

MA PROJECT RESEARCH PAPER

FILTERING THE HEADLINES

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Introduction

This paper is the formal written component for the research project of Lindsey Ann Vodarek, to fulfill the requirements of the Master of Arts in Communication and Culture Joint Program at Ryerson and York Universities. The project, entitled *Filtering the Headlines*, is a short documentary film on the concept/construction of objectivity as it has been applied in journalism in Canada supported by a political economy of the same. The purpose of this work is to connect the theoretical work being done on this subject to the actual practices and discussion going on amongst journalists today. It questions the knowledge of journalists about issues of objectivity and asks how these journalists reconcile their ethical ideals with actual practices. It then questions the hegemony of media as business, as corporate entity, the use of advertising to support this model and the practices of journalists that reinforce it. It aims to foster a dialogue that will promote a greater sense of agency within the profession of journalism by challenging and bringing to light ingrained beliefs. Changes to journalistic practices must come from within.

The literature on this subject reflects the tensions that exist between these structural factors that influence journalists and their work, and the agency that they have within it. This paper and film argue that the structural influences that journalists face greatly affect the news they produce. These influences work in subtle, hegemonic ways.¹ Working within these influences daily, it is difficult to escape their effects. However, it is not impossible to assert personal agency. Structural dominance is negotiated and journalists are able to take advantage of the cracks in the system.² Thus, the tensions between theory

¹ Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, *Manufacturing Consent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), xii.

² Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao, *Sustaining Democracy?: Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1998), 7-14.

and practice do not form an impregnable wall. The challenge then lies in education.³ A greater balance is needed in the education of journalists between theory and practical skills. At the same time, citizens/media consumers must also receive more education in how to critically analyze and deconstruct the news. This project is a part of this education for both.

The project is reflective of both aspects of the Communication and Culture program: it investigates the mass communication production of news media and the culture of the journalists that produce it. It is also both theoretical and practical, allowing me to advance my knowledge on these issues while honing my professional skills. It is the fulfillment of the project suggested for acceptance to the program, and of the project proposed to and accepted by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

The film consists of a series of interviews with Canadian journalists, both celebrity and not, as well as academics who are experts in this field of study. They are: Michael Valpy of the Globe and Mail, Trina McQueen, formerly of CBC and CTV, Kelly Toughill, formerly of the Toronto Star and professor at Kings' College School of Journalism, Stephanie Marcus and John Mather, recent graduates of the Ryerson Journalism program, David Skinner, professor of Communications (specializing in Political Economy) at York University, James Winter, professor of Communication Studies at the University of Windsor, and Lydia Miljan, professor of Political Science at the University of Windsor. Each was chosen for their specific knowledge and point of

³ Chomsky and Herman, 307.

view. Professional skills, experience, and academic knowledge were valued, with each participant having at least one of these qualifications.

The purpose of the film is many-fold; for use as a pedagogical tool by teachers for media literacy, as a rhetorical device (to turn the camera on the interviewer, making them interviewee), as historical document from this particular time period in Canada (on the cusp of the knowledge economy), and as an engaging, informative type of entertainment.

This paper includes a review of the original objectives of the project and its relationship to the Communication and Culture Program, a critique of the concept of objectivity and a brief political economy critique of Canadian media, and an explanation of the details of the production process. It will describe what was learned and how this was accomplished. The discussion of the interviews and how they contribute to theory/practice and to the relevant literature is done through the project component (film).

Paradigm/Perspective and Subjectivity

Journalists consider their work to be an invaluable public service to a democratic state. Modern democratic countries cannot function without adequate dissemination of relevant information, political or otherwise. However, this important work happens in an environment that contains many conflicting concerns, influences, values, and beliefs, including the ethic of objectivity.⁴ In this work, the concept of objectivity is treated as an impossible goal, and one that is not necessarily worth keeping. Objectivity hinders voices from outside the mainstream from entering into the discussion of news events.

⁴ Hackett and Zhao, 15-35.

Furthermore, it hides the natural and unavoidable biases of journalists and removes their subjectivity as citizens who are a part of the news events that they relate to the public. Thus, the remnants of the practice of objectivity need to be removed. This undertaking has been an attempt to understand how journalists reconcile this responsibility with the pressures of their real work environment, political and economic considerations, and the ethics they purport to uphold, both personal and professional.

This project is deeply personal for me. I have always enjoyed writing and am still considering journalism as a career. However, coming from an academic background has made it difficult for me to accept many aspects of the profession that conflict with my personal ethics, based on the knowledge I have gained. Having studied Communication and Culture from a Critical Theory perspective, I have come to an understanding that media are socially and historically constructed. The work of Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman on the Propaganda Model of news has been greatly influential,⁵ as have the works of many members of the Frankfurt School, particularly Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer on the Cultural Industry.⁶ Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the mass media as commodified, standardized and manipulative towards the maintenance of the status quo has broadened my understanding of the purposes of such media. Hence, my understanding of issues of communication and culture, and specifically the mass media, is skeptical and critical. For this project, the purposes of news generating professionals and the organizations they work for are questioned from a Critical Theory epistemological and ontological perspective.

⁵ Chomsky and Herman.

⁶ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry" in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

Literature Review

The literature on this subject is wide and diverse. It is an area that has been discussed in detail, yet there is still space for new inquiry. In order to become well versed and familiar with the subject matter at hand, I have read and reviewed a select bibliography.

One of the most useful books on the subject is Stephen J. A. Ward's *The Invention of Journalism Ethics*.⁷ Ward conducts a thorough investigation into the history of objectivity. He discusses the evolution of journalistic ethics from the 17th century through the 20th century. He argues that the concept of objectivity is a construction of rhetoric that has changed and evolved over time, even within its specific application to journalistic practices. In Part III of his book, Ward proposes a new way of practicing journalism with what he calls pragmatic objectivity, as an answer to the crisis of the concept of objectivity in both journalism and academia.⁸ This concept of journalism entails a reframing of objectivity in practice; journalists do not need to reach the ideal, but rather a level of objectivity that appears as such in comparison to other works on the same topic, within the same context.⁹ It also requires "critical, self-conscious evaluation" on the part of journalists.¹⁰ While these fundamental ideas of a pragmatic journalism are useful in the context of a corporate capitalist economy and society, they do not challenge the status quo. Through further reading and through the interviews conducted, it has become clear that the current system of news media generation and dissemination is inadequate for a truly democratic society. Changes to this system will entail several systemic changes,

⁷ Stephen J.A. Ward, *The Invention of Journalism Ethics: The Path to Objectivity and Beyond* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens UP, 2004).

⁸ Ward, 261.

⁹ Ward, 314-315.

¹⁰ Ward, 316.

both ideological and economical. Pragmatic objectivity does not do this.

A more useful text for the purposes of this work is Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao's *Sustaining Democracy?*¹¹ The authors deal with the evolution of objectivity as well, but argue that it is not a concept worth keeping. Instead of aiding the citizens of a democracy, objectivity is implicated in numerous ways in legitimizing authority and the status quo. They support a more critical, active journalism that fosters civic dialogue and conversation.¹² I have come to agree with the notion of completely removing objectivity, and have agreed from the beginning of this project that journalism should be more critical in its investigation and presentation of the news. The news needs to create dialogue, not simply "inform" from a particular ideology.

In *Manufacturing Consent*, Herman and Chomsky propose a model that outlines how the news is manipulated into "propaganda".¹³ They argue that this is a result of the capitalist economic structure of the corporations that control it. I strongly support this model, as it is still as relevant today as it was twenty years ago. In spring 2007, I attended a conference on this model where its current applications were discussed and debated by Herman and Chomsky, as well as many members of the Academy. Numerous examples were given to support its continued use in both international and domestic contexts. The film I have produced supports this model in a Canadian context. Thus, the propaganda model remains in effect.

In order to conduct high quality interviews on these issues, I have also attempted to become familiar with journalism ethics as they are understood and taught. I have read a

¹¹ Hackett and Zhao.

¹² Hackett and Zhao, 224.

¹³ Chomsky and Herman.

number of texts on these ethics, as well as several non-fiction literary works by professional journalists, in an attempt to understand this framework from the inside. I have furthered my understanding of these practices by conducting the interviews with working journalists. I have gained substantial knowledge from actually conducting the interviews, in which discussions addressed how ethics and practices are truly applied.

The following is a further elucidation of these concepts and the thesis developed in the film. It includes a more thorough critique of objectivity and its history, which was not included in the film, a discussion of the key arguments, and some of the interview results. It is meant to supplement the film only, as the film is the primary work and argument.

Introduction

The generation of news in democratic society has come to be understood as essential to the democratic process. However, it is a process full of contradictions and limitations. Many of these contradictions stem from the fact that the mainstream media are not neutral entities working for the public good, but are profit-driven corporations whose production of news is ultimately controlled by the bottom line. Few organizations escape this framework. In Canada, the CBC does make inroads, but with limited impact.

While the news media's existence is tied to a capitalistic base, they also form a part of the superstructure of Canadian society. As such, they uphold the dominant ideology of corporate capitalism, leaving little or no room for dissent.¹⁴ Canadian media corporations limit democratic discourse by controlling the "bounds of the expressible."¹⁵ This is done through the influence of the capitalist economic structure of media outlets on what news is produced, the use of the advertising model to fund news, and through the

¹⁴ Chomsky and Herman, 2.

