

## The Canadian Newspaper Industry's Portrayal of the Oka Crisis

Warren H. Skea

*This paper examines how the Canadian newspaper industry, an industry that professes and prides itself on being objective, portrayed the Oka crisis. The sociological literature on the Canadian media suggests that the portrayal of news events in Canadian newspapers is based on three variables: the region in which a newspaper is published, the corporate structure of the newspaper and the type of sources used in reports. A thematic analysis of all articles and editorials within a one-week time frame in fifteen major daily Canadian newspapers is provided as well as tests of the significance of the three independent variables. The employment of the theoretical concept of hegemony indicates that the newspaper industry uses the concepts of "objectivity" and freedom of the press to profess unbiased reporting. Hegemony enables ideology sustaining the political and economic status quo to be latently published in newspapers without any scepticism by the reading public.*

### Introduction

The newspaper industry plays an important role in the life of Canadians. At least 69 percent of Canadians aged eighteen and over read a newspaper on a daily basis (Newspaper Marketing Bureau, 1991). The newspaper industry has enjoyed, under the cloak of freedom of the press, a special status that allows expressions ordinary citizens do not enjoy (Khaki and Prasad, 1988). As such, Canadians have experienced the awesome potential of the newspaper industry's influence on their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. This influential quality warrants an examination of the Canadian newspaper industry's portrayal of significant news events such as the Oka crisis.

It would be incorrect to assume that the way the newspaper industry depicts the world is the way the world exists. Erving Goffman (1974) demonstrated that in everyday life we "frame" reality in order to negotiate, manage, comprehend and choose appropriate repertoires of cognition and action. The newspaper industry also employs frames and framing techniques (Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980). Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely, to recognize it as information,

to assign it to categories and to package it for quick relay to their audience (Hall et al., 1980).

At the same time, powerful groups such as government consciously manipulate events to achieve specific or favourable media coverage. In the case of the Oka crisis, Winter (1992) reports that "to the federal government Oka represented an exercise in public relations, or more precisely, in crisis or public opinion management" (p. 248). The army alone hired over twenty public relations experts to advise them, at a cost in excess of \$1 million (York and Pindera, 1991, pp. 374-75). The media were furnished with managed opinion in the form of news releases and programmed spokespersons from both the army and all levels of government (Winter, 1992).

Less powerful groups, such as Natives, have long expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the coverage of Native affairs by the Canadian newspaper industry (Ponting, 1986; Frideres, 1988; Khaki and Prasad, 1988). Natives feel that there has been persistent negative portrayal, bias, scapegoating, stereotyping and sensationalism of Native peoples by the Canadian media (Khaki and Prasad, 1988; Grenier, 1992).

The sociological literature examining the Canadian media suggests that there are certain variables that are important in explaining a newspapers' portrayal of a news event. This paper tests hypotheses developed from the variables supplied by this literature; as well, it illustrates how the Canadian newspaper industry as an aggregate thematically portrayed the Oka crisis.

## Theoretical Perspective

Theoretically, we know little about the principles that direct the Canadian newspaper industry's portrayal of reality. The producers of ideas within the newspaper industry are dominated by the most powerful segments of the upper class (Porter, 1965; Gitlin, 1980; Ginsberg, 1986; Riggins, 1992). Although the notions of freedom of the press and objectivity are essential in a liberal democratic society, it has been widely agreed that powerful groups and individuals have access to the media (Porter, 1965; Clement, 1975; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Lutz and Collins, 1993). Outside this type of theoretical analysis there has been little critical analysis of the Canadian newspaper industry (see Lutz and Collins, 1993). However, in both Britain and the United States there has been a critical analysis of the media that incorporates the notion of hegemony (Hall et al., 1978; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980).

Hegemony, or the successful construction of popular consent, exists not only in the larger society and in professional vocations such as law and medicine, but also among journalists. The media elite are required to preserve and honour the political-economic system because their power and prestige

depend on its success (Porter, 1965; Clement, 1975). Through socialization and experience, essentially by class interest, newspaper owners and managers aim to preserve the system in which they operate, including the concepts of capital, private property and the state. Journalists are also committed to ideological principles to which the state and its agencies adhere, as well as to individual success within bureaucratic corporate structures (Horton, 1978; Gitlin, 1980). To continue to substantiate the dominant frames seen in the newspaper industry, journalists must practise, understand and believe in the hegemonic ideology (Gitlin, 1980, pp. 268-75). It is apparent that a journalist, to secure and retain his or her job, must be considered by the employing newspaper as endorsing the dominant ideals of that particular newspaper.

