Chocolate Milk is Good for You?
Video News Releases, PR, and Knowledge Production in Canadian Television Journalism

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ABSTRACT

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Journalism is surely one of society's great institutions. It has long been an important site of knowledge production, allowing audiences to make sense of their world. Today's journalism is a highly complex, expensive, and time-sensitive challenge to produce. This research investigates how these factors in the production process of Canadian television journalism affect the product.

Public relations has been using journalism as a means of publicity for nearly a century. With increasing pressure on news departments to make profits, PR sources gain an advantage in getting their material on the evening news. Video News Releases are the pinnacle of PR sourcing: fully produced, promotional news stories designed to blend in perfectly with other news content.

This thesis reviews existing literature examining news sourcing practices as well as the organizational and economic constraints that govern journalism's production processes. The research looks at Canadian television news through these lenses, as well as through the words of working Canadian journalists.

The interaction of PR and news is examined to understand how news stories get developed, where the content and resources presented in those stories come from, and who is benefiting from changing practices in the newsroom.

Acknowledgements & Dedication

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This cumbersome work is dedicated to those people in my life who support me as an individual, and who have kept me going through all days leading up to this point: my parents, my sister, and my partner and best friend, who has to deal with me every day. I love you all.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In early 2007, CBC radio aired a six-part series on public relations hosted by Ira Basen. The show traced the roots of the industry in North America through to its modern incarnations. One episode of the show featured an interview with Jim Lukaszewski, a PR practitioner from New York. Lukaszewski argued for the usefulness of the media training courses his firm offers, stating that they prepared spokespeople to respond to the negativity of journalists. They also allowed for the spokesperson to define her own message in the interview: "The reporter says because she asks or he asks the question, that's the question that matters. There might be a more important question to respond to than the one that was asked" (Basen, 2007). Lukaszewski's position was that reporters have their own agendas when interviewing, and those agendas are most often about skewering a victim in the public eye. Describing a reporter as "someone who does not know, who does not care, who doesn't really need to know or have to care," his point was that spokespeople and PR departments should be in charge of constructing the message that reaches the public – not journalists.

This conversation raises many interesting questions about the control of information and knowledge within a society. Increasingly, knowledge is one of the only products emerging from developed nations as the 'new' economy outsources material production. Journalism is one of our society's most firmly entrenched sites of knowledge production. Within this profession, however, who is it that actually controls these processes of production? Reporters, editors, publishers, news directors, owners – there are many sites of control within the organizational hierarchies of today's immense media corporations. Lukaszewski points to other sites of control; sources that the media rely on for information are

increasingly concerned with the content of the media product and its message. Journalism scholarship has dealt with this relationship through the field of sourcing strategy. Media training courses are commonplace in the corporate realm, and large organizations always limit their public face to a few selected representatives with specific talking points. Why does this matter to journalism? While journalists have often faced hostility or at least indifference to their profession, today's attempts at control of information occur within a very specific context. This thesis will provide an overview of sourcing strategy with respect to Canadian television news. While research on this specific area is limited, other journalism scholarship will be mobilized to develop a theoretical framework centering on journalism as a practice of knowledge production. Video News Releases (VNRs) will be used as a case study to examine the influence of public relations on newsgathering. Finally, interviews with Canadian journalists will help to contextualize the research. VNRs represent the culmination of longstanding trends towards efficiency and profitability in journalism production. Divisions between the public service and business responsibilities of journalism and the agglomeration of news divisions within large corporate bureaucracies have exaggerated these trends. The rest of this introduction will outline the basic structure and concepts of the thesis, as well as comment on the research methodology.

A History of Journalism Scholarship

Part of that context is constructed by the general history of journalism. While early newspapers were often highly partisan and inflammatory (Allan,

2004), it was not long before they began to seek a more refined audience. In the late 19th Century, advertisers began to seek the attention of a higher economic class, those with the ability to purchase expensive luxury items. As such, advertisers began to avoid more scandalous newspapers (ibid.). They also began to indirectly shape content, or perhaps more accurately, the media began to rearrange itself to cultivate sponsorship. This was noticed by Joseph Klapper: "in order to avoid offending any significant portion of their necessarily vast and varied audience, the media were perforce reduced to espousing only such attitudes as were already virtually universal" (as cited in Smythe, 1981, p. 254). The emergence of the Associated Press around this same time, with its inverted pyramid structure and impartial tone, also changed news reporting: "These emergent conventions of wire service reporting, apparent as they were not only in a 'dry' language of facts but also in the routinization of journalistic practices, were clearly helping to entrench the tenets of 'objectivity' as a reportorial ideal" (Allan, 2004, p. 17). This, combined with a public backlash against propaganda after World War I, further contributed to the ascension of the values of fact and objectivity in the press. The press made their name on their impartial transmission of information. Thus the tradition of the press as the fourth estate developed (ibid.). This viewpoint envisions a journalism which contributes to society's marketplace of ideas, constructing public opinion and facilitating the workings of democracy. In this way the press can also serve as a system of checks and balances, and a safeguard against power and privilege.

This traditional understanding also serves to strengthen the credibility of the news media. Theoretically, it has been expressed as the social theory of the press, developed in the 1950s following the Hutchins Commission (McQuail,

1996). In the 1940s, absolute freedom of the press was anything but assured. Representatives of government, industry, and the media had differing views on how to manage journalism as an institution (Bates, 1995). The Hutchins Commission was created to explore the freedom of the press and to make recommendations as to what the duties of the press would be in coming years. The Commission's research was directly infused with fears of propaganda, elitist worries about the power of the masses, and moral judgments about vulgarity and sensationalism. The main recommendation of the Commission's report, published in 1947, was the creation of a government body to oversee the operation of the news media. The Commission's report, decried by journalists and not implemented by politicians, nonetheless sparked an important theoretical tradition within journalism scholarship: the study of the connections between journalism and democracy (ibid.). Fredrick Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (1963) provided some of the first attempts to articulate a theory based on the ideas of the Hutchins Commission. In contrast to the libertarian free press ideal, Siebert and his colleagues envisioned a socially responsible press which balanced its obligations to the public at large as well as to its customers and owners. This work, while seminal, was superseded beginning in the 1970s by more concrete scholarship on the values, processes, and participants of modern journalism (Galtung & Ruge, 1973; Tuchman, 1978; Sigal, 1973).

Chapter two of this thesis traces a brief history of the scholarship on journalism, as well as outlines the theoretical framework for an understanding of journalism as knowledge production. This emphasis on objectivity persists in journalism scholarship, emphasizing the importance of information flows to a healthy democracy. Through political, economic, ethnographic, and theoretical

discussions, researchers argue for the importance of news in our society. The move into new media by journalism has only intensified this discussion of media and democracy. Traditional media outlets are adding elements like blog postings, viewer-uploaded pictures and video, as well as soliciting comments and story ideas from viewers. This move towards user-generated content underscores the connections between journalism and democracy. Understanding news as knowledge production frees research from the need to justify the political opinions of the researcher. Instead, this framework can be evaluative through an analysis of balances of information.

Today journalism has, for the most part, been consolidated within large corporate bureaucracies. Additionally, most source organizations attempting to gain publicity through the media are also bureaucratically organized. The effect of propaganda mentioned above reinforced journalism's movement towards objectivity, but it also convinced important organizations of the power of the news in pushing a message. As such, in terms of a flow of information, journalism has become the mouthpiece for bureaucratic propaganda (Altheide & Johnson, 1980). This is not propaganda in the traditional sense; instead it refers to bureaucratic reports structured to positively reflect the organizations that produce them. News serves to legitimate not only itself as a knowledge-producing institution, but also those organizations (government, police, major corporations, etc.) that use the news as their means of publicity.

