist policy at the Globe and Mail. The study found the top three types of stories are politics (defined as stories whose focus was principally on the actions of a political figure or party and accounting for 31% of all requests), military (14%) and general interest. Health accounted for just 3% of requests.

Stories were further coded for *apparent intention:* to expose patronage, self-dealing, inefficiency or waste, or simply provide insight into how government works. Most (61%) fell into the latter category. Such stories typically reported the results obtained from an access request which projected fish stocks, provided budget forecasts, discussed shelters, or reported surveys of public opinion. Just 17% were obviously targeted to expose inefficiency or waste, with another 13% splitting among self dealing, patronage or secrecy. The authors thus tried to argue that the social outcome of the Act is consistent with the intent to inform citizens (with 59% of the stories falling in this category), generate new information (25%) or deal with gaps in policy information, and participate in policy debate (5%) Just 9% focused on accountability. Two styles in types of coverage emerged. The first was the cursory style, where results are reported as facts, and the second builds a larger story arc, using ATI requests as one source among others to build a fuller picture. Once such example included stories about former spies and collaborators living in Canada, to construct a more nuanced picture of Canadian history. In coverage of Somalia, one 'revelation' would lead to another question in parliament and then another ATI request in a spiral of coverage.

Despite the interest inherent in such qualitative cases, the study did not explore them, nor explore constraints on the exercise of access requests, or broader journalist attitudes. It has been criticized for coding problems, but these should be random and not systematically biased in the genre data presented here.

The Federal Report of the Access to Information Task Force (2001) argued for selective opening: to cover matters of consumer protection, reduce the horizon on Cabinet confidence from 20 to 15 years, and two other areas, but the preponderance of

recommendations were to tighten restrictions (with 15 recommendations increasing level of secrecy and 4 reducing it). The report was ultimately shelved, when overtaken by events of September 11, with the passage of the Anti terrorism bill C-36. But the matter has not dropped, championed by independent journalists, and key academics. A searchable data base of requests to federal institutions can be found at http://track.foi.net. In the transition to minority parliament, the quality of the data has further deteriorated, according to Alasdair Roberts of the Campbell Public Affairs Institute at Syracuse University who has leveraged the data 'free' and maintains the site. He confirms Rees' allegation that ATIA requests submitted by journalists of MPs are usually tagged for special attention, leading to delays. In some agencies, these requests are said to be "amberlighted". Other agencies, like the Canadian Association of Journalists, award annual "Code of Silence Awards" to governments most impermeable to access requests (Nova Scotia won in 2003). The Access regime in Canada needs significant overhaul, to protect investigative journalism in Canada.

A "must read" for policy analysts is the monthly amberlist report, published by Professor Roberts of the Campbell Institute. It provides important insight into developing agenda stories, and continuing ones still meriting press attention. In June 2004, 109 media requests were logged, and 32 opposition parliamentary requests. Unfortunately, the Government data base will not reveal the specific institutional media source, superficially, anyway, protecting the privacy of the journalist, but masking the media outlet. As one might expect in a transitional government, canny reporters were requesting the orientation briefing books for new ministers to help anticipate their investigative agenda (Owen in Western Economic Diversification, Scott Brison in Public Work, Pettigrew in Health and so on). The central cause for delay in the average of processing can be found in the bottleneck the PCO offers: many requests (and more than a quarter) were around campaign expenses for Martin's shuttle across Canada. Just a few indicated a research or story arc(perhaps trying to minimize risk, or not alert the competition). Some half dozen focused around an historical period of the 2nd phase of the MacDonald Commission, a predictable number around security, but many around health issues to do with adverse drug reaction information, risks of avian flu or mad cow

disease, and data on the extent of drug trade in the Internet Pharmacy Sector. Two actually probed government responses to media investigations: to a CTV and Globe investigative current affairs story on pharmaceutical products in the water, and CBC's Faint Warning series aired February 16. Most requests ask for raw statistics. Few seem to indicate a high level of specificity about the array of planning tools in the policy analysis process. Just one asked for a cost benefit analysis conducted for the government for the decision to locate the International Centre for Infectious Diseases (after the fact) and another a feasibility study on an Inheritance Tax or records on ratification of the UN Law of the Sea Convention and its impact on natural resources. Again, it is difficult to see a coherent cluster or pattern to these Access Requests, but the surprise is the level of detail, implying a good basic level of policy sophistication, the incidence of health policy requests (the top electoral agenda issue) and paucity of questions for Finance or Defence.