At the same time, the political and economic elite (including the newspaper elite) consider some opposition of opinion between the newspaper industry and the political/economic elite as necessary. This conflict also helps to legitimize the industry as a whole. In other words, the newspaper industry cannot ignore opposing movements or debates because it would undermine not only the larger political and economic system but also the legitimacy of the newspaper industry. Hegemonic ideology is latent in newspaper articles and is typically difficult to discern (Hall et al., 1978, pp. 59-62).

The perception that journalists are autonomous professionals is important in legitimizing the newspaper industry. Journalists are trained so "that they have professional prerogatives to preserve," and certain ideological assumptions are latent in their reporting. Newspapers achieve hegemony by imposing standardized assumptions on events and conditions that must be "covered" by the dictates of the prevailing news standard (Gitlin, 1980, pp. 250-51). This is apparent by the need for stories to be easily edited and reorganized at the last minute by producers and editors who have been nowhere near the scene of the story (Gans, 1979, pp. 57-58). At the same time, the short narrative form of newspaper articles usually means "the account is stripped of context and history, leaving only the barest possible facts" (Winter, 1992, p. 208).

Journalists thus "sustain the dominant frames through the banal, everyday momentum of their routines. Their autonomy stays within the boundaries of the hegemonic system" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 269). When journalists submit news articles that are sympathetic to radicals, editors are likely to intervene in the news process in order to sustain the hegemonic principles (Gans, 1979). This is especially the case when journalists are reporting confrontational events, like the Oka crisis, where the government is the primary source of information. However, the concept of hegemony, as well as the data, suggest that a few newspapers are somewhat sympathetic to the Mohawks' cause.

## Literature Review

Porter (1965) and Clement (1975) provide the seminal critical analysis of the newspaper industry in Canada. Both take an instrumentalist approach when analyzing the media. They impute a conspiratorial motive: a dominant ideology is developed by the owners and controllers of the newspaper industry and they determine what is printed in their newspapers. Those who own and control the major daily newspaper corporations (i.e., the board of directors) are members of what both Porter and Clement call the "corporate elite." The dominant ideology constructs a reality that will maintain the current social, economic and political conditions. It is in this corporate elite's best interest to increase its personal wealth and power at the expense of the proletariat. Porter's and Clement's conspiratorial approach claims the reality construction that journalists and editors report is directly formulated and implemented by the corporate elite.

Armstrong's (1972) analysis of the media's representation of the FLQ crisis was meant to determine the role of the Canadian media during times of crisis. Armstrong asserts that liberal democracies have generally permitted opposition to the prevailing order; however, when threats attain serious proportions, forces are developed. The role of symbol manipulation is more evident in times of crisis. For example, Armstrong states that in the FLQ crisis the funeral of Laporte was used as a means to gain overall legitimacy for politicians. The media were used effectively to "mobilize fear" among the populace and gain support for the government. Armstrong's analysis indicates that in times of crisis it is the political leadership that is given access to the media, and the media gives overwhelming support to that leadership.

Regional diversity is apparent in people's attitudes and opinions on complex issues (Ginsberg, 1986). However, Ginsberg (1986) found considerable similarity of outlook on basic political questions across all regions. Ponting and Gibbins (1980) found through the employment of the Indian Sympathy Index that "the region in which respondents lived had a marked impact on their orientation towards Indians and Indian issues" (p.89). They found that the western provinces were least sympathetic to Native issues and Quebec and Ontario were most sympathetic. If newspapers reflect the political philosophy of their readership one would assume that the newspaper industry would portray the events of the Oka crisis according to the level of Native sympathy found in that region.

The literature on Canadian media suggests that several factors might explain the newspaper industry's portrayal of the events at Oka. Therefore, on the basis of this literature three hypotheses have been developed. The first hypothesis suggests that the corporate structure of a newspaper will determine

a newspaper's portrayal of events. For example, the larger the corporate structure of a newspaper the more "anti-Native" the portrayal will be. For simplicity ownership structure may be categorized as: small newspaper-only companies, medium-sized corporations that own numerous media organizations and large corporate structures that own non-media as well as the newspaper being analyzed. The second hypothesis is that the source (Native, non-Native or beginning with a non-Native source and using a Native one later) will correlate with the thematic portrayal of articles and editorials. The third hypothesis proposes that the region in which a newspaper is published will affect the thematic portrayal of a newspaper's articles and editorials. For example, using Ponting and Gibbins (1980) analysis, newspapers in the provincial regions of Ontario and Quebec should be more sympathetic to Natives in their portrayal of the Oka crisis than newspapers in the prairie provinces.