This emphasis on bureaucracy lends to this work its two main frames of analysis: economics, and organization. Chapter two includes an analysis of how these two competing sets of imperatives have impacted the landscape of journalism production. With news departments increasingly integrated into large

multinational diversified corporations, their emphasis is divided between the public interest and the bottom line. Secondly, there are the structural limitations involved in producing a daily television newscast. These factors are fundamentally involved in shaping the information delivered, what content it prioritizes, and who is authorized to deliver it.

This last topic bridges the research from journalism to sources. Sources create the content of the newscast – they keep the reporter as a neutral spokesperson. These sources, however, have their own agendas and goals in media relations, as Mr. Lukaszewski so clearly pointed out. Broadcast media, television most of all, carries great weight for corporate, governmental, and private interests. Favourable coverage within a journalistic context is unbeatable for publicity; television is consistently rated as the most trustworthy site for news and information (SSCTC, 2006). This understanding of news constructs sources' access to news media not as impartial information delivery, but instead as information subsidy, taking advantage of the financial and organizational constraints on journalists.

News Sourcing

Chapter three explores how sources contribute information to journalism, and the rules and boundaries that govern these interactions. Using the frame of knowledge production developed in the previous chapter, this chapter examines the knowledge and information that sources contribute to the processes and practices of journalism, focusing specifically on television journalism in Canada. How do these sources influence the news? The myth we hold of the roving

reporter, independently developing stories and researching leads, was never really more than a myth. As early as the 1920s, public relations pioneers like Edward Bernays and Ivy Lee were filling newspapers with press releases (Ewen, 1996). These early techniques began what we label today as "information subsidy" and "agenda building" (Berkowitz & Adams, 1990). These practices refer to efforts by source organizations to direct and influence the stories covered on the news, and the frames through which topics are reported. Sources have become knowledge producers on par with the journalists themselves, and not wholly without the consent of journalism.

How do increasingly savvy public information officers and public relations firms work to influence the information produced in journalism? There is significant literature within the field of sourcing strategies examining the relationship between sources and journalists. Many see the relationship as adversarial, a competition to define the issues included in the newscast. Others see the relationship as cooperative – as one journalist I spoke with put it: "you can't really go to war with those people for doing their jobs" (Jim, personal communication, February 5, 2007). With many former journalists "going to the dark side" and working in PR, the relationship between sources and journalists becomes more complicated. Chapter four more fully integrates the concept of public relations, looking at how television journalism has mobilized PR techniques in its production processes. The Video News Release (VNR) is used as a case study to explore this sourcing practice in Canada.

VNRs have become a hot topic in the United States, after highly publicized usage by the federal government (Barstow & Stein, 2005). With a much larger pool of television stations, and a much larger advertising market than here in

Canada, VNRs are big business in the United States. With media consolidation and competition pushing a constant drive for profits, stations are doing all they can to increase margins – everything from cutting staff to selling segments of airtime (Klinenberg, 2007). The Bush Administration's particular use of the press has focused media attention on VNRs, a PR tactic developed in the early 1980s. Under President Bush, the Department of Health and Human Services created VNRs to promote part of its Medicare reform package, using PR consultant Karen Ryan as the story's reporter. The Government Accountability Office later ruled that because of a lack of disclosure, the use of these stories amounted to taxpayer-funded propaganda (Lee, 2006).

In the United States, there are more independent stations run as small local businesses, without stringent affiliate agreements governing their relationships with national networks (Klinenberg, 2007). Within this group especially, the use of externally produced material is essential to keeping profit margins in line with the previous quarter. Here in Canada, the companies that provide wire services to print, broadcast, and Internet news outlets have seen the changes coming. They have diversified their services out from investor relations and press releases, to a full slate of issue management products and services. Their public relations work now overwhelms their corporate reporting services, and they have begun producing multimedia news releases (CNW, 2004).

These VNRs function as information subsidies to news departments constrained by tight budgets and even tighter schedules. They function to the corporation that pays for them as ideal advertising: cheaper than purchasing television spots, with more credibility due to their position on the newscast. Because of this fact, the integration of the VNR with the newscast becomes crucial

to the success of its placement. VNRs use the discursive homogeneity of news to insert themselves without notice, and without attribution. They take advantage of a hybrid discourse, labeled by Erjavec (2005) as public relations news. This discourse minimizes the positive tones of advertising, and integrates the characteristics of journalism's knowledge described in Chapter two. Thus the VNR mobilizes credentialed experts as interview subjects, speaking from positions of authority. It uses the capabilities of bureaucratic sources to use scientific, quantified discourse to frame its information. The VNR also uses technological and formal means to embed itself within the genre of news.

VNRs, in this thesis, represent an example of how the organizational and economic limits on journalism operate to change news sourcing and authorship. They are the extreme end of what is a very commonplace occurrence – the out-sourcing of labour and production, away from the newsroom, and towards the PR or newswire company. Stories which are obviously promotional, like the coverage of the launch of a new clothing line, and those which are less clearly so, like the reporting of a medical study, all rely upon the structures of public relations information dissemination which underlie newsgathering (CBC Arts, 2005; CBC News, 2007). These more subtle, more everyday uses of information subsidy are pervasive and of much greater concern. Chapter four discusses the foundations of this relationship between public relations and journalism, and sets out some new research goals for journalism analysis in Canada.

Reporting on Reporters: Methodology in Journalism Scholarship

Scholarship on Video News Releases is predominantly American, with little coming from a critical communications perspective (Owen & Karhh, 1996; Cameron & Blount, 1996; Harmo & White, 2001). This research, while valuable, takes the effectiveness of public relations materials as the starting point for analysis, leaving out a critical analysis of the effects of PR material on the quality or reception of journalism. While there is a significant amount of work on news being done in Canada by researchers, academic and otherwise, there is still a sizeable research gap in the study of the products of *Canadian* journalism. As with so many disciplines, there exists a more solid research and data foundation on American topics, further confounding the problem. While government commissions and committees provide research and hard quantitative data, they are convened rarely, and are quickly made out of date. The comprehensive research done in the U.S. on VNR use by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) has no equal here in Canada. Indeed, there is no significant quantitative analysis delineating the sourcing practices of Canadian television news outlets.

This lack of information shaped my research process, and convinced me to search out contributions from working journalists in Canada. To this end, I interviewed nine subjects, both currently and formerly employed in journalism. Two subjects work for companies currently producing public relations material, one of whom had previously worked as a print journalist. Research subjects were located through snowballing, as well as cold emailing and calling. American research has identified a connection between smaller, limited budgets and the use of externally produced material. To investigate this, three of the subjects were

from small market stations not owned by the large Canadian TV networks. The material culled from these interviews is presented throughout this thesis, to integrate the voices of working journalism professionals with those of academics researching journalism.

The research questions guiding the interviews centered on the production processes of television journalism. Subjects were questioned on their position within the newsroom and their role in story selection and development. Wire services and affiliate agreements were the subject of questions to elaborate on the role of external sources, both of story ideas as well as video or audio footage. Within this frame, subjects were also asked their personal experiences with VNRs and their station's use of them, if any. For the subjects working as PR practitioners, questions were directed at their relationships to their clients, as well as to media outlets. Other questions investigated their role in journalism as well as the methods by which they distribute their products. All subjects were also asked more general questions about their role in news production. A candid discussion of the use of PR materials in news sourcing could be seen by some as damaging to the reputation of a particular news worker or outlet. In order to encourage discussion, confidentiality was built into the research design. To respect the protocols, subjects will be referred to by first name only within the text of the thesis[1].