Despite the Canadian Association of Journalists' efforts to make Access to Information a major part of the 2004 election campaign, it did not seriously emerge, despite a flurry of calls for 'transparency', lost instead under the proposal from the Conservatives to broaden the powers of the Auditor General Office. Yet reform to the Access to Information regime is essential both to civil service renewal in new public management theory, and to the degree of independent media policy entrepreneurship.

Interpretation

Interpretation involves commentary, editorials , documentary public affairs shows such as Fifth Estate and op ed pages or call in shows which provide a clear evaluative position. Les Pal introduces the idea of a discourse coalition (2001, 235) a range of policy actors united by broad ideas about the policy field, ideas that include assumptions, images or rhetoric advocating an outcome, but more concerned with establishing good currency for core ideas. (233). Columnists and editorial writers are direct actors in such coalitions, while most journalists tend to be more passive.

The interpretative moment in the press cycle causes particular problems for policy analysis, since it does require explicitly value,-based and qualitative approaches to the

study of public discourse. When is interpretation considered 'excellent'? Why? When does it take the partisan voice, the polemic, and when the analytic, or advisory tone as its mode of address? Unlike the area of investigative journalism, debate over standards of interpretation are not well advanced in Canada. Good interpretation is strongly personified with certain 'voices' in social capital or trust networks among policy subsystems. Indeed, the history of the political columnist can be tied to the 20th century tendency to brand and commodify output, and lead to an overly ritualized, fetishistic commentary, where pundits interview pundits. Good interpretation takes time, and time is not the stock of the broadcast journalist and less so the print one. But it is important not to underestimate the popular cultural and post positive trend in political commentary. Brian McNair, a scholar in the UK, notes a greater and greater proportion of popular media output in the public sphere where the evaluation of and opinion about either the substance, style, policy content or process of political affairs is replacing straight reportage (McNair:61).

The National Newspaper Awards have introduced a new category for award in politics. Perhaps Canada's best known columnist Jeffrey Simpson won in 2002 for his story about Jean Chretien's dismissal of Paul Martin. Runners up covered public works contracts(Globe's Daniel Leblanc), and federal patronage in the East(Andrew McIntosh, National Post). Awards are also available in editoral categories. In general, there are few awards for this category in the industry.

The biggest source of political capital is found in the media's leverage of their powers to interpret public opinion. Indeed, the media are often assumed by policy elites to be bell weathers of public opinion. And increasingly, the media will regularly poll public opinion in order to interpret the public's agenda. Conflicts in interpretation of public opinion may easily arise. A notable case of a gap in policy interpretation of opinion may be found in the Gun Registry issue. Federal government polls found high levels of public support for gun control, which gave the bureaucrats introducing the program wide latitude within which to run. But media polls, and readings of the letters to the editor, or talk back radio, generated persistent and hostile editorials on the part of the

press, showing that support to be weak, bimodal in distribution of strong opinion and sharply regionalized.

New media monitoring agencies (like the McGill OMPP and CMRCC) are working to improve the methods of media and policy analysis, but even issues like 'tone' or intent are still contested, and until digital transmission is complete, no single observatory can monitor electronic and print media effectively. Substantial investments must be made in developing better software programs to search and analyse media databases. Yet it is fair to say that media report cards are here to stay. A recent study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, for example, has found that since the year 2000 five new drugs were released. Most (68%) of articles in the media about them report only the benefits without mentioning risk(suggesting an uncritical use of the drug manufacturer's press release). Of the one in four that try to address expert debate over how to quantify risk, 26% were wrong or misleading. The issue is important because a survey of 259 doctors found news coverage inflates demands for treatment. [51] Other surveys have now been done on outcomes, for example, of cultural diversity initiatives in broadcasting. [52] Such monitoring projects are widely called for by global civil society movements to improve democratic communication, and more involvement of academics, institutes and CSOs in their design and public dissemination is important to improve the policy-media nexus.[53]

Media, Agenda Setting and Policy Outcomes

While a neo institutional approach (which is the predominant frame of this book) helps to map media activity in the policy process, the real focus should be on the role the media play in influencing the policy process:

> How do we explain the media's critical influence in some instances and not in others? How important is length and intensity of coverage on policy? How likely is it that sustained media saturation will produce a policy backlash? How important is the public's level of interest and knowledge for the media-policy link? Do reportorial norms have a systematic impact on policy? What are the policy consequences of long term media-government interaction? Does the degree of impact vary across issue areas? (Spitzer, 1993, 5).