## Methodology

The research design of this paper consists of a secondary data analysis. The unit of analysis is the articles and editorials found in each of the newspapers examined in this analysis. An examination of all articles and editorials that focus on the Oka crisis from fifteen Canadian newspapers from Monday, 16 July to Friday, 20 July 1990 inclusive. The rationale for choosing this particular week is twofold. The first reason is that the death of S.Q. Corporal Lemay occurred on the previous Wednesday. It may be argued that this was a central incident within the crisis. Secondly, emanating from the shooting death of Corporal Lemay was the significant national media attention the Oka crisis received. Newspapers are English language newspapers only and have been selected on the basis of researcher availability and represent a majority of the newspapers Canadians, as a whole, read on a daily basis.<sup>1</sup>

The data analysis consists of two parts: a thematic analysis of all articles and editorials, then the testing of the three hypotheses based on the literature. As Ericson et al. (1991, p. 54) state, the role of the analyst is to "construct a reading" of the text. Researchers have demonstrated that when analyzing continuing stories and news themes, patterns and systematic relationships can be captured through qualitative research techniques (Dworkin, 1986, pp 62-65). Four major themes emerged.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Dependent Variable*

The first theme was the law and order theme, which includes editorials or articles in which the primary dialogue advocated paramilitary or government intervention to end the Natives' blockade at Kahnawake. Articles in this

category contained phrases such as "howled for a military strike" or key words such as "illegal" or "militant." It was quite apparent that this theme communicates a very "anti-Native" tone.

The second theme, the death of Lemay, may appear to be a neutral theme but quite often it conveyed government and police rhetoric. A similar kind of interpretation was found by Armstrong (1972) in her analysis of the FLQ crisis in that the funeral of Laporte was used to gain legitimacy for government action. Articles with this theme attempted to elicit a response not of sorrow for Lemay's widow but one of anger directed at the Mohawks, who were portrayed as violent, criminal and responsible for Lemay's death. This anger functioned as a delegitimization tool for the Mohawks' cause and led to the classification of these articles as "anti-Native."

The third thematic category, telling the Natives' story, provided accounts of the Mohawks' interpretations and the problems they faced at the blockade. Because Natives are the focus of these articles, and Mohawk sources are used, a decidedly "pro-Native" approach emerges.

The final theme focuses on the larger topic of Native rights and the history of Native peoples in Canada. This theme, which occurred least often, was most often found in editorials expounding many of the injustices perpetuated on Natives in Canada. This theme was clearly a "pro-Native" theme because it depicted Native rights and the injustices confronting Natives.

Generally, these four themes may be divided into two categories: "anti-Native" themes, including the law and order theme and the Lemay funeral theme, and "pro-Native" themes that include the Natives' "story" and the Native rights and history theme.

In total 182 articles and 26 editorials (or an average of 13.9 articles and/or editorials per newspaper) were analyzed (Table 1). Most articles were found on the front page of newspapers or another page exclusively devoted to articles focusing on the Oka crisis. On average, articles were relatively large, occupying up to one quarter of a page.

### *The Independent Variables*

There are three independent variables in this analysis based on the hypothesis developed from the literature. The Canadian media literature suggests that the corporate structure of a newspaper, the type of source of an article and the region in which a newspaper is published are important variables that might aid in explaining how Canadian newspapers portrayed the events at Oka.<sup>3</sup>

## Results

Newspapers, as finished products, vary in several ways. For example, newspapers may vary considerably in content and style (e.g., tabloid versus

national news), particularly when the target audience is different. However, most of the articles written about the Oka crisis in the newspapers in this analysis were found on the front page or on a page on which numerous articles about the crisis were published.

Because moral disorder stories like the Oka crisis involve images of violence, most articles were accompanied with photographs. A majority (61 percent) of photographs were of three themes: masked Mohawk warriors at or near the blockade, demonstrators burning a Mohawk effigy and calling for the end of the blockade or Corporal Lemay's widow at his funeral. All three of these types of images incite negative feelings about the Mohawks by the reader. Visual stimulation via headlines such as "Native Threat" (*Calgary Sun*, 19 July 1990) and "Less like Warriors than thugs" (*Montreal Gazette*, 17 July 1990) may provoke images of the Oka crisis that may not be warranted, or implied, in the article. The Canadian newspaper industry, it

**Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Themes  
by Newspaper, July 1990**

Newspaper	Themes				Total
	Law and Order	Death of Lemay	Native Story	Native Rights	
<i>St. John's Telegram</i>	5 (71.4%)	1 (14.3%)	1 (14.3%)	0 (0)	7
<i>Edmonton Sun</i>	8 (66.7%)	1 (8.3%)	1 (8.3%)	2 (16.7%)	12
<i>Vancouver Sun Province</i>	6 (75.0%)	0 (0)	2 (25.0%)	0 (0)	8
<i>Calgary Sun</i>	7 (63.6%)	1 (9.1%)	2 (18.2%)	1 (9.1%)	11
<i>Montreal Gazette</i>	19 (59.4%)	1 (3.1%)	7 (21.9%)	5 (15.6%)	32
<i>Ottawa Citizen</i>	14 (53.8%)	1 (3.8%)	10 (38.5%)	1 (3.8%)	26
<i>Toronto Globe and Mail</i>	8 (53.3%)	1 (6.7%)	5 (33.3%)	1 (6.7%)	15
Charlottetown <i>Guardian &amp; Patriot</i>	6 (50%)	1 (8.3%)	3 (25.0%)	2 (16.7%)	12
<i>Calgary Herald</i>	4 (44.4%)	1 (11.1%)	4 (44.4%)	0 (0)	9
<i>Toronto Star</i>	12 (46.2%)	2 (7.7%)	12 (46.2%)	0 (0)	26
<i>Halifax Chronicle-Herald</i>	3 (50%)	0 (0)	2 (33.3%)	1 (16.7%)	6
<i>The Winnipeg Free Press</i>	3 (33.3%)	1 (11.1%)	5 (55.6%)	0 (0)	9
<i>Regina Leader Post</i>	3 (42.9%)	0 (0)	4 (57.1%)	0 (0)	7
<i>Edmonton Journal</i>	5 (33.3%)	1 (6.7%)	7 (46.7%)	2 (13.3%)	15
<i>Saskatoon Star-Phoenix</i>	4 (28.6%)	0 (0)	6 (42.9%)	4 (28.6%)	14
N =	107	12	71	18	208
mean =	7.1	0.8	4.7	1.2	13.9
percentage =	51.4%	5.8%	34.1%	8.7%	100%

may then be argued, was not necessarily objective not only because a majority (58 percent) of the articles was about an "anti-Native" theme, but also because "anti-Native" imagery was incited by many of the headlines and accompanying photographs.

To develop an understanding of how the Canadian newspaper industry portrayed the events of the Oka crisis it is important to know from where the newspapers received the articles and editorials they published. Subscription to one, or several, wire services allows newspapers in Canada to print wire service articles. Reporting on the Oka crisis is not an exception to this trend in that the Canadian Press wire service provided 36 percent of all articles published and almost all of the articles in some small newspapers. However, the material a newspaper receives over a wire service is not necessarily published exactly as it comes off the wire. Often staff journalists or editors add or delete bits of information that they believe enhance or detract from the article.

An example of how newspapers can change the same article they have received from Canadian Press can be illustrated in the following articles. The first article, titled "Indian leaders to meet," appeared in the 18 July 1990 edition of the *Regina Leader Post* and is almost identical to an article published in the 18 July 1990 edition of the *St. John's Telegram*, titled "Hostility now mounting over Mohawk standoffs." In addition, the article in the *Telegram* was somewhat longer and continued on the next page while the shorter *Leader Post* article concluded.

This indicates that although both the *Regina Leader Post* and the *St. John's Telegram* published an article that came from the same Canadian Press release article, the resulting article in each newspaper differed markedly. The beginning of these articles is somewhat neutral in regard to the Oka crisis while the conclusion that the *St. John's Telegram* published was of an "anti-Native" theme. Hence, the "same" story is not necessarily identical in different newspapers.

When one analyzes newspapers individually it is apparent that on the basis of readership the majority of Canadians consulting newspapers reads a significantly higher proportion (58 percent) of "anti-Native" articles and editorials on the Oka crisis. For example, newspapers with a majority of articles and editorials with an "anti-Native" theme represent 76 percent of the readership of the fifteen newspapers in this analysis. This means that most of the newspapers with larger readership are the newspapers that publish more "anti-Native" articles and conversely, the newspapers that published more "pro-Native" articles, such as the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* and the *Regina Leader Post*, have smaller readerships under 70,000. These statistics, although



descriptive in nature, are meaningful because they signify each of the newspaper's thematic portrayal of the Oka crisis, as well as denoting each newspaper's political philosophy. It is interesting that two of the newspapers that did not publish articles on the death of Corporal Lemay, the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* and the *Regina Leader Post*, also published the highest proportions of "pro-Native" theme articles or editorials (see Table 1). A possible explanation for this trend (to be examined later) may be the larger proportion of Native subscribers to these two newspapers.