Further work will advance these research questions by observing the process of story selection and news construction. This ethnographic tradition is significant within journalism analysis (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1989; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1972), and presents the opportunity to keep the experience of the subjects represented within scholarly research. Another methodology, direct

content analysis, is also missing from present scholarship. Canadian research, modeled on the major American analysis of VNR use (Farsetta & Price, 2006, 2006a) would yield invaluable results as to the use of VNRs specifically, as well as the use of third-party and PR materials more generally.

This thesis is not intended to condemn the use of PR materials in journalism. Instead, the understanding of journalism as knowledge production should inspire academics and researchers to investigate the workings of public relations as another important source of information and knowledge in society. These two immensely powerful institutions interact at a fundamental level, yet concrete analyses of the means and structures of this interaction are few and far between. This work begins this process by using Canadian television news as an example. The limited research conducted here shows a clear and important use of external materials, of which PR materials represent a substantial part, in Canadian television journalism. The myth of the investigative reporter still guides representations of journalism in Canada. The experience of journalists, on the other hand, shows that their jobs are more heavily constructed by the organizational and economic imperatives of their corporate owners than by their desire to independently investigate issues of importance to their communities. Canadian scholarship (Gasher & Gabriele, 2004; Hackett, 2000; McLean, 2005; Skinner, Gasher & Compton, 2001) has begun the project of critically analyzing the output of Canada's news media. It is up to further scholars to continue it.

Chapter 2: News as Knowledge Production

News has long been a topic of research for students of communication studies. It holds unquestionable power in our society, standing as a mid-point between authorities and the public. Journalism analysis as a field has made significant theoretical and practical progress, especially in the last 30 years. While the entirety of the field is too large to describe here, certain shifts in the understanding of news have informed the perspective of this analysis[2]. The history of journalism analysis often intersects with the ambiguous terrain of the public interest. The 1947 report of the Commission on Freedom of the Press in the United States (known as the Hutchins Commission), established clear links between news and democracy. Making authorities accountable and informing the public were understood to be the two main goals of journalism. Similar reports, mostly convened by governmental committees and commissions, followed in Canada in the next decades (Skinner & Gasher, 2005).

These various bodies all investigated the balance between public interest and private profit in news media industries. A recurrent theme was the importance of news as a conveyor of information to a functioning democracy. This theme reproduced itself through Fredrick Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm's (1956) "social responsibility" theory of the press (McManus, 1992, p. 201). News media existed to watch over those in power and defend the interests of the voiceless. It was in this same period that definitive notions of journalism arose: it was objective, it was a balance between business and public service, it was informative, and it was a social gatekeeper (Schudson, 1996).

The 1970 Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media (the Davey Committee) first dealt with the effects of concentration and cross-ownership in Canadian media. The 1981 Royal Commission on newspapers (the Kent Commission), enacted in the wake of consolidations and shutdowns in 1980, underlined the importance of news media to a thriving democracy. The recommendations made by these government inquiries concerning diversity of voices, concentration and corporatization were largely ignored or passed over by the governments of the day (Skinner & Gasher, 2005). The 2003 Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (Lincoln Committee) and the 2006 Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications (SSCTC) have continued this tradition. These reports continue to emphasize the importance of news media to democracy, as well as the efforts of media owners to encourage profit at the expense of public responsibility. A repeated conclusion of these analyses has been the need for more accountability in Canadian media (Skinner & Gasher, 2005; Raboy & Taras, 2004).

News media was not spared amidst the mistrust of institutions cultivated in part by the social upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s. Research was directed towards the ways that the news media could support institutions of power and do little to advance the public interest. These failings of the social responsibility theory were addressed through reference to the constructed, processural nature of journalism. Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge (1973) presented some of the first attempts to codify the values that shape and structure news. They argued that news values are made necessary by the overwhelming number of events which occur: "The set of world events, then, is like the cacophony of sound one gets by scanning the dial of one's radio receiver" (Galtung and Ruge, 1973, p.62). This cacophony must be

thinned out by applying some sort of schema or organizational structure. Jerry Palmer (2000) summarizes the initial set of news values as: frequency, threshold, clarity, cultural proximity, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, actions of the elite, personification, and negativity. These eleven values structure the news such that: it makes sense, fits within the viewer's general understanding of the world, occurs within the production cycle of the medium, is rare enough to attract attention, offers a window into the lives of the famous, and represents the unpleasant possibilities of life.

While reference to a public interest theory of journalism would hold that journalism operates with the purpose of maximizing information delivery, news values do not support this. An example of this is the atemporal order of news stories. The elements of the story are ordered based on their newsworthiness – not on their chronological occurrence. This actually reduces reader comprehension: "In the body of the story, perceived *news value* overturns temporal sequence and imposes an order completely at odds with linear narrative" (Bell, 1998, p.96). Similarly, recent moves towards 'infotainment' journalism can be seen as consonant with news values, yet completely out of touch with a notion of public service (Bird, 1997). News values, however, are not alone in structuring news. As an organizational product, news employs professionals and follows a business model. There are many factors which contribute to its production.

Gaye Tuchman's (1972) work, for one, examines the operation of these values in the newsroom. Tuchman mobilizes ethnographic methodology to examine the relationship between theories of the press and their corresponding realities on the newsroom floor. She concludes that objectivity is a ritual of the workplace, used to safeguard the elite position of newsworkers as guardians of

truth. Objectivity strategically reinforces both the authority of the journalist and the legitimacy of journalism as an institution. Entering the newsroom as an environment of study has since become a methodological tradition within the field, mostly within the perspective of sociology (Epstein, 1973; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979). Todd Gitlin's (1980) work on Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) emphasizes that the media's default position reinforces the status quo norms of society. Using the concept of hegemony developed by Antonio Gramsci (1971) and elaborated by Raymond Williams (1977), Gitlin investigates the role of the news media in reproducing dominant social structures and ideologies. Work by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988) follows a similar theoretical path. This research, based in political economy, links the news media to the prevailing corporate structure in the United States. They conclude that the news media's subservience to corporate interests reduces them to mouthpieces for institutional propaganda. This has evolved into more nuanced analyses of changing political, economic, and technological climates (McManus, 1994; Bagdikian, 1997; Bird, 1997; McChesney, 1999).

There has also been a significant amount of work looking at the sources of news (Fishman, 1980; Sigal, 1986; Palmer, 2000), which will be more fully explored in Chapter three. This analysis takes two points of departure for its understanding of television news practices and products. The first is the constraints on newswork, both economic and organizational, which to a great extent structure the conditions of production. The second is an understanding of journalism as knowledge production. This section will address these characteristics of journalism, as well as the ways that sources and journalists interact to produce a product useful to both.

News from Now/Here: Constraints in Journalism Production

> The political economy of information broadcasting spawns a set of social relations of production and a set of market imperatives from which devolve a core of production values legitimated by professional journalistic ideologies and operationalized in professional journalistic practices (Clarke, 1990, p. 89).

News organizations face severe structural impediments to the delivery of their product. As a daily product generated on a limited cycle, news faces strict time constraints. In TV news, the collection of video and audio assets, in addition to technical post-production requirements, increases these limitations. As a corporate structure, journalism relies on skilled labour as well as expensive technical equipment, weakening its profitability. Journalists as workers cover an immense amount of territory without the time or resources to deal with it all. As such, they must position themselves in the paths of information flows, and rely a great deal on their sources (Livingston and Bennett, 2003). Providing quotes, clips, and sound bites, sources facilitate the quick assembly of a story that fits inside news's short production cycle. The transition from film to video has changed the technological demands of the business, but producing a daily newscast is still at least a whole day's work. These organizational and economic pressures can be manipulated by sources trying to maximize coverage, as well as by media corporations trying to maximize profits. While the impact of these constraints on sourcing strategies will be addressed in the next chapter, these issues can be preliminarily explained here.