¹⁵ Noam Chomsky quoted by James Winter, interview by author, video tape recording, Windsor, ON, 22 April 2008.

training of journalists in the pedagogy of “fair and balanced” corporate news generation. This level of authority in society stems from a legacy of journalistic practice espousing objectivity, centered in a positivist epistemological and ontological paradigm.¹⁶

A Critique of Objectivity

In order to use the news to understand the political and social environment, the reader/viewer must actively interpret what is espoused as fact. Understanding the media, its production, and the values it espouses must be taught. While many viewers take what they are told with the proverbial “grain of salt”, active interpretation is not yet the norm. This is evidenced by the fact that mainstream media are still the dominant form of news production and distribution, and that “alternative media” remain named as such.¹⁷

This crisis of media literacy stems from the authority given to these news outlets. The mainstream news media in Canada are still the dominant source of information for much of society. Yet, this authority was not constructed overnight. The power of the media has been a process of evolution, shifting in power and function, along with the larger historical-economic trends of Enlightenment, industrialization, modernization, and post-modernity. Each step was crucial in the development of a media system that has come to support and sustain the ideology of capitalism.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper, it is necessary to acknowledge the technological foundation of capitalist news journalism. It was the advent of the printing

¹⁶ Stephen J.A. Ward, *The Invention of Journalism Ethics: The Path to Objectivity and Beyond* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens UP, 2004), 4.

¹⁷ Winter, interview by author.

press that allowed for the mass production of printed texts that could be distributed to the public at large.¹⁸

While this move towards the printed text was a long evolution in itself, and has never completely excluded oral forms of communication,¹⁹ the medium of print created a cultural shift that became conducive to the flow of capital. As Elizabeth Eisenstein has elaborated, print aided the development of a culture of objectivity (and capitalism) through standardization.²⁰ Working on and amending the same piece of writing led to the more standardized and 'objective' collection of facts. The ability to reproduce copies of work accurately also allowed for a new efficiency in knowledge creation and distribution. Early forms of capitalism required efficient, detail-oriented, rational forms of work, which were thus influenced and aided by the development of print.²¹ In specific relation to journalism, the transfer of the work of writing from the sacred space and free labour of the monastery to the secular space and waged-labour of the copy shop relocated the writing of facts for public use into the sphere of capital.²² Thus, the technological innovation of print influenced the development of an epistemology of objectivity and an economics of capitalism which have thus influenced journalism practice.

When print first reached the public in a form of proto-journalism in the 16th century, it was as the political rants of opposing parties and writers that appeared in pamphlets and on broadsides. This partisan press gave way to the 17th century weekly or

¹⁸ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 9.

¹⁹ Eisenstein, 6.

²⁰ Eisenstein, 5.

²¹ Eisenstein, 80-88, 126.

²² Eisenstein, 9-11.

biweekly “newssheet.”²³ Though still clearly partisan, written by men with obvious political leanings, these newspapers attempted to insert the notion of objectivity into their reports. Western culture was “shifting towards a fallible, epistemic sense of objectivity,” and as such, “early editors’ assertions that they produced reasonable reports based on observation and testimony were comprehensible”²⁴ to the public at large. In this way, news took up the new epistemological position that was developing in society and reinforced it through its repetition of “facts”, while at the same time beginning its attempt to legitimize itself as a commercial enterprise supporting public discourse.

These tendencies grew and flourished in the 18th century under the thinkers of the Enlightenment. The use of reason became the dominant way of understanding the world, and reasonable thought led to the conception of reason-based government. As Hackett and Zhao put it, “reason had an emancipatory character” as “the most reasonable form of social and political organization” was not authoritarian royal or religious rule, but democracy.²⁵

A public sphere developed around these notions, in which journalism played a definitive role. Weekly newspapers had evolved to dailies and a public understanding and acceptance of news as a normal part of life developed, even as the papers remained highly partisan.²⁶ As is well understood from ideal perspectives on democracy, newspapers played a vital role in creating public discussion and fostering governmental change.²⁷ The fight for democracy was carried out as much in letters as it was in arms.

²³ Ward, 90-91.

²⁴ Ward, 90.

²⁵ Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao, *Sustaining Democracy?: Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1998), 16-17.

²⁶ Ward, 128-129.

²⁷ Ward, 128.

However, the journalist's role as "the public's agent and main representative"²⁸ in this shifting society could not have occurred without these very transformations. Thus, while at the same time that a "public philosophy of journalism"²⁹ arose, this newfound philosophy substantiated the very changes in which it occurred – the press had become the Fourth Estate.³⁰

The ideology of democracy demanded that people be educated. In order "for this participation to work effectively, the non-privileged majority would have to be educated on how society works."³¹ With the fall of the noble and the aristocratic as the rulers of society, the new capitalists became the elite. Thus, the Enlightenment can be seen as "the cultural revolution of the capitalist class."³²

With the rising prominence of this capitalist class in the 19th century, the idealism of the previous century's democratic rhetoric began to fade. While the election of government by the people was still gaining ground in Canada, the elite of society, including industrialists, began to fear the idea of "mob rule."³³ A conservative ethic took shape around the "scarcity and ruthless competition for limited resources" that had come "to justify a bruisingly competitive and exploitive laissez-faire market economy."³⁴

The Canadian press of this time was still extremely partisan. The wealthy owners of these publications often relied directly on party support. Papers developed in most major cities on both sides of the Tory/Reform divide, not simply to inform the public, but

²⁸ Ward, 129.

²⁹ Ward, 128.

³⁰ Ward, 128.

³¹ Hackett and Zhao, 17.

³² Hackett and Zhao, 18.

³³ Hackett and Zhao, 19.

³⁴ Hackett and Zhao, 19.

to check or “balance” the rhetoric of their opponents. Even in the 1850s, *The Globe* (forerunner of today’s *Globe and Mail*) catered to the educated and to owners,³⁵ which is akin to their current target market of POMEs (professionals, owners, managers, and entrepreneurs).³⁶ They advocated a careful sort of democracy, one that demanded that suffrage be qualified, and did not put “faith in the natural worth of the common man.”³⁷

However, radical democratic discourse did not disappear altogether. It remained and thrived in the developing labour press. The emerging working class of labour saw the fundamental inequalities between their rights and the rights of owners. Trade unions pushed for greater rights and a better standard of living. The labour press, then, critiqued industrial capitalism, crusading for social justice. It appealed to “reason, public good, and natural rights – the very language of the Enlightenment.”³⁸ Furthermore, it removed itself from party politics, claiming that it would not be beholden to any power. It did not see the obvious contradiction in crusading for its own causes over those of the elite as unavoidable politics.³⁹ It is here that a sense of pseudo-objectivity re-emerges. The universalizing concepts put forth by the labour press in concert with their “freedom” from politics allowed them to present ideas as something more akin to facts than what was being related in the major dailies.⁴⁰ However, this emphasis on democracy to solve inequality saw the very causes of this inequality as the result of greed and owners’ interests, and not as a structural problem based on a society divided into classes.⁴¹ It did

³⁵ Hackett and Zhao, 19-20.

³⁶ Michael Valpy, interview by author, video tape recording, Toronto, ON, 29 April 2008.

³⁷ J.M.S. Careless, quoted by Hackett and Zhao, 20.

³⁸ Hackett and Zhao, 22.

³⁹ Hackett and Zhao, 24.

⁴⁰ Hackett and Zhao, 23-24.

⁴¹ Hackett and Zhao, 24.

not see that their problems were actually embedded within capitalism. It did not take the struggle for rights to a structural level, and thereby did not sufficiently challenge or change the forces that oppressed them. Capitalism, as ideology, was so all-encompassing that discussions of change could only happen within it. Thus, democratic discourse and the rhetoric of objectivity were appropriated by capital.

While the labour press grew a readership, and reignited a more radical ideology, it lived a fragile existence. Dependent on union dues and independent subscriptions, most papers could not survive for long. Towards the end of the 19th century, “Canada’s increasingly industrialized and urbanized market had created a demand for advertising outlets on the part of merchants and retailers.”⁴² This new need of industry, along with the improvement of paper production technologies and the standardizing and time-controlling effects of the telegraph,⁴³ led those with a keen business sense to take advantage of a market ripe for action.⁴⁴

The popular commercial press was born. These papers took the rhetoric of objectivity and democracy and fused it together with advertising. They realized that the “universal perspective”⁴⁵ espoused by the labour press could be used to their advantage. In Canada, “for the first time newspapers became business enterprises, operating primarily to make profits through the dual transaction of selling news to readers and readers’ attention to advertisers.”⁴⁶ Thus, news production came to legitimize capitalism

⁴² Hackett and Zhao, 25.

⁴³ James W. Carey, “Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph,” *Communication as Culture* (Winchester: Unwin-Hyman, 1989), 201.

⁴⁴ Hackett and Zhao, 25.

⁴⁵ Hackett and Zhao, 25.

⁴⁶ Hackett and Zhao, 25.

through its purpose - creating surplus revenue for owners as a fully capitalist enterprise – while still espousing a now neutralized universalizing rhetoric of objectivity.

With the coming of the 20th century, the values promoted by the commercial dailies became more refined and solidified. The creation of a professional code of ethics around the work of journalism was developing. It was influenced by the concepts of facts, political independence, and unbiased reporting that the papers had come to regard not just as a tactic for gaining readership, but as a badge of honour, a way of understanding their role in society, that was crucial to their work. Their origins in partisanship and the labour press were shunned. Yet, their commercial purpose, while always a consideration in the daily running of a news organization, was not taken into consideration as a detracting influence in the same way that their other origins were. Capitalism maintained its predominance. The discussion of journalism's purpose and the ethics behind it remained contained within its sphere of influence.⁴⁷

The actual use of the term objectivity took up its prominent role in journalism after WWI as a response to the doubts that the war created about modernity.⁴⁸ News reports could no longer rely on the use of a journalist's reason; claims of "fact" were not so easily trusted.⁴⁹ As such, objectivity now differed from its lineage in several important ways. As Ward explains, it was much stricter. It had to be seen as devoid of all opinion or comment on the part of the journalist. In addition, journalism relied on its establishment as a profession to substantiate its claims.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ward, 213.

⁴⁸ Ward, 213.

⁴⁹ Hackett and Zhao, 41.

⁵⁰ Ward, 216-218.