Not surprisingly, given the relative closure of the parliamentary system, political communication experts in Canada have been slow to explore these questions. In policy realms, the process by which various demands of groups succeed in placing the problem high enough on the government agenda to get attention is called agenda setting. (Howlett and Ramesh, 128). It is the study of issue salience—the relative importance of an issue on an actor's agenda (Soroka, 5). In policy theory, agenda setting basically covers what the government decides to do. In political communication theory , agenda setting places more of a focus on public opinion.(McCombs and Shaw). The analytic focus is on the linkage between policy, media and public actors. The famous assertion atttibuted to Robert Entman that the media may not tell people what to think, but they do tell them what to think about postulates a link between public opinion and media attention, and in turn, a link to policy action. It is consistent with the theory of low information rationality among voters (Cooper and Miljan, 27) Early studies found a correlation between the emphasis of media content and survey data about what respondents feel are the most important public issues of the day and this link has existed in a variety of studies on the environment, pollution, inflation, defence, energy, civil rights.(Soroka,7). Subsequent studies use an agenda setting framework to look at the relationship between media and public policy agendas (Pritchard, 1992, Mayer 1991, Kingdon,1995 and Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Policy agendas are difficult to measure, but reasonable proxies for measurement include Question Period content, legislation, committee reports and activities and Throne Speech content.(Soroka,117) But a significant short coming of agenda setting research has been its failure to examine how the media produce their own agenda (say, through Access Requests) especially in Canada, and how interaction among the three may work differently in certain policy fields.

Where can we find independent media effects? Do media, public and policy agendas move together? Why and when? A sophisticated longitudinal study of three way agenda setting in Canada explores these questions over eight issues, ranging from AIDs, crime, debt, the environment, national unity, taxes and unemployment. Stuart Soroka (2002) argues that an agenda setting framework is a valuable and inflexible tool for

understanding the role of the media in the policy process.[54] His research has found that issues that are experienced every day (so called real world issues) are much less open to media influence (inflation, unemployment) in public policy.(Soroka, 84). On sensational issues, aids and crime were not found to show an independent media effect, unlike the hypothesis expected. However, in the environmental coverage for a ten year period, a rise in media attention was directly correlated with both public and policy attention. (86) Time series analysis on government issues—national unity, deficit and taxes—shows the importance of the media agenda. An increase in issue salience for the media leads to marked and sustained increase on the public agenda, and media impact on the policy agenda. Question Period content shows a significant effect on media content. (92) in the tax issue, but not for the other two where the Throne speech shows a greater impact. The national unity issue time series showed three periods of heightened salience driven by important events (Meech Lake 1987, 1990 Charlottetown, 1993 Quebec referendum) where the public opinion polls followed the media closely and appears to have led policy (89.,98) Taxes start low on the media and public agendas, rising abruptly around the discussion of the GST, and then slowly declining, to a level slightly higher than initially. Several of Sorokas' other key finding are:

- media effects of coverage on sensational issues on policymakers are slightly greater and more prolonged than are effects in the other direction (89);
- AIDS and crime show little variation in public opinion over time;
- Inflation and unemployment offer strong illustrations of real world indicators emerging as significant predictors of issue salience, meeting the test of a real world driven prominent issue dynamic (79). In these 'prominent' or obtrusive everyday issues, the public identifies it as a top problem first, showing an effect on government and on media, but no independent effect is found for the media.

Anthony Downs' formative concept of the issue-attention cycle (1972) remains relatively unchallenged in media-policy theory, albeit suitably vague (Howlett and Ramesh, 130). Downs notes the cyclical nature (Howlett and Ramesh, 77) of how problems leap into prominence in the public agenda, remain a short time, and then gradually fade. The more sustained issue cycles tend to be a) broadly based in their day to day salience b) with minority differential costs which may be fairly easily identified and c) dramatic.(Ibid, 130) Past research on Canadian data has shown little evidence for an issue attention cycle possibly because the parliamentary system givers "extensive

agenda setting powers to governments by curtailing public and media access to information"(Pal, 2001, 112.) Yet in his ten year comparison of public opinion polls , Stuart Soroka suggests cyclical variation in government-led issues tied to the term of government, but not sensational issues like the environment and or on relatively stable but regionally variable concerns on inflation and unemployment.. In addition, Soroka's study of changes in the public salience of inflation indicate media effects are higher when inflation is low. (100)