The first independent variable in this analysis is the corporate structure of the newspapers. When the corporate structure variable is cross-tabulated with the themes of the articles some distinct trends emerge. For example, articles found in newspapers with a small corporate structure are evenly distributed in terms of being pro-Native or anti-Native, while articles found in medium-sized newspapers have a larger proportion (67 percent) of pro-Native articles. As hypothesized, most articles in large newspapers (63 percent) are anti-Native. However, the predominantly pro-Native thematic approach by medium-sized newspapers does not conform to the hypothesized relationship. To further examine this question, the strength of association is measured between these variables.

The lambda coefficient of .08 indicates that the correlation between the corporate structure of a newspaper and the theme of its articles and editorials is not substantively significant. The lambda coefficient indicates that one would have an 8 percent reduction in errors in the prediction of the theme of an article with the knowledge of the newspaper's corporate structure. This finding implies that although the corporate structure of a newspaper would appear to be correlated with the thematic portrayal of the events at Oka there is no obvious progression in the portrayal from small to large corporate newspaper structures. Although it is apparent that newspapers with a large corporate structure portrayed the events at Oka in a very anti-Native manner it is also evident that medium-sized newspapers' portrayal of the events was

---

**Table 2: Corporate Structure by Theme, July 1990**

Type of Newspaper	Law and Order	Death of Lemay	Native Story	Native Rights	Total
Small corporate	14 (43.8%)	2 (6.2%)	15 (46.9%)	1 (3.1%)	32
Medium corporate	7 (33.3%)	0 (0)	10 (47.6%)	4 (19.0%)	21
Large corporate	85 (54.8%)	10 (6.5%)	47 (30.3%)	13 (8.4%)	155
Total	106 (51.0%)	12 (5.8%)	72 (34.6%)	18 (8.7%)	208

Lambda = 0.08

---

more pro-Native than small-sized corporate newspapers. This suggests that it is difficult to demonstrate the instrumentalist theories used by Porter (1965) and Clement (1975), which state that newspapers with large corporate structures portray reality in a more conservative manner because of the ownership structure of the newspaper.

Still to be determined is the role corporate structure did play in the newspaper industry's portrayal of the Oka crisis. The small corporate newspapers in this analysis are the Charlottetown *Guardian & Patriot* and the Toronto *Star*. The target audience of these newspapers may be called petty bourgeois (Newspaper Marketing Bureau of Canada Readership Data and Guide, 1991). It can be argued that the main objective of these newspapers is to promote the democratic capitalist order of which they are a part. If this is the case, then it may be assumed that these two smaller newspapers would be somewhat conservative in nature, and hence, have the equivalent thematic division. This appears to be a plausible explanation with the inadequacy of a more comprehensive explication. This explanation subsequently resolves why small corporate newspapers portrayed the events at Oka in a more "anti-Native" and law-and-order fashion than medium-sized newspapers. It is then apparent that a newspaper's corporate structure has little significance in the portrayal of the Oka crisis.

The second independent variable in this analysis is the type of source used for each article or editorial: "Native," "non-Native" or "non-Native-then-Native." The latter category is significant because studies on newspaper readers' habits indicate that most readers read the first few sentences of an article or "scan" the article and if it is not of particular interest to them they do not read the whole article (Newspaper Marketing Bureau, 1991). Therefore, because most of the articles on the Oka crisis were on the front page of the newspapers it may be assumed many readers only read the first part of an article; hence, the location of the "non-Native" source becomes more crucial.

The overall frequency distribution of the types of sources on a per newspaper basis (Table 3) reveals that non-Native sourced articles were the most common. Considering that most people read only the first part of an article a majority of people read non-Native sourced articles, or parts thereof. Among the newspapers with the most Native sourced articles were the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, with 46.6 percent and 42.8 percent respectively. They are also the most pro-Native newspapers in the analysis. Similarly, newspapers with the most non-Native sources, the *St. John's Telegram* (71.4 percent) and the *Montreal Gazette* (65.6 percent), are also among the top few newspapers with predominantly anti-Native themes. Obvious contrasts to this generality are the Charlottetown *Guardian &*

*Patriot* and the *Regina Leader Post*. The *Guardian & Patriot* had a significantly high proportion of articles in Native sourced category while not being very pro-Native, and the *Regina Leader Post* has a high proportion of articles in the non-Native-then-Native sourced category while generally having thematically pro-Native articles. Again, this proclivity may be attributed to the higher Native readership of these newspapers. This suggests that the correlation between the sources used in newspapers' articles and the theme most prevalent in their articles may be somewhat suspect.