These modifications came as a response to worries over content; respectable journalists were threatened by the popularity of “yellow” tabloids, the sensational press. Also, as is ironic in today’s atmosphere of commercial journalism, there was concern over the concentration of ownership. A handful of owners had acquired a monopoly share of news companies. Their methods developed “the low-cost, centrally managed chain, run on the principles of market segmentation and vertical integration.”⁵¹ As such, leading journalists of the day saw objectivity as a way to overcome these obstacles; by attempting to avoid any appearance of opinion, they could separate themselves and their reports from scandal, libel, and the influence of their owners. As Joseph Pulitzer, himself, warned, “Influence cannot exist without public confidence.”⁵² Journalists outside the tabloids saw that their profession could not exist, that they could not contribute to public discourse, if the public did not have confidence in what they were reading. Thus, objectivity as the ultimate journalistic commandment came to prominence as a defense mechanism against alternative forms of journalism and the capitalist structure that created it.

This professional practice so long in the making reached its peak in the 1940s and 50s.⁵³ Yet, this form of objectivity did not last long. From its documentation in the code of the American Society of News Editors in 1923, to critiques as early as the 1950s when “press theorist Theodore Peterson...wrote that objectivity was ‘a fetish’”,⁵⁴ objectivity was challenged. As modern ideals gave way, so did the ideal of objectivity. The newsroom could no longer rely on a concept that claimed to divide facts from opinion to maintain their credibility with their audience.

⁵¹ Ward, 221.

⁵² Joseph Pulitzer, quoted in Ward, 221.

⁵³ Ward, 215.

⁵⁴ Ward, 214-215.

The 1960s were when it all started to fall apart. Memories of protests, hippies, the Vietnam War, Civil Rights and Watergate are highly idealized in society's collective memory, but these important events in American history did, in fact, have a significant impact on journalism and objectivity.⁵⁵ In Canada, programs like *This Hour Has Seven Days*, and political developments like Quebec's Quiet Revolution and the October Crisis had impacts as well.⁵⁶ All of these events, as evolving in the socio-historical context of two World Wars and the post-Fordist "era", moved society towards a shift in epistemological understanding. Post-modernism was in the stages of becoming. The idea of a pure fact was no longer as widely accepted, and governments could not be trusted. As for journalism, objectivity as pure practice was in crisis.

Out of this crisis interpretive, adversarial and investigative journalism developed.⁵⁷ However, none of these forms could break the mold. Each attempted to be "critical in intention and controversial in character" but they still had to "appear to be completely objective."⁵⁸ After all, these muckraking journalists still worked for corporate organizations with advertisers to court, a POMEs-dominated readership, and a bottom line to defend. In this way, by trying to incorporate some controversy within the corporate news structure, these efforts at critical journalism served to reinforce the ethos of objectivity and the capitalist ideology behind it.

In addition, the advent of television news came to reinforce objectivity in a very specific way. The power of images appears to present the world as it truly is. It was difficult to argue with the apparent factuality of an event happening live, right before

⁵⁵ Douglas Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 48-54.

⁵⁶ Hackett and Zhao, 48.

⁵⁷ Hackett and Zhao, 51.

⁵⁸ Private correspondence to the authors, Hackett and Zhao, 50.

your eyes. While it is now largely understood that all images are constructed in some form, the damage has been done. The place of journalists in the public sphere and the standard of objective news were reinforced.⁵⁹

Hence, the crisis in democratic discourse remained. Newsrooms responded by moving away from the standard of objectivity as such, towards the new ideals of being fair and balanced in reporting. This has done little to challenge or change the underlying assumptions or structure of news production. One might question whether the Emperor really is wearing new clothes. As Lydia Miljan put it, “fair and balanced was made up by PR people to skirt the issue of objectivity.”⁶⁰

From the perspective of employment, journalists themselves have a stake in maintaining objectivity. Along with Graham Knight, Hackett and Zhao call attention to the economic context of journalists’ (and their own) work in that “the cultivation of objectivity and professionalism in journalism was closely linked to the emergence of a new middle class of salaried intellectuals.”⁶¹ Journalists are employees who must maintain the importance of their profession in order to secure themselves a job. Hence, they support the hegemony of the capitalist ideology as part of the superstructure of society, while at the same time reinforcing it by selling their biopower to the same ideology as a part of its base. The newer notions of ‘fair and balanced’ do the same work. Thus, while the notion of objectivity is now seen as something from a bygone era, and while journalists will not claim that they can be completely objective, the authority that

⁵⁹ Hackett and Zhao, 47.

⁶⁰ Lydia Miljan, interview by author, video tape recording, Windsor, ON, 24 April 2008.

⁶¹ Hackett and Zhao, 55.

they have as gatekeepers of information maintains their ability to be reporters of fact, of truth, of news. In this way, objectivity is “the god that won’t die.”⁶²

Corporate Capitalism as Structural Influence

Through the previous discussion of objectivity, it has been demonstrated that from its early stages, journalism has been tied to a capitalist economic structure. This is not entirely surprising, as capitalism has become the dominant form of economic relations. However, it is surprising that since the mainstream media are not neutral entities but are profit-driven corporations, they are entrusted with working for the public good. It is the contradictions between this economic structure and the supposed democratic purpose of the news media in society that will now be explored.

From its first ties to wealthy politicians to press barons, the fact that the press was run through private enterprise was not entirely astonishing. It was the growth and professional assertion of the notion of objectivity, combined with the industrialization and corporatization of the media that put journalism into a precarious position. News is not a public good - it is a commodity.⁶³

In this context, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman devised their seminal work, *The Propaganda Model of News*, to explain some of the effects and consequences of such a structure of news production in a democratic society. They explain how, in a society not directly inundated with government propaganda, “money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private

⁶² Hackett and Zhao, 82.

⁶³ Hackett and Zhao, 60.

interests to get their message across to the public.”⁶⁴ Their model consists of five “filters”: size, ownership and profit orientation; advertising; reliance on expert sources; flak as discipline; and anticommunism as ideology of control. The first two filters will be discussed here in a Canadian context.⁶⁵

The size, ownership, and profit orientation of the Canadian news media have long been a concern. As of 2000, Canada had the highest concentration of ownership of all capitalist countries.⁶⁶ With the continued increase of both vertical and horizontal media integration, the number of differing viewpoints has decreased. In 2008, Canada is looking at what has been termed a “Tri-opoly” of media conglomeration with CTVGlobeMedia, CanWest, and Quebecor dominating the industry.⁶⁷ This is problematic for a democracy where open discussion of opposing views is necessary to reach egalitarian decisions. The views that do get expressed in these limited channels are those that do not challenge the status quo.

While it is exceedingly rare for an owner or editor to tell a journalist what to write, it is not actually necessary. As Paul Nesbitt-Larking describes, “in subtle ways, the journalists and editors who survive normally are those who have adopted the taken-for-granted and status quo way of seeing things. There may be some exceptions – the odd maverick or radical – but they are usually mere tokens.”⁶⁸ James Winter terms this “Media Think.”⁶⁹ Lydia Miljan furthers the point by relating that no journalist wants to

⁶⁴ Herman and Chomsky, 2.

⁶⁵ Herman and Chomsky, 2.

⁶⁶ Paul Nesbitt-Larking, *Politics, Society and the Media: Canadian Perspectives* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), 110.

⁶⁷ Campaign for Democratic Media. “Ownership Chart,” *Campaign for Democratic Media*, 2008 <<http://democraticmedia.ca/blog-entry/media-tri-opoly>> (10 May 2008).

⁶⁸ Nesbitt-Larking, 113.

⁶⁹ James Winter, *Media Think* (Toronto: Black Rose Books, 2002), xxvii.

be the odd one out.⁷⁰ Thus, while journalists do have agency over what they write, they do not often use that agency to challenge the status quo of corporate capitalism.

Here profit orientation needs further elucidation. The fact that news is a commodity and not a public good, results in information that is provided based on the bottom line. In an effort to increase profits while decreasing costs, the resources available to journalists are often cut. This decreases their ability to provide the best, most accurate and sophisticated picture possible concerning a given news story. Profits may go up, but quality may go down. This limits the context that can be given to a situation and thereby limits the knowledge that citizens are given by which they make their decisions.⁷¹ This is exemplified by the decrease in local news and the emphasis on Pan-Canadian stories, on news that can be used across the country. A decrease in resources also limits the ability of a news organization to send their own journalists to distant locations, often relying on standardized wire news.⁷²

In addition to decreasing resources, media owners aim to increase profits by reaching as wide-ranging an audience as possible. While this is a noble goal from the point of view of democratic discourse, the inclusion of citizens is not the main goal. The purpose behind trying to reach a larger reader/viewership is to bring as many people to advertisers as possible, thereby increasing profits. In order to reach this larger audience, content must be offered that the audience desires, or that at least will not be offensive. This is a dangerous position for the Fourth Estate to be in. Conflicting viewpoints and

⁷⁰ Miljan, interview by author.

⁷¹ David Skinner, interview by author, video tape recording, Toronto, ON, 15 April 2008.

⁷² David Skinner, interview by author, video tape recording, Toronto, ON, 15 April 2008.

uncomfortable stories need to be brought to light for the purpose of discussion and possible solutions.

Some media outlets may also target more specific audiences. For example, the *Globe and Mail*, with its readership target of POMEs, will rarely run a story on child poverty, or even publicly funded university education. The POMEs readership, with its income of \$50 000 and up, is assumed to be interested in certain things and to care less about others.⁷³ As David Skinner points out, this is where ideology comes into play. Certain topics are considered by the media to be of interest to those who own the means of production, and who therefore support capitalism. In the articles written for this audience, certain voices are amplified over others. Thus, what is consistently talked about becomes and then reinforces the dominant discourse.⁷⁴ In this way, Canadian media corporations limit democratic discourse through their profit orientation.