Television news stations exist within the larger context of Canadian news media. This larger market has been under shifting pressures and imperatives as regulatory, economic, and competitive climates have changed. In English-language television news, there are really only three companies competing for

audiences: the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), CTVglobemedia, and CanWest Global. The latter two have emerged after a 25-year battle of consolidation and takeover as the only two media mega-corporations in Canada[3]. This process has been seen over the whole of the industrialized world, and it has been studied extensively (Winter, 1997; McChesney, 2004; Gratz, 2005; Adelstein, 2006). These analyses most often focus on corporate control and the lack of editorial diversity that comes with increased centralization. In Canada, government inquiries have repeated these concerns, in 1970 with the Davey Committee, and again in 1981 with the Kent Commission. The underlying motivation for this corporate consolidation is a drive for profits, understandable in any commercial undertaking.

In 2003, a Senate Committee was convened to report on the state of Canadian news media. The mandate included studying trends within the industries, appropriate policies, and broader questions of the media's role within Canadian society. The Charter rights of freedom of expression and communication media framed the Committee's work. The Committee interviewed media executives, employees, scholars, and concerned members of the public in a three-year process interrupted by two Federal elections. Continuing the tradition of Canadian inquiry, the Committee investigated the effects of consolidation on news media. Their report discussed the importance of changing markets:

> ... consumer markets for all forms of news media have fragmented dramatically in recent years, triggering a widespread struggle for economic viability among Canada's major media firms. Media mergers, sales, re-mergers, and divestitures of broadcast and print media holdings have been the most striking coping strategies. (2006, Vol. 1, p. 9)

This emphasis on a struggle for viability can be misleading. Media owners and managers repeatedly claim their business is a difficult one in which to make a profit (Dacruz, 2004; Vieira, 2006). This claim is most often used as a means to plead for less regulation. The evidence, however, goes in the opposite direction. Data from the CRTC, which collects annual reports from the businesses which it regulates, consistently shows big gains (CRTC Report, 2004; McGovern, 2005; Revenues Grew, 2005; Norris, 2006). Conventional TV stations in Canada in 2003 averaged profit margins of 18.3%; newspapers did even better (SSCTC, 2004). News production has been seen as a success story in Canadian television. Statistics repeatedly show that Canadian viewers prefer Canadian news. News and public affairs programming accounts for 25.2% of Canadian television viewing time (SSCTC, 2004). Local news benefits the larger media group by building station loyalty, establishing a local connection to viewers, and enhancing opportunities for localized advertising. This fact, coupled with the consistent profitability of news productions, convinced the CRTC to de-regulate local public affairs programming in 1999 (Murray, 1999).

The history of changes in media ownership and policy in Canada have been a subject of inquiry for many Canadian academics. David Skinner and Mike Gasher (2005) provide a recent, comprehensive look at the relationship between government policy and media ownership. They document the attempts of government to analyze the state of the media in committees and commissions, and the repeated failure of governments to make policy based on the findings. Overall, their account of media consolidation in Canada is highly critical. The new mega-corporations, obsessed with the bottom line, and saddled with debt, invariably produce a weaker product, importing content, laying off workers, and

re-using media over the breadth of their ownership group. The waves of consolidation described have been triggered by a government emphasis on deregulation, which Catherine McKercher (2002) claims has "opened the doors to reconvergence among cable television, telephony, and broadcasting" (p. 6). Other scholarship has discussed the corporatization of the Canadian news media. Jim McLean (2005) uses a personal account of one TV station as an entry point to issues of media consolidation in Canada. Dan Luzadder (2003) provides a detailed history of Canadian consolidation, using it as a frame to regard the American situation. The subject continues to evolve, evidenced by the recent CTV takeover of the CHUM network (Vieira, 2007). Jerry Coulter (1986) contrasts the editorial views of independent and corporate-owned newspapers and concludes that independent papers reflect more locally-minded, citizen-oriented news content than those directed by corporate interests. This emphasis on ownership and business models is brought up repeatedly because of its conflict with the public service ideals espoused both by journalists as well as by traditional journalism studies.

Nonetheless, in Canada as in most industrial nations, news outlets are businesses, and as such their prime concern must be profit levels and shareholder satisfaction. Beginning in the 1970s, corporations began to notice the huge profit potential of media organizations, particularly those in the news business (McManus, 1994). Economic principles dictate that this potential should be maximized, causing financial imperatives to play into almost all newsroom decisions: "Because news organizations must spend money for equipment and personnel to gather the raw information from which news is made, every story that is reported carries a cost" (Berkowitz and Adams, 1990, p. 724). Each story can

therefore be evaluated not only in terms of quality, relevance, and newsworthiness, but also in terms of cost. Debra Clarke (1990) sees logistical limitations like staffing, equipment, and facilities, as dictated overwhelmingly by cost.

Often, eliminating or consolidating jobs is the easiest way to cut costs. Stian Johnsen's (2004) account of a management change at a TV station emphasizes the importance of profitability. The new owners decided to "creat[e] a new type of employee, the Video Journalist, who will perform tasks that were previously performed by three persons: the journalist, the cameraman, and the newscutter" (p. 246). While this decision undoubtedly improved the stations margins, employees saw a drop in quality. Catherine Murray (1999) sees this as a trend across media: "consolidation of media ownership means rationalization of resources by laying off local staff and reducing or realigning production levels" (p. 64). Job consolidation, cross media integration, or staff reductions – these financial decisions often produce the same result: "journalists have been consistently forced to increase output without a corresponding increase in resources" (Davis, 2000, p. 43). Networks with fewer bureaus are relying more on local affiliate stations. Conversely, local stations fill up holes in their newscast with syndicated national material, even though local broadcasts are usually followed by a national newscast (McManus, 1994).

Stations without network resources face less choice to develop their programming: "A 1996 survey of 60 broadcasters found, '...62% said that, with budget restrictions and increased demand for stories, they expect to use more outside generated material in the coming year'" (Davis, 2000, p. 55). This emphasis on 'market-driven' journalism impacts all aspects of the industry, from labour to

story selection to organizational culture. This has been shown to be the case in Canada. Clarke's (1990) study of story provenance on Canadian networks emphasized that economic limitations caused "a low level of original story production in terms of international items or foreign stories and a consequently greater level of dependence upon external suppliers, such as the international news agencies and foreign networks" (p. 69). Stories are increasingly concentrated in secure markets. In Canada this means major urban centers and capitals, taking advantage of the availability of unplanned and planned events.

Often, no management change is necessary, for the underlying imperatives of the station are determined by advertising income. This is the case at any private broadcaster. Michael is a manager at a group of television and radio stations in rural Canada:

> It's a challenge given so few people, so few resources in terms of staffing and it becomes that much more of a challenge if even just one person is away. It would be nice to have a larger staff and the flexibility and capability of providing more and better coverage, but the reality, you have to look at our market size, and understand the reality of small market television, and the revenues that are generated on an advertising basis. You don't make as much money as a medium- or a major-market station. (personal communication, February 16, 2007).

Even in larger markets, stations' income is due to advertising, so profitability can be measured for each show based on their advertising revenues. In their article on the role of technology in news, Steven Livingstone and W. Lance Bennett (2003) note that "a huge volume of literature has emerged suggesting that economic pressures have threatened traditional gatekeeping based on reporter judgment and professional editorial standards that define the quality of news organizations" (p. 364). Aeron Davis (2000) notes that financial concerns are trumping public service ideals. While these ideals are central to

journalists and their professional culture, they are at odds with the values and decisions of bureaucrats in charge of the corporation. Economic pressures are intensified by the structural limitations of producing news.