While a promising contribution to study of the media-policy nexus, Soroka cannot account for two principal criticisms. Schattsneider has suggested that the scope of the media's impact will vary with the extent to which political conflict is privatized or contained or socialized and open. Thus, media define the scope of the agenda. (9) but the problem with agenda setting theory is that it does not explicitly adapt to conflict. (32). A more qualitative and comparative case approach, looks at how wide the public opinion is, how competitive the debate among elites are over policy outcomes, and hypothesizes when there are better outcomes for independent media policy entrepreneurship. (Pal, 2001,245). Studies elsewhere suggest a minimal effects model, which stipulates when elites are already in open debate, media coverage functions well. (Bennett, 136) but maximal effects are to be found when a policy vacuum exists because of uncertainty, so that the media may play a role in both highlighting and publicizing alternatives…may influence agenda (Bennett, 82). The second problem is failure to assess fully the policy window concept, when policy alternatives and politics must converge to open a policy window (Kingdon). Study of the focusing events or extraordinary agency (as journalist entrepreneurs) which facilitate window opening would elevate such agenda setting studies and go further to answer important questions about the nature of media impact.

Conclusion

Given their resources their reach and potential leverage, the agenda setting process, the Canadian media play an important part in Canadian policy networks, especially if influence is determined as more than just outcomes (Abelson). This paper argues that

both their direct and their indirect role in modern governance are growing. But as institutions and actors, the media are apparently disaggregated, uncoordinated,, negotiating highly differential access to the policy sphere depending upon personal capital, economic constraints of ownership and the news culture within their organization. The journalist-politician link or journalist-public servant link then, is a weak, contingent one in Canadian policy networks.

Elite peer juries have found sufficient numbers of cases to suggest some space for effective policy entrepreneurship roles exists for Canadian media, especially in interrogative and investigative press cycles, but these are not yet sufficiently systematic, rigorous or transparent in their standards or basis for judgment to contribute to theory building about the role of the media in the policy process. And as a proportion of overall activity, such moments are rare, except in several notable institutions like the CBC, La Presse, Globe, Star and some organizations who may be surprising to Ottawa mandarins like the Winnipeg Free Press or Ottawa Citizen. More work needs to be done refining the models of agenda setting, and comparative studies of policy-press and public interaction developed in more policy sectors—especially health which is a growing field of contemporary journalism. This article argues for a media policy pressure to improve the corporate governance practices of media organizations, and in particular, debates over appropriate models for self regulation of standards of content. Clearly, data suggest that organizational structure impacts news culture, and in turn the quality of journalism. How and under what circumstances, and what should be the public policy response in media ownership debates? Given the minority government, no one has high hopes for the Senate Special Inquiry on the status of the media, so most of the work must be done in civil society.

In the practice of news manufacture, much merit is to be found in new public journalism's emphasis on context, history and narrative in journalism, which in turn, maximizes audience engagement and literacy. Researchers must address if good policy coverage makes sustainable media organizations and better policy (The link between editorial expenditures, quality of coverage , retention of audiences and maximization of

profits must be further explored as must the interaction or 'levelling up' effect of public CBC journalism on discourse networks, as the surprising share of merit awards for policy journalism attest).

Journalism and policy schools, public service training institutes, academics and policy analysts must address some serious deficiencies in the accountability network of the media-policy sphere. There are strong cases to be made to improve whistle blowing legislation, and the operational culture of access to information so it is no longer secret, and a critical need to regularly monitor the 'amberlist' for its impact on investigative journalism. More resources and coordination among civil society actors (think tanks, universities and public interest groups) are needed to regularize media monitoring, and improve the quality of discursive networks. What is also apparent is that specialized interaction between departments, agencies and news media can lead to interesting precedents in evaluation of the media-policy cycle. The Policy Research Initiatives of public policy research awards in the media should be revived, but broadened on the Justicia award model developed by the Department of Justice. Despite a tendency of successively centralized (PMO/PCO) executives in Ottawa, like the White House to write off the press as adversarial special interests, the story is more complex. The Canadian media can still occasionally act in the public interest and escape through the cracks of a control-mad ethos in new Government communications policy. Such is the difference between mediated and mediatized policy: one is a democratic investment and the other a drug.

Endnotes

[1] Survey data suggest that non news coverage—and especially, political satire, or portrayal of issues like unemployment in soaps or other dramatic vehicles—play an important role in mediating citizen understanding, but for the purposes of this study, they are set aside. See the CBC study on public perception of news values.