Table 4 shows correlations between the theme and the type of source used on an individual newspaper basis. The results indicate that the correlation between the dominant theme a newspaper presents and the type of source is not high for most newspapers and rather high for a few. The average lambda coefficient is .2, or a 20 percent reduction in error in the prediction of the theme of an article when one knows the type of source used in the article or editorial. However, this non-association may be due to the fact that for six of the newspapers the correlation between these variables is 0. These newspapers

**Table 3: Type of Information Source by Newspaper, July 1990**

Newspaper	Native	Non-Native	Non-Native then Native	Total
St. John's Telegram	1 (14.3%)	5 (71.4%)	1 (14.3%)	7
Edmonton Sun	1 (8.3%)	7 (58.3%)	4 (33.3%)	12
Vancouver Sun Province	1 (12.5%)	3 (37.5%)	4 (50%)	8
Calgary Sun	4 (36.4%)	6 (54.5%)	1 (9.1%)	11
Montreal Gazette	7 (21.9%)	21 (65.6%)	4 (12.5%)	32
Ottawa Citizen	9 (36.0%)	11 (44.0%)	5 (20%)	25
Toronto Globe and Mail	3 (20%)	8 (53.3%)	4 (26.7%)	15
Charlottetown <i>Guardian &amp; Patriot</i>	8 (66.7%)	3 (25.0%)	1 (8.3%)	12
Calgary Herald	1 (11.1%)	5 (55.6%)	3 (33.3%)	9
Toronto Star	10 (38.5%)	13 (50%)	3 (11.5%)	26
Halifax Chronicle-Herald	0 (0)	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.7%)	6
The Winnipeg Free Press	3 (33.3%)	2 (22.2%)	4 (44.4%)	9
Regina Leader Post	1 (14.3%)	1 (14.3%)	5 (71.4%)	7
Edmonton Journal	7 (46.7%)	5 (33.3%)	3 (20%)	15
Saskatoon Star-Phoenix	6 (42.9%)	4 (28.6%)	4 (28.6%)	14
N =	62 (29.8%)	96 (46.2%)	50 (24.0%)	208
mean =	4.1	6.4	3.3	13.9
percentage =	29.8%	46.2%	24.0%	100%

**Table 4: Correlation between Theme and Information Source**

Newspaper	Lambda
St. John's <i>Telegram</i> (a)	0
<i>Edmonton Sun</i> (a)	0
<i>Vancouver Sun Province</i>	0.5
<i>Calgary Sun</i> (a)	0
<i>Montreal Gazette</i>	0.08
<i>Ottawa Citizen</i>	0.1
<i>Toronto Globe and Mail</i>	0.5
<i>Charlottetown Guardian &amp; Patriot</i>	0.4
<i>Calgary Herald</i>	0.25
<i>Toronto Star</i>	0.23
<i>Halifax Chronicle-Herald</i>	0.66
<i>The Winnipeg Free Press</i> (b)	0
<i>Regina Leader Post</i> (b)	0
<i>Edmonton Journal</i>	0.33
<i>Saskatoon Star-Phoenix</i> (b)	0
mean =	0.2

(a) = newspapers with non-Native themes and low lambda statistics

(b) = newspapers with Native themes and low lambda statistics

Note: high correlation indicates a newspaper with a "pro-Native" theme and non-Native sources or vice versa.

can be considered extremist (labelled "a" and "b"). It may be suggested that these extremist newspapers predetermined the themes of their articles despite the source(s) used; hence, it is easy to predict the theme of their articles. This brings into question the principle of "objectivity" in the newspaper industry. Only those newspapers with a significant lambda can be considered to be "objective" on the basis of the sources they used.

The third and last independent variable in this analysis is the region in which a newspaper is published. The frequency distribution of the themes of articles and editorials on a regional basis (Table 5) indicates that Ponting and Gibbins's (1980) findings, based on individual Canadians' sympathy levels towards Natives on a regional basis, does not exactly parallel these newspapers' thematic portrayal—assuming that the theme of an article (either "anti-Native" or "pro-Native") is equivalent to Indian sympathy. For example, Ponting and Gibbins (1980) found that individuals in Quebec were the most sympathetic to Native issues; however, 62 percent of articles or editorials in

the Quebec newspaper (the *Montreal Gazette*) had an "anti-Native" theme—one of the highest. This negative climate of opinion may be explained by the long history of the Oka land dispute in Quebec and the actual consequences of the dispute such as roadblocks. However, by contrast, Saskatchewan newspapers, from the region Ponting and Gibbins found to be the least sympathetic to Native issues, had the lowest proportion of "anti-Native" articles at 33 percent (Table 5).