The Effects of Advertising

To continue with the affect of advertising on the Canadian news media (the second filter), it can be understood as a subcategory of profit. As mentioned above, advertising affects the kinds of stories that are told by influencing the type of audiences that the media organization will target. However, it affects the production of news in several other ways.

Trina McQueen, media veteran of both the CBC and CTV, claims that while she was never directly asked to change a story by an advertiser in thirty years of work as a journalist, advertising affects news in another way. With twelve minutes of ads shown

⁷³ Valpy, interview by author.

⁷⁴ Miljan, interview by author.

every hour, the amount of time that can be spent on each news story is decreased.⁷⁵ In the same way, newspapers are filled with ads. The actual stories that go in between ads only fill the holes that are left over.⁷⁶ In combination with cut resources, ads reduce the amount and kind of information that readers can get, further limiting democratic discourse and insulating the 'bounds of the expressible' from critiques or marginalized views.

Again, it is important to consider the role of the journalist in how advertising affects the news. Trina McQueen also suggests that self-censorship on the part of editors and journalists serves to protect the advertisers from excessive (or often any) critique. Editors simply do not assign stories that criticize their advertisers, unless it cannot be avoided. The paper must not alienate its readership by failing to cover important issues, even if they portray their advertisers in a negative light. It is, in effect, a cost/benefit analysis that an editor must perform when considering what stories to cover. In addition, most journalists would prefer not to work with the advertising model, but they accept it as part of the reality of news media production in Canada. Thus, they accept the status quo of corporate capitalism and further strengthen it by self-censoring story choices.

A third way in which advertising affects the news is a directly ideological one. Ads are persuasive rather than realistic in nature. With two minutes out of every ten devoted to ads, the eight remaining minutes of television news are juxtaposed against them. These portrayals of real events, however much they are produced, cannot compete with advertising's promotion of ideology. Advertising is an ideological intrusion into democratic discourse.

⁷⁵ Trina McQueen, interview by author, video tape recording, Toronto, ON, 29 April 2008.

⁷⁶ Stephanie Marcus, interview by author, video tape recording, Toronto, ON, 14 April 2008.

While the news fortifies the ideology of capitalism in many subtle ways, advertising screams its justification. This can be said for most forms of media, but it does this most strongly through television's audio-visual intoxication. Dallas Smythe would argue that news is the "free lunch" in between ads.⁷⁷ It serves to attract audiences to be delivered to advertisers. Yet, more understated effects exist. However much the news is affected by ads, it underpins the very ideology that creates them. It is a complex and symbiotic relationship that structures their influence on each other, and on democratic discourse.

The Pedagogy of News

The final way that the news media uphold the dominant ideology of corporate capitalism and limit democratic discourse is through the training of journalists in the pedagogy of 'fair and balanced' news reporting. As mentioned in the critique of objectivity, 'fair and balanced' is the latest incarnation of this old master. The break from meta-narratives and the uncertainty of truth that developed in the latter half of the past century led the press to reconsider their ethics. That no one can be completely objective had become common sense. Thus, journalists had to come up with a new code that would deal with this epistemic shift and still maintain their credibility and professional authority. Yet, what is balanced and what is fair cannot be easily defined. While balance aims to give both or all sides of an argument equal time and representation, this is not easy to achieve. All of the factors discussed above weigh in on this process. Those views outside the dominant discourse are still not often a part of this weighing. Furthermore,

⁷⁷ Dallas Smythe, *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness and Canada* (Norwood: Ablex, 1981).

fairness is almost impossible to define. While it does take subjectivity into account in that someone must decide what is fair, in practice, it does so in a way that barely differs from attempts at objectivity.⁷⁸ Trying to be objective and trying to be fair are both inherently impossible endeavors and are not substantially different enough to foster change. Thus, ‘fairness’ fulfills its purpose in supporting the hegemonic discourse of capitalism.

In addition to the transformation of objectivity into ‘fair and balanced’ reporting, journalists are trained in many other corresponding ethical principles. These include concepts such as being impartial, attributing information to sources, and using methods like the inverted pyramid. All of these techniques help to maintain the media’s legitimacy and to reinforce the hegemonic position of capitalist ideology. Many have suggested more critical approaches, but they have not yet been able to make substantial inroads within the structural constraints of the Canadian media monopoly. Journalists are still trained as “cogs in the machinery” of society.⁷⁹

It is at the level of training that the ideals of the status quo are foregrounded and emphasized. In short, ideology is taught. Thus, the level of education is one point at which a change in the structure can occur. For David Skinner, the establishment of a critical school of journalism was an attempt at such a change. This new school of journalism in the interior of British Columbia focused more on the “why” of stories; the socio-historical background as context for a story was emphasized. However, this sort of practice ran into problems as its students attempted to enter the workforce. Owners and editors did not want their critical skills. What was desired were efficient writing skills;

⁷⁸ Hackett and Zhao, 58-59.

⁷⁹ David Edwards and David Cromwell, *Gaurdians of Power: The Myth of the Liberal Media* (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2006), 178.

“the ability to produce a lot of short, highly descriptive stories quickly.”⁸⁰ A broader analysis is not needed when the media’s imperative is to produce a commodity for a profit-oriented corporate organization.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Beyond the Triopoly of corporate broadcasters, there is one other very important Canadian broadcaster that needs to be addressed. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canada’s public broadcaster, has been commended the world over for the quality of news broadcasts it provides.⁸¹ Its public service mandate⁸² directs it towards providing news that gives a wider variety of viewpoints, more detail, context and background, and promotes discussion and dissent to a greater degree. Thus, it is more democratic, and more useful to viewers, than any of its private counterparts.

The ability of the CBC to produce better quality programming, related to its crucial public service mandate, is a result of its funding sources. The CBC runs on two-thirds government funding.⁸³ This financial support allows the CBC to stay away, to a certain degree, from some of the pitfalls that private broadcasters face- namely the crucial influence of ownership, the corporate mindset, and the affects of advertising. However, the other third of CBC’s revenue comes directly from advertising, specialty services and other commercial activities.⁸⁴ Hence, although some of the influence of these factors is

⁸⁰ Skinner, interview by author.

⁸¹ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, “Highlights,” *2006-2007 Annual Report*, 2008
<<http://www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/annualreports/2006-2007/index.shtml>> (19 August 2008).

⁸² Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, “Vision, Mission, Values,” *2006-2007 Annual Report*, 2008
<<http://www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/annualreports/2006-2007/index.shtml>> (19 August 2008).

⁸³ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, “Financials,” *2006-2007 Annual Report*, 2008
<<http://www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/annualreports/2006-2007/index.shtml>> (19 August 2008), 65.

⁸⁴ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, “Financials,” 65.

diminished, the CBC is still greatly affected. These affects are on the rise as restructuring is occurring that is transforming sections of how the CBC operates.⁸⁵ For example, revenue from advertising is increasing.⁸⁶

One of these influencing factors, the corporate ethos, still exists within the CBC. It competes within a market-driven economy.⁸⁷ Shrewd management skills and the 'common sense' of profit orientation appear on the CBC's Board of Directors. One member of the board, Trina McQueen, has spent a considerable amount of time at the CBC during the course of her career. She has done much for the organization, fulfilling many crucial managerial roles. After her time at the CBC she was President of CTV. She unproblematically claims that people who work for a "large organization" tend to think like that organization.⁸⁸ Thus, her inherent business approach to steering the CBC today influences it at the highest level in a very subtle way. She is not calling for the complete financial restructuring of the CBC. However, her market-orientation can affect the strategic goals and direction of the organization.

In addition to the affects of advertising and corporate-style management, the government of the day, while not directly able to influence the content of the CBC, is able to influence policy and funding decisions concerning it.⁸⁹ The current Conservative government of Stephen Harper has voiced its dislike for the CBC in favour of commercial broadcasters. Currently, it has committed funding for another year, but it refrains from committing to the kind of substantial funding, and adjustment for inflation,

⁸⁵ Steve Lillebuen, "Corporate culture is hurting journalism, says CBC broadcaster," *Express News, University of Alberta*, 2005 <<http://www.expressnews.ualberta.ca/article.cfm?id=6334>> (19 August 2008).

⁸⁶ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Financials," 65.

⁸⁷ Hackett and Zhao, 64.

⁸⁸ McQueen, interview by author.

⁸⁹ Hackett and Zhao, 64.

that the CBC needs in order to maintain quality programming.⁹⁰ While the CBC did little better under the Liberal government, it must be continually on guard against further cutbacks.

Lastly, and most importantly, those who work for CBC News are still journalists, trained in the same pedagogy as their corporate counterparts. Journalists may self-select their preferred work environment.⁹¹ Those that choose the CBC are generally more liberally minded than those who choose other broadcasters.⁹² However, the pressures to produce competitive programming, the intrusion and influence of advertising, and the ideology of objectivity still affect their work and their personal agency within the organization.⁹³ Public funding does allow them to do more than those at other outlets, but they are still limited.

Thus, market pressures, the influence of advertising, and journalism training all affect the production of news, even at the CBC. If journalists and broadcasters have more agency at the CBC than they do at other news organizations, they must fight to keep it.

Solutions

Indeed, many authors have written on the problems of contemporary journalism. This paper is one more in that list. Each presents possible solutions or alternatives for dealing with these issues. Of these, the formulation with the most promise comes from the authors Hackett and Zhao.

⁹⁰ Canadian Press, "CBC should receive stable, indexed funding for at least seven years: report by Sue Bailey," *Friends of Canadian Broadcasting*, 2008 <http://www.friends.ca/News/Friends_News/archives/articles02290802.asp> (19 August 2008).

⁹¹ Miljan and Cooper, *Hidden Agendas*, 97.

⁹² Miljan and Cooper, *Hidden Agendas*, 77.

⁹³ Hackett and Zhao, 76.