Organizational constraints in journalism are most commonly tied to sourcing practices. This is because the most prevalent way to streamline the production process is to outsource production, and to use institutional sources like press conferences. These concessions allow for the profit maximization techniques described above. Because of the process of story discovery, the constraints of production, editing and delivery, the reality is "that most news events must be known about hours (and usually days) before the newscast" (Altheide & Johnson, 1980, p. 60). This can result in the use of incomplete stories, or pre-written stories of little news value (Baker, 2004; Bell, 1999). An understanding of news routines verifies that values of relevance and objectivity can be superseded by the structural demands of the business. Clark (1990) sees organizational pressures as two-fold. Firstly the time constraints of producing a news cast each day, and the balance of availability of equipment, personnel, and facilities, and secondly, choices more ingrained in the production process of news: "the second category includes the more subtle, long-term constraints that are repeatedly at work: historically evolved news practices and ideological principles of television journalism, the dependence of the production unit upon continental and international news suppliers..." (p. 68). These ideological principles, as well as organizational imperatives more widely, often deal with the use of sources, and as such, will be more completely addressed in Chapter three.

We can, however, outline the general organizational challenges faced by the job of producing a newscast or newspaper on a daily basis. These challenges

obviously conflict with desires for quality (as in almost any large-scale production process), as an overemphasis on perfection can delay the production process and hamper profitability (Tuchman, 1978). The time cycle of news production is such that the most basic form of organizational constraint is the deadline. These are independent of the newsworkers, usually decided on by management, and dependent on the medium (Sigal, 1973; Fishman, 1980; Ericson et al., 1989). Organizational constraints also influence the style of coverage that newsworthy issues receive. Since news emphasizes the change that occurs within each news cycle, stories are constructed in a fashion that reduces links between past and present. E. Barbara Phillips (1976) describes this as "novelty without change" saying that "externally imposed constraints (e.g., regularly scheduled telecasts) and organizational pressures to routinize work combine with the journalist's tendency to view the day's events as discrete, unrelated facts to produce the news mosaic of surface reality" (p. 92). One of the main outlets for these processes of work routinization is the use of news beats. Pamela Shoemaker (1989) notes that news beats reinforce the status quo by limiting ideas to the easily available mainstream. Discussing sports news, Nancy Theberge & Alan Cronk argue that beats are a way of "providing predictably available information to reporters and, as such, are an important means of reducing the variability of the news and bringing some order to the news world" (as cited in Lowes, 1997, p. 148). Work routines respond to the vast amount of newsworthy events by organizing and structuring the processes by which items are selected for coverage. These routines are not deterministic, but along with economic imperatives, news values, and the constraints of any particular medium, they function as indicators of how stories are chosen, and the way in which they are covered.

In short, organizational and market pressures are interacting in such a way as to be important shapers of the content of journalism. They construct the context within which news stories, especially those in television news, are produced. John McManus (1994) sees market rationality as giving form to organizational practices:

> ... market logic is the mold for routines of discovering newsworthy events, selecting some of them for coverage, and pulling information together into a report. These routines constitute the daily expression of an organizational culture – an accepted way of producing news in a particular media firm. (p. 85).

Mats Ekström (2002) understands these influences on news production as being part of the rules, routines, and institutionalized procedures which govern the production of knowledge in a journalistic context. This process is steered by these different constraints, which in turn impact the media texts produced by newsrooms. These texts are a form of social knowledge, prepared by specialists for the general public. This knowledge carries with it certain characteristics, shaped by logistical, economic, ideological, professional, and technical factors.

No Longer Sacred: News as Knowledge Production

This understanding of the economic and organizational limitations on news production must background all work on television news sourcing that will follow in Chapter three. While certain theories of journalism were discussed earlier, this research relies on the idea that news is a knowledge-producing institution in society (Ericson et. al, 1987, 1989, 1991; Ekström, 2002). Ekström regards journalism from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge. News

legitimates ways of knowing within society by portending to offer accounts of reality:

> It is thanks to its claim of being able to offer the citizenry important and reliable knowledge that journalism justifies its position as a constitutive institution in a democratic society. Knowledge claims are justified and legitimated within the framework of epistemologies. (Ekström, 2002, p. 260).

In this case it is no longer journalism's importance to democracy which interests journalism research; it is instead journalism's *claim* of importance to democracy which is of note. Similarly, notions of truthfulness and objectivity fall to the wayside. The goal is not to evaluate the validity of truth claims, but instead to "identify the epistemologies that are characteristic of journalism as a knowledge producing and communicative practice" (Ekström, p. 260). Thus, following this model we can look at the characteristics of knowledge produced by news institutions, and we can trace the rules and routines that govern its production.

If television news is knowledge production, what are the characteristics of this knowledge? Firstly, it is visual. More than any other, the demand for images drives TV news production. Roger Bird (1997) notes that among practitioners, "television is pictures, so even a technical story about, say, currency fluctuation must be illustrated by general shots of crowds of people, or someone counting money" (p. 5). All other things being equal, a story gains credibility where film is accessible – organizations are aware that the availability of relevant footage is crucial to getting coverage. A PR practitioner I spoke with emphasized the importance of providing visuals to stations, rather than just text releases (Joe, personal communication, February 9, 2007). As news develops technologically and audiences become more demanding, sustained coverage from foreign news sites becomes a necessity. News providers rely on international TV news agencies

to provide them with footage. These services provide the required televisual impact demanded by stations (Baker, 2004). The business of providing footage for worldwide television news has consolidated as large networks like CNN and BBC increasingly have the ability to distribute their own international video (Boyd-Barrett, 1998). Yet the power of these large TV news agencies remains firm because of the visual needs of television. They "exercise considerable control over the world's television news agenda, for most broadcasters have no other non-local sources for these influential and ideological products – the visual component of TV news" (Paterson, 1998, p. 79).

Similarly, in local news, advanced technology[4] has increased the use of live footage to provide action and drama to the newscast (Livingston & Bennett, 2003). Research into the visual component of news has shown that the availability of images determines whether or not a story will be included in a newscast (Paterson, 1998). Indeed, this emphasis on images is central to the form and content of television news. John Hartley understands this character to be primary: "Journalism's presentational aspects, its visuality and its discursive visualizations, can be understood not as the unfortunate contaminants of an otherwise pure and factual realism but as the very purpose of journalism, from the very start" (qtd. in Ekström, 2002, p. 6). The knowledge that is produced through television is inherently visual (see also Postman, 1985). This quality exaggerates the trends already present within journalism's structures. Since news writing (whether for print or television media) is directed at a broad audience, it uses plain language. Since it is produced in such quantities, it is made compact. These techniques necessarily structure its informational qualities: "In sum, journalese emphasizes the concrete, the particular, and the individual as opposed to the structural, the

abstract, and the universal" (Phillips, 1976). These qualities are enhanced through the use of a visual medium, but they play into broader journalistic tendencies emphasizing the present.

These characteristics mean that above all, news is timely. News is never about long-term trends or chronic conditions – it is as much as possible about discrete events. Context is provided only as much as required. As Todd Gitlin (1979) remarked, news is about "the novel event, not the enduring condition; the person, not the group; the visible conflict, not the deep consensus; the fact that 'advances the story,' not the one that explains or enlarges it" (p. 24). This encourages a reliance on press conferences and scheduled events as the sources for story ideas. Source organizations increasingly use such "pseudo-events" as forms of publicity (Palmer, 2000). The emphasis on these events specifically constructed for television news can be traced back to the beginnings of the medium, when the process was made all the more difficult by heavy cameras and long film-processing times (Allan, 2004). Constructed explicitly along media norms, these pseudo-events take advantage of journalism's need for current stories. They also provide complete stories that rely little on context or background to be clear. This emphasis on timeliness has only increased as technology has allowed for quicker responses.