These findings generally suggest that newspapers in regions with higher proportions of Natives, and perhaps readership (i.e., Saskatchewan and Manitoba) portrayed the Oka crisis in a more "pro-Native" manner. However, an anomaly to this trend is Alberta. Alberta has a high proportion of Natives as well as a high proportion of "anti-Native" articles in its newspapers. The lambda coefficient of .09 indicates that the correlation between the region of a newspaper and the portrayal of the Oka crisis on the basis of theme is not significant. In fact, one would only have a 9 percent reduction in errors in the prediction of the theme of an article with the knowledge of the region in which the newspaper was published. Therefore, it can be concluded that statistically the newspaper industry's portrayal of the Oka crisis as either "anti-Native" or "pro-Native" does not parallel the opinion of a region's population in regards to Native issues as found by Ponting and Gibbins (1980). This would indicate that something other than the region, and presumably the readers' opinions within these regions, affects the newspaper industry's thematic portrayal of the Oka crisis.

**Table 5: Regional Distribution of Stories by Theme, July 1990**

Region (number of newspapers in parentheses)	Law and Order	Death of Lemay	Native Story	Native Rights	Total
Maritimes (3)	14 (56.0%)	2 (8.0%)	6 (24.0%)	3 (12.0%)	25
Quebec (1)	19 (59.4%)	1 (3.1%)	7 (21.9%)	5 (15.6%)	32
Ontario (3)	33 (50%)	4 (6.1%)	28 (42.4%)	1 (1.5%)	66
Manitoba (1)	3 (33.3%)	1 (11.1%)	5 (55.6%)	0 (0)	9
Saskatchewan (2)	7 (33.3%)	0 (0)	10 (47.6%)	4 (19.0%)	21
Alberta (4)	24 (51.1%)	4 (8.5%)	14 (29.8%)	5 (10.6%)	47
British Columbia (1)	6 (75.0%)	0 (0)	2 (25.0%)	0 (0)	8
Total (15)	106 (51.0%)	12 (5.8%)	72 (34.6%)	18 (8.7%)	208

Although, statistically speaking, region is not a significant variable, when one examines regional categories significant trends do appear: specifically, the high proportion of "pro-Native" articles in the Saskatchewan and Manitoba regions. A possible explanation as to why the two newspapers published in Saskatchewan were among the most "pro-Native" newspapers may be due to the political persuasion of the province. At both the federal and provincial levels Saskatchewan residents have long strongly supported the New Democratic Party which, it may be argued, is more likely to support, or at least be philosophically open, to Native rights and struggles. Secondly, Saskatchewan has a long history of outspoken Native organizations and government assemblies (e.g., the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations). In Manitoba a number of Native issues were ongoing during the Oka crisis. The *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* was about to be released, as was the J.J. Harper shooting inquiry; hence, the topic of Native issues was sensitive in Manitoba during this time. The editors of *The Winnipeg Free Press* perhaps felt a "pro-Native" portrayal of the crisis would mean the least reaction.

## Conclusion

This analysis has demonstrated that Canadian newspapers individually constructed reality in the reporting of the Oka crisis. The newspaper industry's portrayal of the Oka crisis illustrates that, as Gitlin (1980) suggests, the framing of news events does occur. For example, portrayals of the events at Oka in the *Montreal Gazette* or any of the Sun newspapers contrast significantly with the way *The Winnipeg Free Press*, the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, or the *Regina Leader Post* portrayed the crisis.

Statistically, there was little association between the independent variables and the dependent variable, or the theme of the articles and editorials a newspaper published. Similarly, none of the hypotheses based on the Canadian media literature was proven to be significant. Nevertheless, the descriptive data did indicate that there was a notable contrast in the portrayal of the Oka crisis on a per newspaper basis. For example, newspapers in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, provinces with large Native populations, provided more of a "pro-Native" account in their articles and editorials. Because the independent variables were not substantively correlated with the thematic portrayal of the Oka crisis it appears as though the Canadian newspaper industry is very adept at not creating identifiable bias in reporting patterns based on a newspaper's defining attributes such as ownership and, to some degree, region. Similarly, as confirmed by the type of source variable,

newspapers developed an overall thematic portrayal of the Oka crisis that was not dependent on the sources they used in their articles.

This suggests that the notion of hegemony exists in the Canadian newspaper industry. Hegemony allows for the creation of ideology, or reality, on an individual newspaper basis. This was substantiated by the fact that there were no easily identifiable patterns ("pro-Native" or "anti-Native") in the portrayal of the Oka crisis based on the independent variables. This created the impression of newspaper "objectivity" and independence. The notion of freedom of the press and the "objectivity" principle, on which the newspaper industry is founded, parallels the notion of hegemony in that the dominated (the newspaper readership) collaborate or consent in the construction of reality. The reading public assumes that the newspaper industry is "objective" because "freedom of the press" and the journalist's credo of "objectivity" are widely understood. Similarly, the dominant groups, including those who own newspapers, would argue that because there are no apparent patterns in how the newspaper industry in Canada portrayed the Oka crisis, the industry does not construct reality. Hegemonic ideology within the Canadian newspaper industry has created a biased framework on which the events of the Oka crisis were portrayed. However, it is difficult to uncover the prejudiced portrayal because patterns of industry misrepresentation are not apparent.