Hackett and Zhao suggest that journalism should be “a form of public communication for sustainable democracy”; it must be freed from its commercial imperatives.⁹⁴ Stepping away from objectivity and admitting bias through a more self-reflexive journalism could be a place from which to start, as could the reporting of the ways in which people are working together to create change. Overall, a “public journalism” would “try to minimize the impact of the structural inequalities of market society on democratic participation in the public sphere. It would consciously search for intellectually, politically, and culturally significant voices... for standpoints that challenge conventional wisdom.”⁹⁵

Lance Bennett also gives several useful, practical suggestions for how journalists might improve their work for citizens including: providing greater context for stories; inserting the voice of the journalist to a greater extent as the observer (with less focus on the narratives constructed by political actors); avoiding or defining uncommon vocabulary; avoiding stereotypes; and answering the “so what” of the story.⁹⁶ Attempting any of these structurally subversive methods would greatly advance a democratic media.

Yet, this way of doing journalism cannot happen in a vacuum. It can only happen as part of a larger societal transformation, one where “audiences will demand new kinds of news when they need it in order to participate meaningfully in making decisions whose consequences they must live with.”⁹⁷ This is not a naïve assumption, but a realistic understanding that the relations of power in society and the underpinning ideologies of objectivity and capitalism are not going to change overnight. It asserts that change is

⁹⁴ Hackett and Zhao, 226.

⁹⁵ Hackett and Zhao, 234.

⁹⁶ Bennett, 265-268.

⁹⁷ Hackett and Zhao, 236.

possible; the move to a more democratic media will occur in the same way that journalism shifted from partisan to 'objective' news.

Sadly, the problem with much of the critical theory written about journalism and the media is that it is not read by those whom it most intimately concerns- the journalists themselves. Most journalists feel that media scholars do not understand them or their work.⁹⁸ They do not see how these critiques are relevant to their daily lives and so they dismiss them as unhelpful.

This paper itself may seem like an attack on journalists, but it is not. It holds journalists in high regard. Yet, journalists are human beings, and as such, they are fallible and imperfect.⁹⁹ They do the best they can to produce news for the public within the constraints of the corporate media system. Critiques such as this aim to bring light to this imperfect practice in an effort to improve it. Journalists and academics must work in tandem - views from the inside and the outside are useful in order to get a clearer understanding of the situation at hand.

Conclusion

The legacy of objectivity is still at work in Canada's news media today. From the beginning, notions of objectivity have been the foundation of reporting, giving it its authoritarian voice. This voice has the ability to decide what is discussed, and what is not. Thus, Canadian media corporations limit democratic discourse by controlling the "bounds of the expressible."¹⁰⁰ These bounds are dictated by the dominant ideology of

⁹⁸ McQueen, interview by author.

⁹⁹ Lydia Miljan and Barry Cooper, *Hidden Agendas: How Journalists Influence the News* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2003), 175.

¹⁰⁰ Noam Chomsky quoted by James Winter, interview by author.

corporate capitalism, which in turn, is supported and upheld by the discourse that the news media create. As has been demonstrated, this is done through the influence of the capitalist economic structure of media outlets, the impact of advertising on news content, and through the sustained training of journalists in the pedagogy of 'fair and balanced' reporting.

As the news media are tied to both the base and superstructure of our society, changes in its function will be tied to changes in both the dominant mode of production in society, and in the hegemonic discourse that supports it. In order for such change to occur, society must demand it. Academics and journalists both have a role to play in supporting such a demand. It is a dialectical process in the exchange of interacting agencies as both work for the development of a truly democratic discourse in the public sphere.

While there are tensions between structural theory and the personal agency of journalists, these do not have to be at odds. Personal agency can and must flourish within the current media system. It is through the cracks in the system that changes can be made. Media literacy can be a site for this struggle, as it is the public's increasing awareness of the problems with commercial media that will help to incite this new demand. Furthermore, the education of journalists in a more critical approach to the production of news must be undertaken. While this is not a popular approach with employers, Journalism school is fertile ground for instruction in new ways of conceiving of and producing news. The structural influences discussed have been reinforced through the education system. Hence, a more balanced education of journalists is necessary in order to create a fundamental change.

Thus, the mainstream media must exist as entities working for the public good, and not the bottom line. In the words of Michael Foucault, “Society must be defended!”¹⁰¹ The ideology of capitalism must be cut out of the frame.

The Contribution

The contribution of this project is in bringing together the theoretical with the actual, bringing the academic and journalistic discourses about objectivity and the political economy of Canadian media face to face. The ultimate goal of the project has been to foster a dialogue around agency and reform in journalism, and to create a film that fosters this discussion in the public sphere. It will serve as a tool in the fight for critical journalism education and media literacy in Canada.

This work has broken new ground in professional practice by being an example of a form of critical and engaged journalism in the form of a documentary film. Also, using the camera as a rhetorical device has brought out the idea of both the journalist, academic and filmmaker as active participant in the creation of meaning through their work, instead of passive observer. This understanding is necessary in order to work towards a new conception of objectivity and a new political economy, towards change in the journalistic profession and the Canadian media environment.

The Project

The film, as mentioned, consists of a collection of interviews with both journalists and academics. It has incorporated journalists from both print and television, for-profit,

¹⁰¹ Michael Foucault, *“Society Must Be Defended”: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (New York: Picador, 2004).

non-profit and state-sponsored media. This includes the Globe & Mail, the Toronto Star, CBC, CTV, the Ryersonian and the EyeOpener. Opinions on both the right and left side of the political spectrum were sought to obtain a holistic view of the issues at hand.

Again, the journalists interviewed were: Michael Valpy of the Globe and Mail, Trina McQueen, formerly of CBC and CTV, Kelly Toughill, formerly of the Toronto Star and professor at Kings' College school of journalism, and Stephanie Marcus and John Mather, recent graduates of the Ryerson Journalism program.

As for the academic side of the film, interviews were conducted with experts on the political economy of Canadian media. They are: David Skinner, professor of Communications (Political Economy) at York University, James Winter, professor of Communication Studies at the University of Windsor, and Lydia Miljan, professor of Political Science at the University of Windsor.

The film has attempted to not only juxtapose these positions of academia and professional practice, as well as politics of right and left, but tries to find areas of common ground and concern. Thus, the interviews are interwoven to reflect similar understandings at times, and to show direct contradictions at others. Overall, it makes an argument in favour of journalistic, political, and economic reform.

Pre-production

Pre-production is an essential element of a good production. As such, all of the planning for the project, from booking interviews to creating contingency plans, was done before filming actually began. The main areas of such planning were: interviews, equipment, crew, and financing.

Since the film consists entirely of interviews, this was the most crucial component of preproduction. The first step in the process, after deciding on the topic and becoming familiar with the literature, was to decide on who should be interviewed. I wanted a mix of journalists and academics with varying experience and expertise to try and get as wide-ranging a spectrum of views as possible. This proved somewhat difficult, as the number of people that I could interview limited me. The number of participants decided upon in conjunction with my supervisory committee was eight. This number proved to provide a large amount of data. More participants would have broadened the scope beyond the capabilities of this project. It is important in a film of this nature not to interview too many people, or the audience will become confused. Since each person interviewed provided key information and is central to the argument, they each need a substantial amount of time on screen. Perhaps even six participants would have been enough.

As for the effects on the diversity of opinions obtained, this number of participants revealed similarities that would likely have only been duplicated with more interviews. The journalists all held a similar understanding and similar opinions. As for the academics interviewed, they also shared similar understandings and opinions, divided along political lines. More academics could have been interviewed from the “right” but these views were sufficiently congruent with those of the journalists to the point that it was unnecessary. Furthermore, as this is an argumentative piece, the critical “left” approach needed to be foregrounded.

As for the construction of possible interview participants, a search was done across all of the journalism schools in Canada, the major media conglomerations (centered in Toronto), and amongst universities with critical communications programs. Leads were

taken from the suggestions of my supervisory committee. In the end, those chosen came from those who responded “yes” to my requests for interviews. Personal contacts and having Dr. Fletcher as my supervisor yielded the most results. Michael Valpy and Kelly Toughill are familiar with Dr. Fletcher. I took a class with Trina McQueen in 2006. Stephanie Marcus and John Mather were not known before hand. David Skinner is a professor in my program and has the critical understanding I was looking for. James Winter and Lydia Miljan were my professors in my Undergraduate years. Both deal extensively with the media, Winter from the left and Miljan from the right of the political spectrum. As such, the list of interview participants proves that whom you know affects your work. However, I argue that having these contacts helped to develop a list of participants that was useful, insightful, relevant, and meaningful. The information gathered from this group created a film that fully addresses the topic. Knowing most of the participants did not bias my work in a negative way, but in fact, helped me to obtain more fruitful interviews. Furthermore, having professors from my Undergraduate and Graduate work participate portrayed a synthesis of the knowledge I have gained in my studies. The final video is my thesis: it is the culmination of six years of study.

The equipment used was either borrowed from Ryerson University or came from my personal collection. The Camera used was the Panasonic DVX100. Luckily, it is the camera available to Communication and Culture students, as this is the camera I wanted to shoot on. It is capable of shooting in 24p format, which created an aesthetic that looks more like film than regular video. It is also capable of widescreen, which I used for the same reason. As such, I was able to shoot on video, which was affordable with my budget, but still obtain the film aesthetic I wanted. To capture audio, I used lapel

microphones. This is the best option for interviews as the mic is close to the participant and can capture the cleanest sound. The camera and microphones were booked with the Ryerson Electronic Field Equipment Lock-up well in advance of the interviews.

Obtaining crew proved to be a challenge. I tried to recruit at least one other person to help me for each of the scheduled interview dates, except for Kelly Toughill (shot on location in Halifax). Most of my production-oriented colleagues were too busy with their own projects/thesis work to be able to help me, even just for three hours at a time (interview set-up, shooting, and teardown). In addition, those in the documentary film program were also busy. As shooting was done in late April, undergraduate students had exams and then most left town. As such, creating a crew was very difficult. In the end, I shot all but two of the interviews by myself. This proved successful enough (to be discussed further in the Production section).