Doug Saunders (1997) tells the story of a plane crash on the island of Guam, reported on the Associated Press (AP) wire and website 43 minutes after its occurrence. Minutes later, Reuters sent a story over the wire that had come from CNN's coverage. CNN and MSNBC had detailed website information with maps, sound clips, and photos. These sites, however, had taken much of their information from the AP, who had continued to update its reports as time passed

– often with information gathered from websites. The result, says Saunders, "was an odd circular pattern," where source strategies were ultimately concealed. The interaction of wires, Internet sources, and television sources has increased the demand for up-to-the-minute coverage. The timeliness of news will affect ratings, advertising, and economic viability: "The drive to get the news first is embedded deep in the news ethos, and radically affects the structure of the news text – to the extent of motivating attempts to disguise the age of news which is less than fresh" (Bell, 1998, p. 101). This knowledge is valued precisely because of its age, exclusivity, and visual impact. Knowledge in television news is both simplified and event-oriented (Ekström, 2002).

Finally, news is bureaucratic. It is a product of an organization, and it relies heavily on organizational representatives for its product. A 1992 Ryerson study "found the content of straight news stories was overwhelmingly 'agenda' reporting – reporting from city hall, press releases, House of Commons, press conferences, and the like, rather than initiative journalism" (Bird, 1997, p.58). These organizational sites that serve as the sources of news understand media routines and use them to their advantage. As Leon Sigal (1973) documented, reporters must place themselves in the paths of information flow – they are too time constrained to do otherwise. As organizational bureaucracies are a large source of information in our society, these are the spaces that newsworkers move to in order to stay informed.

David Altheide and John Johnson (1980) include news within their understanding of bureaucratic propaganda. News media aid in the distribution of information whose purpose "is to maintain the legitimacy of an organization and its activities" (p. 18). This includes, of course, the news outlet itself as an

organization. Bureaucracies have embedded themselves as the most legitimate social structure, and have increasingly influenced the way we understand knowledge. Reason and science are understood to be more legitimate ways of knowing, and these have been linked to the organizational form of the bureaucracy. Altheide and Johnson add that "the organizational demands of administering news on a daily basis, especially in television news, have generated complex and restricting organizational formats, time schedules, and commercial priorities that provide a bureaucratic context for many other organizations to supply self-serving information" (ibid., p. 45). Thus news can be understood as a sharing of bureaucratic knowledge between news and source organizations. Both sides have accepted and undertaken to structure their information in a bureaucratic fashion. The routines on both sides are informed by bureaucratic organization, and thus can be compatible. These qualities delimit the knowledge produced by television news. While sourcing as a field of study will be more fully investigated in Chapter three, sources play a fundamental role in the knowledge production of journalism[5].

Who's in Charge: Sources & Newsworkers

Ericson et al.'s (1989) work provides a context for understanding news as a form of social knowledge. Their research "explores a central terrain for the reproduction of the knowledge society" (p. 3). Here the highlight is on the interactions between source and news organizations, and their dialogical dealings in the process of knowledge production. This is important because news discourse is a milieu for the contestation of social signs: "sources compete for access to the

news media in order to traffic in their preferred values for signs" (ibid., p. 17). News offers to these sources the ability to gain credibility. This is because, according to Ekström (2002), the one thing that differentiates news from other television discourse is legitimate and publicly acceptable knowledge claims (p. 274). The interaction of source and news organizations is a negotiation of public knowledge. These two groups make use of each other's assets in order to attempt to control and define reality. However, Richard Ericson, Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan (1989) note that while these two groups are intertwined, "it is an illusion to think there can be a near total or effective control of knowledge" (p. 13). This is because the process of creating news is specifically not controlled by a single person or group. It is this negotiation which creates the final product. Indeed, these researchers look at source and news organizations as convergent, not as two separate bureaucracies (ibid., p. 5). Above all, the process of interaction between source and news organizations to build knowledge is a complex one. It cannot be reduced solely to economics or hegemony, because such a simplistic account "tends continually to subordinate the activities of journalists, assumes primary definers act in unison, and does not account for historical shifts in status and access" (Davis, 2000, p. 49).

The informational interaction between sources and news organizations is best understood through the linked concepts of information subsidy and agenda building. Dan Berkowitz and Douglas Adams (1990) describe information subsidy, "which concerns the efforts of news sources to intentionally shape the news agenda by reducing journalists' costs of gathering information" (p. 723). Agenda building also describes the relationship between news sources and news media. It concerns attempts by source organizations to shape what is covered and from

what angle. While they cannot directly shape this coverage, they can use the routines and constraints of newsgathering to their advantage. If source organizations understand media needs, then their subsidies will be tailored to suit these needs: "this has led organizations that seek publicity via the news to ensure the availability of relevant, fresh video footage at times that fit with TV channels' output schedule" (Palmer, 2000, p. 33). Large, resource-rich groups have a significant ability to shape the news agenda by providing subsidies that play into the economic and organizational constraints of newsgathering.

Adversarial relationships between newsworkers and public relations practitioners have also been shown to reduce the effectiveness of information subsidy (Curtin, 1999). The nature of this relationship is governed by the belief of journalists that they serve the public interest. The perceived difference in motivation between themselves and PR practitioners governed the use of subsidized materials (ibid.). Joseph Turow (1984) for instance, described the relationship as one of "resource dependence" where each group strives to be independent, but make other groups as dependent on them as possible. Following Ericson et al. (1989), this research posits the relationship as characterized more by exchange (see also McManus, 1994), than by conflict or dependence. My own research, while limited, seems to bear this out. Jim McLean, a former journalist, sees the relationship as mutual dependence: "I think adversarial is too strong. Generally, if you're a producer or a reporter or an editor of some sort, and you're dealing with people whose job it is to get the word out, I mean, you can't really go to war with those people for doing their job" (personal communication, February 5, 2007). Reporters must combine information from many sources, and synthesize it into a coherent account.

Research shows then, that agenda building is also a negotiated process between news and source organizations. Patricia Curtin's (1999) research shows that subsidies are often used only as the idea for a story. In this case, "the public relations goal of agenda building may be sacrificed along with the loss of control over the material" (p. 75). Altheide and Johnson (1980) describe reports issued by source organizations as "bureaucratic propaganda". They emphasize that "what the mass media do with these reports *depends on their organizational needs* and not on direct manipulation" (p. 17, emphasis added). The constraints placed on journalism drive the use of subsidized material, meaning that source organizations have less direct control over this process. The expansion of PR techniques to public interest and non-profit groups also emphasizes the negotiated character of information subsidy. "A range of organizations and individuals have accordingly shown interest in the adoption of corporate promotional strategies and expertise as a means to achieve their objectives" (Davis, 2000, p. 42). Responding to decades of marginalization at the hands of the mainstream press, public interest groups are using these techniques as a means of reversing this trend. The orientation of the group producing the information subsidy has been shown to affect uptake: "Given nonprofit or government agency status, however, if the materials contain news value and are written in news style, the interview data suggest they can pass almost unimpeded through media gatekeepers" (Curtin, 1999, 74). This research likens media legitimacy to a form of cultural capital, suggesting that marginalized source organizations can use professional techniques to "simulate the authority and legitimacy of institutional sources" (ibid., p. 50). However, when two sources of PR differ in their information, journalists have been shown to choose those groups who possess

more cultural capital (Erjavec, 2005). These multiple understandings of information subsidy necessarily inform an investigation of television news as a knowledge-producing institution.