[2]The Annual Review of the Media produced by the Columbia Journalism School in cooperation with the Pew Foundation may be found at http://www.stateofthemedia.org/narrative_newspapers_contentanalysis.asp?cat=2&media=2

[3] Unfortunately Canadian news and information programming is not reported in terms of the total numbers of hours broadcast or relative share obtained since it is not a direct policy concern of the Canadian Radio-television Commissions' monitoring system. (Interim Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communication, April 2004,: 22).

[4] Neil Nevitte, 2001. Citizen's Values, Information and Democratic Life, March. Report 2 to the Access to Information Review Task Force. Henry Milner. 2002. *Civic Literacy: How Informed Citizens Make Democracy Work.* Hanover. Tufts University.

[5] In terms of resources invested, the media surpass all but the university sector. The regulated sector of news media must report expenditures on programming to their regulatory agency. In 2002, Private Commercial TV broadcasters spent $288 million on news: closely followed by $230 million spent by the CBC. Total spending combined in Quebec is $135 million for a total of $654,180 million (Report: 25). On a per capita basis, this represents about $21 per annum to reach citizens. Hard numbers on print newsroom budgets are not available, but expected to be about twice that.

[6] The effect, all evidence suggests, is that newspapers have seen a net drop in the overall number of people and a squeeze on resources devoted to covering the news. The cuts coincide, moreover, with the sharper decline in circulation that began in 1990. The cycle of deep cutbacks followed by only modest expansion goes back about 15 years. See the Columbia /Pew Review.

[7] Recent studies by Meyer found that papers with larger staffs relative to their circulation retained more of their household penetration over a period of years. So did papers whose readers rated them higher for credibility. The more credible papers also charged higher stated ad rates. Meyer's research is further supported by an extensive review of decades of academic research supervised by Prof. Esther Thorson at the University of Missouri. That literature review showed a clear pattern that investing more in the newsroom is correlated to higher quality, higher circulation, higher ad rates, and higher profits. The best way to build circulation, the research suggested, is to diversify content. And this is further reinforced by work by the Readership Institute at Northwestern, which finds that diversifying content will also get readers to spend more time with the newspaper. See http://www.stateofthemedia.org/narrative_newspapers_contentanalysis.asp?cat=2&media=2. The Knight Ridder Foundation invests heavily in leading edge research, and most recently co sponsored an extensive study into communities and social and cultural capital, to work within Richard Florida's concept of creative clusters, urban planning, and local development.

[8] The operating profit margins are public in broadcasting: 19% in TV. While not reported for print, the Senate Committee on the Current State of the Media heard testimony suggesting newspaper profits for some markets in the 20% range, with the major markets as high as 30%.

[9] Under Martin's regime there has been even more centralization of government messages than in Chretien's. Abolishing Communication Canada, and tightening the regime of political surveillance of Access to Information Requests suggests a closed stance vis a vis the press. The Prime Minister's Office is tightening control over media relations.

[10] Interim and Final Reports of the UK Government Communications Review Group. August 27,2003. http://www.gics.gov.uk./review/default.htm. In 'modernizing' government communications, these independent experts argued for seven key principles: openness, not secrecy; more direct unmediated communications to the public, genuine engagement with the public as a part of policy formation and delivery, not afterthought; positive presentation of government policies and achievements, not misleading spin, the use of all relevant channels of communication, coordination of communication of issues that cut across departments; reinforcement of the civil service's political neutrality, rather than blurring of government and party communications. The subsequent resignation of the Head of the BBC Gregg Dyke over an Iraqui controversy rather ironically undercut the last principle in the Blair regime.

[11] Meredith Edwards,2001. *Social Policy, Public Policy: From Problem to Practice.* Crowsnest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 188. Ministers and policy analysts on several key issues (child support, income support for young people etc.) encouraged key commentators in Australian papers to follow policy developments, and the facts and logic of the reform proposals resonated, and the commentators in turn, concurred with the need for reform, framing them in a positive light.

[12]Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman.. 2003. *The Press Effect: Politicians, Journalists and the Stories that Shape the Political World.* New York. Oxford University Press.

[13] See the UK Independent Report on Government Communications as representative of this view.

[14] Miljan and Cooper, survey of 270 journalists and 800 citizens: 72 refutes this at least for English market, private sector journalists, but a number of US and UK studies have supported this thesis, for all but economic news. Lydia Miljan and Barry Cooper.2003. *Hidden Agendas.* Vancouver. UBC Press.

[15]Attalah, Paul and Pyman, Heather .2002. *How Journalists Use the Federal Access to Information Act.* Report 8 of the Government of Canada, Access to Information Review Task Force. www.atirtf-geai.gc.ca/paper-journalist1-e.html.