As for financial considerations, I received a grant from the Canadian Media Research Consortium for \$2000. This was extremely helpful. While the use of my own and Ryerson's equipment kept my costs much lower than otherwise, there were still other costs. In addition, the money from the CMRC allowed me to venture outside of Toronto (to Windsor, ON and Halifax, NS) to conduct interviews. In this way, I was able to avoid being entirely Toronto-centric. This was necessary to broaden my view of Canadian media and to be more holistic in approach. However, this view was difficult to broaden because most of the organizations discussed are based in Toronto. Yet, this is part of the problem that the film attempts to address in a discussion of corporate media consolidation. Overall, the CMRC grant allowed me to conduct my research and create this film without spending an excess of my personal money.

Production

Overall, the production of this video went very well. With the exception of John Mather (April 3rd), the interviews were conducted from April 14th to May 1st. I will give a few comments about each of the interviews in the order in which they were taped.

1) John Mather

John Mather was the Editor-in-Chief of the EyeOpener, Ryerson's extra-curricular weekly news publication. He fulfilled this position for the 2007-2008 academic year. He graduated from Ryerson's Journalism program the year before, having contributed to the EyeOpener as a volunteer student reporter during his academic career. As a paid employee for the EyeOpener, not only did he assign and supervise stories, but he was also in charge of dealing with the public's responses to his publication. John now resides in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, working for a newly minted "western-style" news organization.

As John was my first interview, I was rather nervous. However, John is a very affable man and was easy to interview. He answered all of the questions in detail and gave several useful examples. However, there were technical difficulties. There was something wrong with the microphone and the audio did not record well. There are huge sections where there is so much static that the segment is unusable. This was very unfortunate as John gave such a great interview. As such, he does not appear much in the final film. Reshooting was not an option as he moved to Abu Dhabi the week following the interview. Having a crewmember to assist me may have prevented this problem as they could have monitored the camera more closely while I was asking questions. Also, I

had not yet bought headphones and thus I was unable to hear the fact that the audio was bad. I bought headphones and borrowed an extra microphone before the next interview to prevent this from being an issue again. This strategy was successful with no further audio problems while filming.

2) Stephanie Marcus

Stephanie Marcus was the Editor-in-Chief of the *Ryersonian*, the Ryerson School of Journalism's weekly publication, as part of a class requirement for the winter semester of 2008. She has now graduated from the Journalism program and aims to work professionally for a major Canadian news organization.

The interview with Stephanie went well in that she was open to being interviewed. However, I did not gain as much insight from her as from others. This may have been because she was just graduating from her journalism program at the time of the interview and had little work experience. I wanted to interview her because of this position/perspective of hers, but her responses were just not as eloquent as others, which is important in the context of a film. What an interviewee says has to be engaging for the audience.

On the technical side, I had a crewmember to monitor the camera and the audio, which allowed me to concentrate fully on conducting the interview. This relieved me of a lot of stress and made it a more enjoyable experience.

3) David Skinner

David Skinner is a Professor of Communication Studies and a member of the faculty of the Communication and Culture program at York University. His research interests lie in the Political Economy of Communications. He has published many books

and articles, including *Converging Media, Diverging Interests: A Political Economy of News in the United States and Canada*, "Alternative Media In Canada" in Paul Attallah and Leslie Regan Shade's *Mediascapes: New Patterns in Canadian Communication*, and "Divided Loyalties: The Early Development of Canada's 'Single' Broadcasting System" in the *Journal of Radio Studies*. He was the founding chair of the Bachelor of Journalism at Thompson Rivers University where he attempted to teach communication theory together with practical journalism skills.¹⁰² Presently, he is a main contributor to the Campaign for Democratic Media.¹⁰³

The interview with David was my favourite. This was natural because I personally agree most with his point of view and explanations. Also, he was not as constrained by time as most of the others were, which allowed for a more lengthy discussion with additional follow up questions.

The interview was shot outdoors in Young-Dundas Square. As such, it was rather noisy. I had to take traffic, people, and other extraneous noise into consideration when choosing a spot in the square and when mic-ing David. I also had to monitor the audio and video more carefully. However, I was lucky and the noise did not interfere too much. Luck truly has a part to play in the making of any film, especially when shooting outdoors.

4) James Winter

James Winter is a Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Windsor where he is known for his controversial stance against the common sense

¹⁰² "David Skinner," *York University*, 2008 <<http://www.yorku.ca/comcult/frames/staff/profiles/skinner.html>> (18 August 2008).

¹⁰³ David Skinner, "David Skinner's Blog," *Campaign for Democratic Media!*, 2008 <<http://democraticmedia.ca/blog/david-skinner>> (17 June 2008).

discourse of the mainstream media and his teaching of *Media Literacy* (a course which I have taken). He has published several books, including *Lies the Media Tells Us*, *Media Think*, *Democracy's Oxygen: How Corporations Control The News*, and *Common Cents*. His formal education consists of a BA and MA in Journalism and a PhD in Mass Communication. He has also worked for the CBC in Ottawa and Windsor.¹⁰⁴

The interview with James Winter was originally supposed to be shot in March. I went to Windsor to shoot it but James had to cancel at the last minute. This was deeply frustrating as it costs money to go there and back. A second interview attempt was scheduled for April and this time I confirmed and re-confirmed several times before I traveled to Windsor again.

The interview went well as James is very passionate about this subject and can speak about it at length. I, however, made the horrible error of forgetting to turn the camera to record mode. I missed the first few minutes of the interview. Luckily, I realized this and we were able to reshoot those responses. Unfortunately, answers given a second time are different. Some were better as they were articulated more clearly, but others were not as good, as they lacked spontaneity.

On a personal note, I was suffering from a stomach virus that caused me to be in much pain. I should have been home in bed, but I managed to pull through to get the interview.

5) Lydia Miljan

Lydia Miljan is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Windsor. She has written several books, including *Hidden Agendas: How Journalists*

¹⁰⁴ "James Winter," *University of Windsor*, 2008 <<http://athena.uwindsor.ca/units/commstudies/home.nsf/209ad309690892f38525699900571a92/96398cde6f39f9dc85256bb3006eca77!OpenDocument>> (18 August 2008).

Influence the News with Barry Cooper. She has also held the positions of Director of the Calgary Initiative and Director of the National Media Archive at the Fraser Institute. Forthcoming works include the chapter “Do Canadians Have a Balanced Media Diet?” in Joshua Greenberg and Charlene Elliott’s *Communications in Question: Canadian Perspectives on Controversial Issues in Communication Studies*.¹⁰⁵ While at the University of Windsor, I took her courses entitled *Introduction to Canadian Politics* and *Politics and the Media*.

The interview with Lydia also had to be rescheduled. Both of the Windsor interviews were not confirmed as well as they should have been. They seemed to be confirmed, but they were not tightly specified. This was a problem of both email and familiarity. Knowing the participants at Windsor led me to be more casual with them and to assume that they would be around campus at my convenience. This was wrong of me to assume. However, both were able to be rescheduled and a valuable lesson was learned—treat all interview subjects with the utmost professional attitude, leave nothing to chance, and make sure the time and day are 100% confirmed.

As for the interview itself, I had a colleague from a production company in Windsor assist me in camera operation. Thus, I was again able to fully focus on the interview. I was still ill and needed all the energy I had just to do the interviewing. The results were mixed – a good interview, but the opinions expressed were mostly the opposite of what I found to be true. It was difficult for me to listen to her views on the media and the market economy. I was able to challenge some of those views with follow-

¹⁰⁵ Political Science: Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, “Lydia Miljan,” *University of Windsor*, 2008 <<http://crons.uwindsor.ca/units/polsci/political.nsf/main/FF14D7929A5165718525721B0075DA03?OpenDocument>> (18 August 2008).

up questions, but I found that the peacemaker inside me did not want to challenge her too much. As my former professor, I respect her and am perhaps still a little bit afraid of her. I did not want to offend her. This may have been a negative consequence of knowing the interview subject. However, I was able to include and refute her opposing arguments, and even found points of agreement between her and the other interviewees. Thus, Lydia greatly adds to the film.

6) Michael Valpy

Michael Valpy is a seasoned journalist at the *Globe and Mail* where he has held many positions, including columnist on religious and political issues. Notably, he was the *Globe's* correspondent to South Africa during the last years of Apartheid. He has won several National Newspaper Awards and has written several books, including *Uneasy Partners: Multiculturalism and Rights in Canada* and *The New Canada*. Uncommon for a journalist, Valpy ran as an NDP candidate in the 2000 federal election in Toronto's riding of Trinity-Spadina. Not elected, he returned to work at the *Globe* where he was kept from writing on political issues for a period of time. Back to regular status as a columnist, he is also a senior fellow at Massey College at the University of Toronto.

The interview with Michael Valpy is one that I am very proud of. It took a lot to get the interview, even with Dr. Fletcher's acquaintance with him. Initially, he fully agreed to the interview, but right before the taping date he emailed me very upset. It seems he had not completely read or understood the email that explained the nature of the project to him and he was afraid that the interview would be seen and misinterpreted by his employer or "the wrong people" in general. I was able to explain to him that it was not my intention to get him into any trouble and that if there were questions that he was not

comfortable answering I could accommodate that. He invited me for lunch and we met to go over the interview protocol. He had problems with many of the questions, especially the one concerning his candidacy for a political party and his return to journalism upon not being elected. By the end of the meeting we were able to reach an agreement about the questions. He was comfortable with answering most of them, some in indirect ways (not revealing names, etc).

On the day of the interview I went to the *Globe and Mail*, which was very exciting for me as an aspiring journalist. We did the taping in the newsroom where I also got some excellent B-reel footage. The interview went well. He ended up answering all of my questions. Not all of his answers were particularly useful, but they are there. Hence, I am very proud of my ability to obtain and keep this interview.