Towards an Understanding of Sources

News analysis has made great advances since the social responsibility theory of the press. Scholars have spent a great deal of time in the newsroom, understanding the job, the process, and the workplace. They have embedded themselves within source organizations, looking at how they attempt to influence and shape the news agenda. The rather simplistic view of journalism as democracy's third leg has for the most part been abandoned. While justified, this theoretical viewpoint provides little room for advancement or development of research, and gives little weight to the fact that news media operate within the corporate structures of advanced capitalism. Nonetheless, researchers have understood that journalism *claims* to present reliable factual information indispensable for citizens in a democracy. It has also been made clear that news discourse is separated from other televisual discourse by making legitimate and publicly acceptable knowledge claims (Ekström, 2002). These concepts must be taken as starting points in understanding how journalism contributes to the construction of knowledge.

As a theoretical standpoint, understanding journalism as information becomes important when the *control* of that information is considered. Considering Walter Lipmann's (1922) discussion of controlling public opinion, Altheide and Johnson (1980) conclude that "such insights make it apparent that

the criteria and significance of legitimacy in a particular historical period are inextricably tied to information control" (p. 10). When news is understood as knowledge production, the variations in this process can shift the balance of this information towards the press, the public, figures of authority, or some middle ground. Regardless of the specific tilt, the investigation of this information balance is important.

Given all this research on the process of news production and the role of outside information, further research is warranted on how sources affect news products. Chapter three will investigate these processes further, and break down the source/reporter relationship. Issues of authority, authorship and voice will become more important when looking at how sources affect the quality of news discourse. How are these sourcing practices changing as PR become embedded as a source technique? How do authorized sources and 'experts' become mobilized as builders of credibility? How are these shifts in process related to resource cutbacks, job de-skilling, and other labour issues? A more developed understanding of sourcing as it relates to authorship will be advanced in the following pages.

Chapter 3: Sources and Authorship in News Discourse

The issue of who is given voice in society is one of the dominant questions in cultural studies. This issue is of especially great importance when the speakers are designated as truth-tellers, reporting on world events. News has become big business, constructing itself as the modern means by which we learn about our world – and to a great extent it is, especially on television. This, of course, is a valuable role to play. Statistics show television as the dominant news source in Canada, amidst decreasing newspaper circulation in North America (SSCTC, 2006; Angwin & Hallinan, 2005). But where do our local newscasters get their stories? Sourcing strategy is an established field in journalism studies, investigating not only who is interviewed, but how stories are chosen and pursued, as well as how source groups interact with news organizations (Sigal, 1973; Ericson et al., 1989; Palmer, 2000). The changing face of electronic newsgathering is producing an ambiguous terrain of news authorship, involving freelancers, local stations, local reporters, national networks, affiliated international networks, websites, wire services and PR practitioners. As one of the most significant sources in contemporary news production, wire services will be a main focus of this discussion[6].

Sourcing strategy will be important to the larger focus of this thesis because of the connections between sources, organizational and economic pressures in news, and the relationship between public relations and source organizations. Regardless of the theoretical position taken, sources are important to news. Newsworkers must rely on sources to create their stories – they are not able to directly observe all the events they are called on to describe. Important

sources for news include news agencies and wire services, press conferences and scheduled events, governmental and 'expert' sources, and of course, other broadcast and print outlets. Within this thesis, the term 'source' has two main interpretations. Traditionally understood, a source is an individual contact, someone trusted by a reporter to give an account of a specific event. In a more organizational sense, all external materials used within the production of a news text are sources. It is this connotation which is dominant within this research. This focus is due to the increasing importance of institutional sources, and the use of pseudo-events like press conferences and press releases to circumvent the traditional use of individual spokespeople. While there are differing implications and nuances attached to these various types of sources, the importance is the extent to which content production is being moved outside of the newsroom. Sources clearly subsidize news production. This chapter will address how sourcing fits into the organizational climate of journalism, and what role it plays in the commodification of what many see as a public service.

The content of news depends on the sources of news, which in turn often depends on how reporters gather the news (Sigal, 1986). Historically, sources have provided the opportunity for journalists to present viewpoints without expressing them directly. This was especially important in the transition of journalism into a respected and professional news medium (Allan, 2004). Sources allowed journalism to construct itself as a neutral mouthpiece for the views of others. The heavy use of sources began, at least, as a tool for objective journalism: "Objective reporting means avoiding as much as possible the overt intrusion of the reporter's personal values into a news story and minimizing explicit interpretation in writing up the story" (Sigal, 1986, p. 15). Sources moved journalism from its

beginnings as political partisanship to distanced reporting. Balanced journalism has been constructed as the inclusion of sources with divergent viewpoints[7]. This has been so firmly entrenched as to appear in legislation to mandate a neutral press in both the U.S. and the U.K. (Allan, 2004). Within the realm of external source organizations, none weighs more prominently in the media landscape than wire services. These organizations, as old as the separation of communication from transportation, are a crucial part of the news food chain in Canada. Since wire services account for such an overwhelming part of news sourcing, a slight diversion is necessary into the history of these organizations.

Wire services have been a part of journalism since the mid 19th Century, as news outlets sought a means by which to report global events[8]. In 1870, a cartel comprised of four news agencies divided up the world's news between them (Allen, 2006). Facilitated by the advent of the telegraph, these wire services transformed news from a strictly local enterprise into a global business. Within the last two decades, however, wire services have become key in the restructuring of journalism. Today four bodies – Reuters, Associated Press (AP), Agence France-Presse (AFP), and United Press International (UPI) – dominate the global news agency business[9]. These agencies are complemented by a number of national news agencies, like the Canadian Press (CP)[10]. In addition, there exists a subset of the news agency business that specializes in press releases and public relations work. In addition to providing foreign coverage to small papers, the wires now often replace local workers, facilitating the application of economies of scale to an otherwise labour-intensive enterprise. Wire copy also divorces the news from its authors, creating a product which can move through different media, locations, and formats. Thus overall, the emergence of wire services and news

agencies can be understood as a process of commodification of the news. This discussion will follow the pattern set up in the previous chapter. Sourcing will be interrogated based on its role in the production of journalistic knowledge, its correspondence to organizational routines and structures of news production, and its use as a means of commodifying the news product. This chapter will conclude with an examination of the effect of changing sourcing practices on the labour of journalism.

Sources as Knowledge Producers

Sources depend on the trust that the media, and their audiences, place in the information they deliver. Ideas of credibility and authorization have long been an important item for study in communications. Commenting on his expansive study of media in the 1940s and 1950s, Joseph Klapper remarks that, "the mass media bestow prestige and enhance the authority of individuals by *legitimating their status*" (as cited in Smythe, 1981, p. 255-6). This process of legitimation flows in two directions; the media are also authorized as experts through association with prominent figures. More often than not, these individuals being legitimated are already figures of authority. This focus on authority is a reflection of the values of society; and these authorities will reflect these values *back to* society. They are more likely to hold dominant interpretations of events, and their institutional perspective will foreground any biased interpretation. Most importantly, they reflect the perspective of the journalist: "for a news source to be included as part of the constellation of interests being constructed around an event, it must either explicitly or implicitly

reaffirm the terms being employed by the newsworker in the initial framing of the event" (Allan, 2004, p. 72).

As bureaucrats and officials dominate news sourcing, they are allowed to define these framing terms. Official sources have been shown to exist as 'primary definers' – because of their legitimacy they are given the opportunity to offer the normative definition of events (Hall et al., 1978). Whether labeled bureaucratic, official, institutional, or routine sources, the same understanding is implied. These sources represent large organizations, both public and private, they possess large quantities of cultural capital, and they are often identifiable individuals, society's elites (Galtung & Ruge, 1973; Sigal, 1986; Erjavec, 2005). That institutional and government sources dominate news coverage has been proven extensively (Sigal, 1973; Hall et al., 1978; Fishman, 1980; Gitlin, 1980; Herman & Chomsky, 1988). With their resources and skills in public relations, large private organizations like corporations can "rival the power of the state in defining and reproducing social order" (Ericson et al., 1989, p. 259). These representatives of large bureaucracies are endowed with authority by the mass media, but given *a priori* legitimacy through our society's respect of the bureaucratic form.