[16] One ideal type of the social responsibility view may be found in the code of practice set out by private broadcasters in the News Code of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (www.cbsc.ca).

[17] Although a leaden term, media-policy denotes the interaction of the media in the policy cycle, and not media policy: that is, the need to cap foreign ownership in the media, for example(currently set at 25% of print and 33% of electronic media, although under review).

[18] See for example, David Taras on the democratic deficit and the media, or Entman on democracy without citizens or Milner.

[19] Tabloid source.

[20] By editorial content here we mean that which endorses a specific policy position, or advocates for policy change, or endorses a party or other policy actor position. In newspapers, this can be found in the editorial page, or among certain national, provincial or municipal columnists. On television newscasts, it is rare. Public Affairs shows, which use longer form documentary investigative genres such as Fifth Estate or --- tend to present the only editorial voice of the electronic media. The CBC *National* however experimented with giving their lead political reporters Keith Bogue more latitude for comment, like Rex Murphy, but such experiments are still rare, and occupy a small proportion of air time.

[21] For this definition, consult Howlett and Ramesh.

[22] Consolidation of the media is important to Canadians. While rarely emerging as the top problem, surveys have found that 56% of citizens believe that consolidation of media outlets in a local market has a negative impact on their trust in the media. The specter of decreased competition in the newspaper industry prompted five policy inquiries: the 1969-70 Senate Special Committee on Mass Media (chaired by Senator Keith Davey); the 1980-1981 Royal Commission on Newpapers (chaired by Tom Kent), a Department of Canadian Heritage review in 1999[22] , a Quebec Ministry of Communications and Culture inquiry in 201 and most recently a Senate Standing Committee on the current state of the media industries chaired by the Honourable Joan Fraser with a final report due in March, 2005. The trigger for the most recent inquiry was the Hollinger sale, and increase in cross media ownership in Canada. . For example, Hollinger/Southam, the largest owner in 1999 had a 42% share of the Canadian newspaper market. After the sale of its properties, however, CanWest took a 28.5% share in news for the first time. The concern is thus a qualitative political and not necessarily an empirical observation, since in fact, concentration as measured in the print sector is declining, but it is sharply regional in its impacts.

[23] The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission has implemented safeguards in cross media ownership, including, maintenance of structural separation between print and electronic news; editorial independence; prohibiting of cross over board presence, establishing complaint procedures, and annual reports on complaints. In some cases, the CRTC may compel the development of codes of ethical conduct.

[24] Gerard Hebert et al, 1981. Labour Relations in the Newspaper Industry. Vol. 5. Research Publications of the Royal Commission on Newspapers. Ottawa: Supply and Services. 195.

[25] The Canadian Broadcast Council has been singled out for its path breaking rulings on gender justice, see Margaret Gallagher, 2001. Gendersetting: New Agendas for Media Monitoring and Advocacy, London. Zed Books. 43. but also singled out for its reactive nature and uncertain public representation. Catherine Murray and Natalie Coulter. 2001. *Watching the Watchers: Gender, Social Justice Media Self-Regulation,* a study sponsored by Industry Canada and Mediawatch, April 2001.www.mediawatch.ca/ education/research/watchers.

[26] The Joint Graduate Program in Communication and Culture - A partnership of Ryerson University and York University **(**http://yorku.ca/comcult
http://comcult.ryerson.ca;
The School of Journalism, The University of British Columbia
http://www.journalism.ubc.ca; and Le Centre d'Études sur les médias
http://www.cem.ulaval.ca,

[27] David Deacon and Wendy Monk move further afield in political communication to address the blindspot in mainstream media research about the rise of the so-called third sector or non-elected Quangos (Quasi Autonomous Non-Governmental Agencies) , which now account for one third of all public expenditure in the UK (26). With a definition framed as deliberately broad, the authors present their random survey at random obtaining a 70% response rate from some 390 agencies. Is the accountability to the electorate eroding in public communication? The authors come up with a qualified "yes". The article is a classic of its kind, arguing the third sector is not immune to the spread of 'promotionalism' across political and