7) Trina McQueen

Trina McQueen is currently a member of the Board of Directors of CBC. She is a renowned journalist in both the private and public sectors, starting from her work as the first female host of CTV's *W-5*. Her list of positions include being the President and Chief Operating Officer of CTV, the President of the Discovery Channel, CBC Television's Vice-President of News and Current Affairs and *Newsworld*, Executive Producer of *The National*, Network Program Director, Director of the Television Network, and Vice-President of Regional Broadcasting. The Canadian Broadcasters' Hall of Fame and the Canadian News Hall of Fame have recognized her for her achievements.¹⁰⁶ Now in retirement, she teaches Broadcast Management at the Schulich School of Business at York University, which I took in fall 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Trina McQueen," *CBC Board of Directors*, 2008 <<http://www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/about/directors/mcqueen.shtml>> (10 March 2008).

The interview with Trina McQueen was very successful. She was early for the interview as she had not received my last email about the exact time, and as a result, I almost missed her. I only had half an hour to conduct the interview. I managed to do it, and her responses were extremely useful. She has more knowledge about the workings of the industry from both the profit and state-sponsored perspectives than any of the other participants. Also, being a seasoned journalist (thirty years), she was able to answer the questions succinctly, and even left pauses for editing. I did not agree with all of her points, but I did not have to. I could respect them as the perspective of someone who has spent her life living in this business.

8) Kelly Toughill

Kelly Toughill is a Journalism professor at Kings University College in Halifax. Before starting to teach she worked for several newspapers in North America. During her twenty years at the Toronto Star, she wrote for an investigative team she created, reported from Queen's Park, and served as Deputy Executive Editor.¹⁰⁷

The interview with Kelly Toughill was conducted on location in Halifax, Nova Scotia. As such, I had to make the journey out to the east coast. It was my first time on that side of the country and I was excited to go.

The interview went well. There were no technical problems. The answers that Kelly gave were mostly useful, but I found her to be somewhat defensive and closed-minded to some of the concepts that I was trying to explore. She was not very open to critique from the academy as she feels we do not truly understand what it is like to be a journalist, that

¹⁰⁷ "Kelly Toughill," *University of Kings College*, 2007 <http://www.ukings.ca/kings_3635_8455.html> (10 March 2008).

we come from a different world. While this may be true for some of us, it only hindered a more fruitful dialogue.

On a personal note, it is a testament to my professional attitude and personal strength that I was able to conduct the interview at all. The night before, I was assaulted by the owner of the Bed and Breakfast at which I was staying. I managed to escape greater harm but I was up until 3am discussing the incident with the police. It was a horrifying experience. The next day I was still scared and in shock, and I had more police matters to take care of. I was able to put this on hold in order to do the interview that afternoon. Clearly, I could not have planned for such an event and wish it had not happened. I got the interview that I came for, but overall it was a horrible research trip.

Post-production

Compared with production, post-production was a rather simple process. I used my own editing suite, consisting of an Apple computer and Final Cut Pro and DVD Studio Pro software. I cut down the ten hours of interview footage I had obtained into the segments of each that I felt were the most useful/interesting. They were useful if they related to the key arguments I was trying to make. This is an entirely subjective process, yet it is no different than writing a paper; what will be discussed has to be narrowed and not everything can or should be included. I made an effort to portray everyone's opinion and to not take comments out of context.

I then divided the footage into key arguments or groups of topics. They were: opening thoughts, advertising, corporate influence, the Internet, objectivity, laundering/censoring, partisan/editorial, practical considerations, government policy, the

Propaganda Model, resources and new media, solutions/change/unions, journalist training, and endings. I could not have included all of these topics, as the project would have then ended up being far too long to be useful as a media literacy tool. I decided to choose the most important/relevant topics to objectivity and political economy as I saw them. They are: objectivity, corporate influence, advertising, journalist training and solutions/change/unions. Elements of the other topics come into play within these (especially the Propaganda Model).

From here, the sections were polished and put together to form a cohesive argument. Transitions and B-roll were added. Audio and colour were enhanced. I then constructed a copy in DVD format with a menu that allows users to access any section. The final product is a 30-minute video that can be used by professors and journalists alike to educate, entertain, and promote media literacy.

Editing and Directorial Decisions

As with the writing of a paper, the production of a film requires that decisions be made as to the content, structure, and overall argument of the piece. It is a deeply personal process that is reflective of the creator's own bias and purpose in the creation of the work. In *Filtering the Headlines*, such bias is a critical and necessary part of the piece for two distinct reasons. First, the piece is argumentative. The analysis that underlies the presentation is based on a Critical Theory perspective. Thus, while voices that disagree, such as Lydia Miljan, are included, they are presented within the larger structure of argument and counter argument, returning to the main argument to refute the counter argument. Thus Dr. Miljan is juxtaposed with James Winter and David Skinner who share my critical perspective. David Skinner was chosen as the key participant who

guides and grounds the film. He expresses my main argument in detail and thus I return to him frequently to structure the piece.

The second reason that one side was strongly featured over the other is to highlight my argument that objectivity is impossible and that journalists and the news media should in fact state their biases with openness and honesty. That being said, there are several ways in which this can be done. For the purposes of my work, I did not explicitly state the purpose of the piece, nor did I include myself in the film to make it clear that the story comes from a particular person with a particular point of view. However, this was done implicitly within the film. I did not want to feature myself as a star within the film because I did not want to take away from the issues being discussed. The purpose of the piece is to make an argument and provide information. It is not meant to be a personal story or relentless diatribe in the style of Michael Moore. My voice is not the focus of the piece, although it is the voice that has created it. Instead, I opted for certain stylistic choices and the inclusion of specific moments of participant-provided insight to relate to the audience the fact that this is a constructed work. For example, instead of having my participants face the camera, I had them face me to the side of the camera in an attempt to dismantle the pseudo-objectivity and authority that can develop from looking into the camera/at the viewer directly. I am attempting to imply that the participants are having a conversation with someone off screen, suggesting my presence and my part in the construction of the film. In addition to this technique, insights from participants, such as James Winter's explanation that asking questions involves bias, and that "this" (the film) is "about education" were included. As well, Trina McQueen's question of "If you've directed the pictures have you directed the story?" was included.

While her answer was no, it was not included. Since she was asking a question, I left it as such in attempt to have viewers try to answer that question for themselves. In addition, I surrounded this clip with other points of view to suggest that, yes; if you've directed the pictures you have indeed directed the story, the very essence of my work's argument.

From interviewing both practitioners of journalism and academics, it became clear that they each have very different views about the influences on journalistic work. While academics are more likely to understand and focus on the structural influences on media, the journalists are more focused on the minutia of everyday work and are not able to see as clearly how their work is influenced. Hence, my argument that while journalists have agency within their profession, they are influenced and sometimes restricted by the structures in which they operate, is demonstrated. This is best displayed in the section on journalism pedagogy. Both Kelly Toughill and Trina McQueen are adamant that academic work does little to influence journalistic practice. Yet, Ms. McQueen was able to express (as her own ideas) several concepts that Dr. Fletcher described in his work almost three decades ago. Also notable is the fact that the views of Lydia Miljan, coming from a perspective on the right of the political spectrum, were more in line with those of the journalists. This demonstrates the structural influence of corporate ownership, suggesting that financially (and sometimes socially) conservative ideals are present in the news media via the journalists themselves. Both Lydia Miljan and Michael Valpy admit that most media do not adequately cover issues of poverty. Mr. Valpy did not advocate this, but admitted that it is true. He was the most insightful of structural influences of all the journalists but is not so expressive of a desire for the current system to change outright, as is David Skinner, for example. Instead, he demonstrates the agency that he

has as a renowned journalist working within the system, writing stories that deepen the cracks in the monolith.

Thus, *Filtering the Headlines* is an argumentative piece that does not attempt the impossible but instead rewards bias. Participant selection, question creation, directorial style and editorial choices all play a part in the construction of such an argument. While these are not made explicit, they are demonstrated within the film, such that it is hoped that the audience is able to both interpret and question the information given and how the work was constructed.

In the end, I feel that I have produced an interesting and informative film that reflects my best efforts at bringing theory and practice together. It evolved from its beginnings as a piece on objectivity towards a fuller political economy. It is my hope that this contribution to knowledge on the Canadian news media will be a useful tool in media literacy. It is one more step in the direction of change.

Conclusion

In summary, I submit this project and paper for review that it may be accepted for fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts in Communication and Culture Joint Program at Ryerson and York Universities.

Appendix

A: Question Protocols for Journalists

Kelly Toughill of King's University College (formerly of the Toronto Star)

1. Where have you worked as a journalist and for how long? When did you start teaching?
2. What are some of the difficulties you faced in your work as a journalist?
3. Did you ever have your work criticized for not being objective? Why do you think this is? Does this matter (why/why not)?
4. What was the editorial stance of your paper? How does it differ from other papers in the same market?
5. What are some of the most important concepts that journalism school teaches its students? (What do they teach in J-school?)
6. What is taught about objectivity in journalism school? Are these ideas useful or restricting for journalistic work?
7. Communications scholars have come up with many theories about journalistic objectivity, mostly critical (ex. Propaganda Model, criticism of advertising, infotainment, bias of journalists). Are these studies and others like it, useful to the journalism profession? Are they taught in journalism schools?
8. Are you familiar with Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's "Propaganda Model of News"? Do you think they are correct in their analysis? (How so/not?)
9. In today's world, where does objectivity belong? Is it an impossible ideal, realistic and necessary goal, or guiding principle? Can you ever be truly objective? As a journalist? As an academic?
10. Does the commercial capitalist nature of the news media undermine its ability to create democratic discussions? (How so/not?)
11. Did the advertising in your paper affect the content of articles?

12. Does the practice of objectivity in news production help or hinder democracy?

How so?