The Canadian newspaper industry included only accepted liberal, or mainstream, frames in the thematic portrayal of the Oka crisis ranging from "pro-Native" to "anti-Native." Although a majority of articles, as well as a majority of newspapers, take a decidedly "anti-Native" approach, all articles are set within these "acceptable" thematic limits or boundaries. However, the data indicated that most Canadians (the readership of the newspapers in this analysis) read articles that portrayed the events of the Oka crisis in an "anti-Native" manner.

The representation of Native peoples and their struggles as portrayed by the newspaper industry ultimately affects the larger public's perceptions of Native people. It is apparent that the primary ideological tactic used by the federal government, via the media, was to cast the Oka crisis as a "law and order" issue (Ponting, 1990). It may be argued that the Canadian and Quebec governments administered a Gulf War style manipulation of the press. The government's public relations campaign (see York and Pindera, 1991) along with the newspaper industry's employment of hegemonic ideology resulted in the Canadian newspaper industry's essentially negative portrayal of the Oka crisis.

## Notes

The author thanks Dr. Terry Wotherspoon, Dr. Vic Satzewich, Dr. Bernard Schissel, Dr. Gurcharn Basran, Dr. J.S. Frideres and the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

- 1 Newspapers in this analysis include: the *Montreal Gazette*, the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *Calgary Herald*, the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Vancouver Sun Province*, the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, *The Winnipeg Free Press*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Calgary Sun*, the *Edmonton Sun*, the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, the *St. John's Telegram*, the *Regina Leader Post*, the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* and the *Charlottetown Guardian & Patriot*.
- 2 A pre-test of articles from the *Vancouver Sun Province*, the *Montreal Gazette*, and the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, from the week of 9 July to 13 July 1990, was implemented to determine the number and types of themes that emerged.
- 3 Regions are categorized provincially in this analysis because it would be incorrect to assume that within what is usually identified as the prairie region, the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan would have similar political philosophies and ideologies as represented in newspapers. The Atlantic provinces are collapsed into the Maritime region due to the small size and number of newspapers.

## References

- Armstrong, J. 1972. "Canadians in Crisis: The Nature and Source of Support for Leadership in a National Emergency." *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 9(4).
- Clement, W. 1975. *The Canadian Corporate Elite: An Analysis of Economic Power*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited.
- Dworkin, R. 1986. *Law's Empire*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ericson, R.V., P.M. Baranek, and J.B.L. Chan 1991. *Representing Order: Crime, Law, and Justice in the News Media*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Frideres, J.S. 1988. *Native Peoples in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts*. Third edition. Scarborough: Prentice Hall.
- Gans, H. 1979. *Deciding What's News*. New York: Pantheon.
- Ginsberg, B. 1986. *The Captive Public: How Mass Media Opinion Promotes State Power*. New York: Basic Books Inc.
- Gitlin, T. 1980. *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Grenier, M. 1992. *Critical Studies in Mass Media*. Toronto: Butterworth and Company (Canada) Limited.
- Goffman, E. 1974. *Frame Analysis*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Hall, S., Critcher, F., Jefferson, T., Clarke, R., and Roberts, D. 1978. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: MacMillan.
- Horton, F.C. 1978. *The Third World and Press Freedom*. New York: Preger Special Studies.



- Khaki, A., and Prasad, K. 1988. *Depictions and Perceptions: Native Indians and Visible Minorities in the Media*. Vancouver: Page Master Services.
- Lutz, C.A., and Collins, J.L. 1993. *Reading the National Geographic*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Newspaper Marketing Bureau Inc. 1991. *Readership and Data Guide*.
- Ponting, J.R., and Gibbins, R. 1980. *Out of Irrelevance*. Toronto: Butterworth and Company (Canada) Limited.
- Ponting, J.R. 1990. "Internationalization: Perspectives on an Emerging Direction in Aboriginal Affairs." *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 22(3): 85-109.
- Porter, J. 1965. *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Riggins, S.H., editor. 1992. *Ethnic Minority Media: An International Perspective*. New York: Penquin Books.
- Winter, J. 1992. *Common Sense*. Montreal: Black Box Books.
- York, G., and Pindera, L. 1991. *People of the Pines: The Warriors and the Legacy of Oka*. Toronto: Little Brown Company.