institutional cultures, but displays unique characteristics. Still paternalist in orientation to public communication, Quangos foster their media links more selectively than elected bodies, are less concerned with audience maximization and less inclined to sensationalism, and less conflictive than in the electoral sphere. Public communication strategies of Quangos focus on role promotion, and are heavily dependent on frequent and functional interaction with the local media. More extroverted than supposed in the assumptions of the 1998 Labour Green Paper, the authors' data suggest Quango public communications are designed to facilitate external promotion but not scrutiny. An important element of the study explores the degree of autonomy from government in information reportage: Deacon and Monk confirm James Curran's premise that there is a 'licensed autonomy' for Quango communication practitioners, much like the news profession. This autonomy may be more tactical than absolute. The gauntlet for democratic communication is thrown: how can UK QUANGOS retain this non conflictive mode yet improve public awareness and accountability of their functions? Secondly, how can the cultural specificity of the non governmental sector in Britain transfer if at all to QUANGOs elsewhere, where more space for adversarial/electoral intervention exists in electoral law? Bruce I. Newman and Dejan Vercic(2002). *Communication of Politics: Cross-cultural Theory Building in the Practice of Public Relations and Political Marketing*. New York. The Haworth Political Press. Co-published simultaneously as Journal of Political Marketing, Vol.1, No. 2/3,2002.

[28] The director Neil Seeman, a former journalist (National Post) and lawyer (a graduate of the University of Toronto Law School) with a graduate degree in public health sciences from Harvard University, is dedicated to building improved alliances between the media and researchers in quantitative fields assisted by a board of expert advisors in the fields of medicine, statistics, journalism, law, and science. (www.canstats.org).

[29] Miljan and Cooper, 69.

[30] There has been no recent human resource study of journalists and the length of their assignments. But the trend has been to multiskilling, with print reporters crossing over to TV and so on. Even within the CBC where we might expect assignments would be more stable, anecdotal evidence would suggest a career path among journalists under 45 of two to three years, before moving on to another field.

[31] Romantic memories of Norman DePoe, or Jack Webster or etc etc.

[32] They may be few, but influential. Selected commentators are: Chantal Hebert, Jeffrey Simpson, John Ibbitson, Michel Vastel etc.

[33] . On average, francophone newspapers employ 117 journalists, English 83. TV state employees are also marginally higher: 50 in montreal per outlet, versus 42 in Vancouver.

Number of Journalists in Montreal and Vancouver Markets

Media	Number of Journalists
The Gazette	150
French language press	351
CBC Montreal	15
CTV Montreal	22
Global Montreal	13
Vancouver Sun	96
Province	70
GM Vancouver	10
National Post Van	1
CBC Vancouver	25
CTV Vanc	71

City TV Vanc 31
Global 42

Source: Centre d'etudes sur les media , Report: 41.

[34] Adapted from Brian McNair. 1995. *An Introduction to Political Communication.* London: Routledge.
x

[35] PEW –Columbia has found 56% of Americans think the news is inaccurate. The Canadian Media Research Consortium's Report Card on the news media. CMRC,12.

[36] A recent (2004) audience study by the CBC has found: "Audiences are getting more demanding about what they expect from regular newscasts. In particular, they want to know when their have been significant developments to warrant their attention (CBC:2). There is a desire for more diversity in selection and treatment of stories, need for more international news, more openness and accountability. There is greater interest in more issue based and positive news stories. Need for more engaging and approachable story telling and perspective (objective editorializing) News worth paying attention to emerges as revealing of meaningful change that stimulates meaningful response. ()CBC11) Given the fragmented pressure of today, the more we can give people 'road maps' alerts, schedules, navigation options, summaries, follow-ups, information when and where they need it, the more the relationship with them will deepen."

[37] The Pew-Columbia survey of journalists in the 2004 Media Report, notes that nw a third of local journalists say they have felt such pressure, most notably from either advertisers or from corporate owners. In other words, one of the most dearly held principles of journalism-the independence of the newsroom about editorial decision-making-increasingly is being breached. They go on to argue that there is also alarming news here for the Internet. Advertiser and corporate interference with the news content are similarly high among those who work in online news, where the line between independently produced content and advertising may be harder to detect.

[38] . (McNair, 46). Designed to probe if the content focused on process rather than policy, or style rather than substance, or private rather than public affairs, the study found 50% of 1500 news items reported issue based policy positions of the political actors. A further 244 times focused on government activity, and an additional 338 of 1500 focused on non party specific policy actors' positions. Thus, policy matters significantly in the press cycle.

[39] States Stewart: Margaret Atwood is no fan of modern-day journalism. But in her book *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2002, $27.95) she writes about narrative in a way that could easily be applied to both print and electronic journalism: "Writing is writing down, and what is written down is a score for the voice, and what the voice most often does — even in the majority of lyric poems — is tell, if not a story, at least a mini-story. Something unfurls,
something reveals itself. The crooked is made straight…There's a beginning, there's an end, not necessarily in that order, but however you tell it, there's a plot."