13. What needs to change within the profession or the system? What can journalists do about this?

John Mather of The EyeOpener

1. As the editor of the EyeOpener, what does your job entail?
2. What were you taught about objectivity in journalism school? Have you found this to be useful or limiting in your work?
3. What are some of the difficulties you have faced in your work as an editor? As a journalist?
4. What is the most controversial story you've run as editor? Tell me about it: the difficulties you faced and any responses you received from the readership?
5. Have you ever been working on a story where your personal ethics conflicted with your professional ethics? How did you handle this situation?
6. Have you ever had your work criticized for not being objective? Why do you think that is? Is this important?
7. Does your paper have a particular political stance?
8. How is the EyeOpener different from Ryerson's other major weekly, the Ryersonian?
9. You were offered a job in the United Arab Emirates as a journalist. How did that come about why did you decide to accept the offer?
10. What do you feel the role of the journalist in society is? For democracy?
11. Do you have any fears about practicing journalism (the responsibility, libel, etc.)?

12. Are you familiar with Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's "Propaganda Model of News" (Size, Ownership, Profit Orientation; Advertising; Expert Sources; Flak; Anti-communism as Control Mechanism)? Do you think they are correct in their analysis? (How so/not?)
13. How does the advertising in your paper affect the content of articles?
14. In today's world, where does objectivity belong? Is it an impossible ideal, realistic and necessary goal, or guiding principle? In journalism?
15. Does the commercial nature of the news media undermine its ability to create democratic discussions? (How so/not?)
16. Does the culture of objectivity in journalism help or hinder democracy (how so/not?) (Culture- how the news media use the idea of objectivity, ex. CBC commercials)
17. What needs to change within the profession or the system (if anything)? What can journalists do about this?
18. Academics have come up with many theories about journalistic objectivity, mostly critical (ex. Propaganda Model, criticism of advertising, infotainment, bias of journalists). Do you think there is anything about your work that they do not understand or consider in their studies?

Michael Valpy of The Globe and Mail

1. Why did you decide to become a journalist? What stories do you currently cover?
2. What were you taught about objectivity in journalism school (if you went)? Have you found these ideas to be useful or restricting in your work?
3. What are some of the difficulties you have faced in your work as a journalist?

4. Have you ever had your work criticized for not being objective? Why do you think this is? Does this matter (why/why not)?
5. Does your paper have a particular political stance? How does it differ from other papers in the same market (National Post, Toronto Star)?
6. Did running for the New Democratic Party in the 2000 Federal Election affect your work as a journalist? How so? Where does the concept of objectivity lie when you are both a politician and a political journalist?
7. Does the practice of objectivity in news production help or hinder democracy? How so?
8. Are you familiar with Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's "Propaganda Model of News"? If so, do you think they are correct in their analysis? (Why/not?)
9. Does the commercial capitalist nature of the news media undermine its ability to create democratic discussions? (How so/not?) How does the advertising in your paper affect the content of articles?
10. Academics have come up with many theories about journalistic objectivity, mostly critical (ex. Propaganda Model, criticism of advertising, infotainment, bias of journalists). Do you think there is anything about the work of journalists that they do not understand or consider in their studies?
11. In today's world, where does objectivity belong? Is it an impossible ideal, realistic and necessary goal, or guiding principle? Can you ever be truly objective? As a journalist? As an academic?

12. What needs to change within the profession or the system? What can journalists do about this? What role should politicians play? How can academics get their voices heard by the former groups?

Stephanie Marcus of the Ryersonian

1. How did you become the editor of the Ryersonian? What does your job entail?
2. What were you taught about objectivity in journalism school? Have you found these ideas to be useful or restricting in your work?
3. What are some of the difficulties you have faced in your work as an editor? As a journalist?
4. Have you ever had your work criticized for not being objective? Why do you think this is? Does this matter (why/why not)?
5. Does your paper have a particular political stance? How does it differ from The Eyeopener?
6. Are you familiar with Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's "Propaganda Model of News"? If so, do you think they are correct in their analysis? (Why/not?)
7. Does the commercial capitalist nature of the news media undermine its ability to create democratic discussions? (How so/not?) How does the advertising in your paper affect the content of articles?
8. Does the practice of objectivity in news production help or hinder democracy? (How so/not?)
9. In today's world, where does objectivity belong? Is it an impossible ideal, realistic and necessary goal, or guiding principle? Can you ever be truly objective? As a journalist?

10. Academics have come up with many theories about journalistic objectivity, mostly critical (ex. Propaganda Model, criticism of advertising, infotainment, bias of journalists). Do you think there is anything about your work that they do not understand or consider in their studies?
11. What needs to change within the profession or the system? What can journalists do about this?

Trina McQueen, formerly of CBC and CTV

1. With what news organizations have you worked and in what positions?
2. What are some of the difficulties you faced in your work as a journalist? As an executive?
3. Have you ever had your work criticized for not being objective? Why do you think this is? Does this matter (why/why not)?
4. Have the companies you've worked for had particular editorial/political stances? How does this come into play in the production of news?
5. Does the commercial nature of the news media undermine its ability to create democratic discussions? (How so/not? Ie: who is left out of the discussion?) (Should news be considered a public good- should it be privately or publicly owned? Compare CBC to CTV).
6. How does advertising affect the production of a news broadcast?
7. Academics have come up with many theories about journalistic objectivity, mostly critical (ex. Propaganda Model, criticism of advertising, infotainment, bias of journalists). Can you comment on the relevance or usefulness of this type of study (to actual journalistic practice/running a news organization)? Do you think

there is anything about your work that they do not understand or consider in their studies? (budget, time constraints).

8. In particular, are you familiar with Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's "Propaganda Model of News"? Do you think they are correct in their analysis? (How so/not?)
9. In today's world, where does objectivity belong? Is it an impossible ideal, realistic and necessary goal, or guiding principle? Can you ever be truly objective? As a journalist?
10. Is there anything that needs to change within the profession or the system of news production? What can journalists do about this? Managers and executives?

B: Question Protocols for Professors

Dr. Lydia Miljan, University of Windsor

1. In your book *Hidden Agendas*, you and your co-author Barry Cooper focus not on advertisers, corporate amalgamations or the other business considerations that many other academic studies do, but instead focus on the journalists themselves. Why is this and what did you discover about the impact that journalists have on the news they produce?
2. Are you familiar with Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's "Propaganda Model of News"? Do you think they are correct in their analysis? (How so/not?) Are your findings completely at odds with this model or do they reflect some common ideas?

3. Does the commercial capitalist nature of the news media undermine its ability to create democratic discussions? (How so/not?) Does advertising in a paper affect the content of articles?
4. In today's world, where does objectivity belong? Is it an impossible ideal, realistic and necessary goal, or guiding principle? Can you ever be truly objective? As a journalist? As an academic?
5. Does the practice of objectivity in news production help or hinder democracy? How so?
6. Do the private beliefs of journalists automatically ruin their ideals and taint their practice?
7. You write "journalists don't believe that their political views have an impact on the way they report news" (p.99). Is this always true and why might this be the case? Do schools of journalism propagate or deter this belief?
8. Your survey found that journalists were not overtly censored by their superiors (p.97-98) but that they did self-select work environments that they felt were more in line with their own politics. How does this compare to Chomsky's assessment of "flak", of journalists worrying about being reprimanded or penalized and self-censoring to avoid it? Does this affect their objectivity? (ie: the hiring and firing of like-minded individuals, p.175).
9. Partisan papers of the 1800s clearly identified their political stances. Was this a more honest approach? If parties on the right and left of the political spectrum both claim that newspapers favour the other side, where does the responsibility of the journalist lie?

10. What needs to change within the profession or the system? What can journalists do about this? Academics?

David Skinner of the Campaign for Democratic Media/Professor at York in Communication and Culture

1. Tell me about the Campaign for Democratic Media (purpose, goals, etc).
2. Would you explain (briefly) Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's "Propaganda Model of News"? Do you think they are correct in their analysis? (How so/not?)
3. In today's world, where does objectivity belong? Is it an impossible ideal, realistic and necessary goal, or guiding principle? Can you ever be truly objective? As a journalist? As an academic?
4. Does the commercial capitalist nature of the news media undermine its ability to create democratic discussions? (How so/not?) How does advertising affect the content of news articles or broadcasts?
5. Does the practice of objectivity in news production help or hinder democracy? How so?
6. What is the focus of your academic work? How has it been received by media professionals? (Or has it been received at all?)
7. Journalists give many reasons why their work is difficult and why the nature of news production is difficult to change (ie: time and budget constraints, making a living means working for a corporation). Are these concerns valid? How so/not?
8. What needs to change within the profession or the system? What can journalists do about this? Academics?

Dr. James Winter, University of Windsor

1. What has been the focus of your current work? Can you talk a bit about your new book and how it relates to the concept of journalistic objectivity?
2. Can you discuss some current examples of biased reporting?
3. Are you familiar with Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's "Propaganda Model of News"? Do you think they are correct in their analysis? (How so/not?) In which ways do your views and theories co-inside with Chomsky and where do they differ?
4. You coined the term "media think" - what does this mean?
5. If the ways of thinking of "media owners, managers and workers" (xxvii) influence the news they create, who is the most responsible for biased, non-objective or limited perspectives in reporting? What is the balance of power between them?
6. Can journalists be objective within a commercial-capitalist society?
7. How does this differ with Miljan and Cooper's perspective that journalists greatly influence the news they produce?
8. Does the commercial capitalist nature of the news media undermine its ability to create democratic discussions? (How so/not?) How does the advertising in a paper affect the content of articles?
9. In today's world, where does objectivity belong? Is it an impossible ideal, realistic and necessary goal, or guiding principle? Can you ever be truly objective? As a journalist? As an academic?
10. Does the practice of objectivity in news production help or hinder democracy? How so?

11. What needs to change within the profession or the system? What can journalists do about this? Academics?
12. Are “alternative media” sources adequate?

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