The lack of narrative and plot is the main reason most people find journalistic writing utterly boring. Like much of what is relayed to us through various media, academic writing assumes we are robots into which information can simply be uploaded and retained. Good stories, on the other hand, engage us as full human beings.

> (At) a writing workshop given by Lynne Van Luven (my predecessor as Media magazine's books editor) at a CAJ conference in Victoria…people were literally jumping out of their seats with questions and comments. They wanted to write like the writers she had brought to their attention. They wanted to use narrative, plot, poetic style — all the things that go into a good story. But more than one said that when they got back to the newsroom that would be next to impossible. Editors simply didn't want that kind of writing.

[40] Media Magazine, special issue on investigative journalism.

[41] Although not a well developed area of public administrative research, governments have been grouped into various types of philosophies about public communication management: Open and proactive; service or clientelist; or closed and bureaucratic. The Liberal Government is classified as the latter (Roberts), See the Canadian Centre on Management Development, 2004. Interim Report on the Roundtable on Government Communication.

[42] For a critical view, read Andre Mitrovica in Media, Spring 2004, 7. O Neill is writing a book about the incident. CanWest is supporting her in her leave.

[43] The Pew-Columbia study notes that many of the job reductions (some 7%) since 2001 are achieved to a substantial degree by buyouts. The effect, then, has been extra savings by shedding experienced, higher-salaried reporters and editors. And the budget cuts hit hardest in areas like training, travel and resources for investigative and in-depth reporting, the areas some deem most critical in providing quality news content. Lance Bennett argues that economic pressures, budget cuts, and low cost entertainment approaches have left reporters in most newsrooms little license to investigate and even less to write detailed stories except for a few isolated cases.

As the review of the American Media in 2004 found in a national survey of journalists:

> US Journalists fear more than ever that the economic behavior of their companies is eroding the quality of journalism. In particular, they think business pressures are making the news they produce thinner and shallower. And they report more cases of advertisers and owners breaching the independence of the newsroom. These worries, in turn, seem to have widened the divide between the people who cover the news and the business executives they work for. The changes in attitude have come after a period in which news companies, faced with declining audiences and pressure on revenues, have in many cases made further cuts in newsgathering resources. There are also alarming signs that the news industry is continuing the short-term mentality. (see Also Greenwald, vii).

Nonetheless, American journalists cite the least formal restraints on their production, but produced the narrowest range of choices on how to cover hypothetical news situations (Bennett, Xiii) . At the elite agenda setter the New York Times, publishers are not immune to allegations of fabrication, or plagiarism which lead to embarrassing senior resignations (Nemeth, 2).

[44] Jacques Steinberg. 2004. "Washington Post Rethinks its Coverage of the War Debate'. New York Times, August 13. The executive editor of the Washington Post said he and other top editors erred before the war in Iraq by not giving front page prominence to more articles that cast doubt on the Bush administrations claims that Saddam Hussein was hiding weapons of mass destruction. By contrast, the Director General of the BBC, Greg Dyke, was forced to resign, after the suicide of a low level source in the British Foreign Office brought into the open the same contention in the UK.

[45] Tabassum Siddiqui and Ish Thelheimer. 2002. The Stories Media Outlets Blew. Media Magazine. Fall.

[46] CAJ, CNA, Justicia and Michener Awards.

[47] Media, Fall 2002 David Akins Feature: Race Matters.

[48] Letter from the Editor, The Globe and Mail. August 14, 2004. A2.

[49] Chad Skelton and Lori Cuthbert with Judith Lavoie.2004. *Special Report: How Organized Crime has Infliltrated Our Communities.* The Vancouver Sun. September 10.

[50] They used the following electronic news sources: Dow Jones Interactive, Virtual News Library and Canadian NewsDisc. The keywords used included "access to information, access-to-infomration and access information'—something Rees criticizes for its breadth.

[51] Allan Cassels et al. 2003. *Drugs in the News: How well do Canadians report the good the bad and the ugly of new prescription drugs?* Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. April 29.

[52] See www.cab.ca, the report of the cultural diversity task force.

[53] Nordenstreng, Kaarle and Michael Griffin. 1999. *International Media Monitoring.* Cresskill, N.J. Hampton Press.

[54] Soroka argues there is strong evidence of the original Chapel Hill hypothesis developed by McCombs and Shaw and bases this on a meta analysis of more than 200 studies worldwide. The problem is that many of these studies do not triangulate over time. (Soroka,12).