Bureaucratic accounts are easily understandable because our society respects the hierarchical organization of information. Howard Becker (1967) labels this the 'hierarchy of credibility' – that is, within ranked systems, those individuals at the top will have the most accurate and informed picture of reality, while those at the bottom know relatively little. The initial account of any event or story is usually constructed from accounts of individuals placed at the top of the hierarchy; not only are they easily believed, but they are readily available for use as sources. Newsworkers specifically, and audiences more generally, believe these

experts because of their social position: "Bureaucrats are seen as competent knowers by virtue of their social structural position, i.e., their official assignment over a jurisdiction. Thus, they have a social warrant, they are entitled or authorized, to know certain things" (Fishman, 1980, p. 93). The credibility of officials is established by society and reinforced by journalists. This convention has a lot to do with understandings of bureaucratic hierarchies. Not only will these authoritative sources be chosen, but journalists will also accept their accounts as factual. Studying the practices of a local newspaper, Mark Fishman writes, "the only accounts that were taken at their face value were bureaucratically organized and produced" (1980, p. 86). This contradicts the self-ascribed mandate of the newsworker that all facts be checked and verified to ensure objectivity (Tuchman, 1978; Bukro, 2003). This reality is not overlooked by large organizations. On the contrary, it is mobilized in the large-scale production of press releases, reports, studies, and surveys – almost always tied to a media-friendly event to encourage their dissemination through the media.

Altheide and Johnson (1980) use the term "bureaucratic propaganda" to refer to organizationally-produced reports that promote the organization, while at the same time concealing the production processes and promotive character of the text[11]. This provides us with a frame for understanding the information put out by source organizations. Bureaucratic communication is not verifiable in the same ways as personal communication, as the only reference is the document itself. These reports gain their authority from "the preeminence accorded the belief in, and appearance of, rational coordination as the height of legitimacy," as well as, "the establishment of bureaucracy as the major organizational form" (Altheide & Johnson, 1980, p. 26). This mobilization of bureaucracy is seen

constantly in television news. We can relate the use of official spokespeople and press releases to the idea of bureaucratic propaganda in two ways. First, press releases and spokespeople operate bureaucratically by conveying through the media a text promoting their organization. Secondly, news organizations are themselves usually structured as bureaucracies, and this fact inevitably shapes any knowledge produced within them. Decisions, both in the newsroom as well as within the source bureaucracy are made within a culture based on organizational demands and economic needs (McManus, 1994).

News sourcing practices are also shown to produce knowledge that is predominantly focused on the Western world. This can be understood in terms of global flows of information (Cumming et al., 1981; Schiller, 1978; Wu, 2000). These analyses repeatedly detail the inequities between different parts of the world. International news agencies serve markets in developed nations, and as such, their news concerns these same nations. This same phenomenon can be seen at the national level. In addition to focusing predominantly on urban centers in central Canada, news agencies homogenize their content. In the hearings of the recent Senate Committee hearing into Canadian news media, Christopher Waddell of Carleton University testified that:

> National news services ... produce qualitatively different coverage than the individual newspapers with their own reporters in Ottawa provided their readers through the 1980s. The national news services have no ability to provide local examples or context to national political or public policy stories. Everything is written in broad brush strokes. ... They are not looking for the specific stories or issues that may have an impact primarily in one city – in Hamilton, in Windsor, in London, in Regina or in Saskatoon. Neither are they looking for local angles on the national stories they write. (SSCTC, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 11).

News services thus produce knowledge that is de-contextualized, that is pulled from any notion of place. All news, from royalist papers in early America, to free weeklies in rural Canada, depends on a local audience. News was traditionally tailored to this audience – to a specific geography (McKercher, 2002). Wire services have changed all that by attempting to appeal to a geographically dispersed audience of media outlets. In so doing, they necessarily transformed the style of news writing: "wire copy strips the news of the specificity of localized understandings in favour of more broadly understood news conventions" (Gasher & Gabriele, 2004, p.321). Thus, rather than a nuanced description of local events understood within a specific geographic, historical, and political context, news becomes a tale of natural disasters, accidents, and crime – events which are easily understood when de-contextualized. News agencies excel in what Oliver Boyd-Barrett (1998) calls a journalism of information, "which privileges 'facts' together with the routines in which this style of journalism engages to convince readers of the authenticity of such 'facts'" (p. 20). This journalism of information is an account of the commodification of news. It is the process whereby news is transformed from a personal, local, human account, into a record, a product that can be sent around the world to objectively describe an event.

Organizational Forms: Subsidies and Sources

> "In effect, the large bureaucracies of the powerful subsidize the mass media, and gain special access by the contribution to reducing the media's cost of acquiring the raw materials of, and producing, news" (Herman & Chomsky, qtd. in Bird, 1997, p. 91).

This understanding of information subsidies introduces the final way in which bureaucracies can act as sources. Bureaucracies insert themselves into the newsgathering process by corresponding to the organizational needs of

newsworkers. Sigal (1986) breaks down sourcing into three categories: routine, informal, and enterprise. Routine sources include press conferences, official interviews, and press releases. This can also include stories already in circulation. Jim McLean says this accounts for much of daily news: "By its nature, news, not much has changed, it's about the circulation of stuff that everyone else has. So most of the competition, in daily news, comes from trying to find an angle that your competitor doesn't have" (personal communication, February 5, 2007). In these situations, other media outlets like newspapers and 24-hour news networks become important sources. Informal sourcing includes leaks and private sources, while enterprise sourcing connotes reporter-initiated, investigative reporting. By almost all accounts, enterprise stories are on the decline: "Over the years, you know, enterprise stories have become fewer and more far between, simply because stations have decided that they can get away without putting the resources into researching and developing these things" (ibid.). We can also add spot news, to cover crime, disasters, and other unplanned event coverage. Smaller cities and rural stations cannot use the same amount of spot news as larger markets – there aren't as many crimes to go around. Michael, a manager at a small prairie station noted that, "while we wish we had [spot news] every single day, and that would lead our cast every single day, the reality is we're not a Montréal market...we just don't have it here" (personal communication, February 16, 2007). As such, Michael said his station tries to concentrate on community events.

Experts and officials represent routine sources, easily accessible and ready to provide an account of a major event through press conferences and interviews (Palmer, 2000; Sigal, 1973). Routine sources will conventionally be used because of

the time constraints and scarcity of resources involved in news production. In the competitive landscape of news, these events almost demand coverage. Planned events like court cases or news conferences by city officials play into this competitiveness: "you also know that most of your competition will be there, but you're kind of beholden for competitive reasons to show up" (Jim McLean, personal communication, February 5, 2007). These events also receive coverage because they are planned, and therefore guaranteed to fill a portion of the night's news hole. To ensure enough news, and to be able to plan it out in advance, newsworkers use the same sources repeatedly: "Assignment editors and other 'gatekeepers' routinely rely on predictable sources in order to schedule news coverage" (Altheide & Johnson, 1980, p. 60). The process of producing news is such that most news stories must be known about in advance, thus privileging scheduled events.

The 'primary definer' status of official sources discussed earlier can then be said to be structurally determined by the practices and organizational needs of journalism (Davis, 2000). Altheide and Johnson (1980) add that: "It must be emphasized that news routines are symbiotically compatible with the purposes or organizations that provide potential news information" (p. 63). As related institutions, news and source groups interact on a fundamental level – it is a combination of the routines and structures of journalism with the use of PR techniques by large organizations. Ericson et al. (1979) note that, "it is not simply the resource constraints and professional imperatives of journalists that force them to rely on a limited number of authorized knowers. Even organizations of minimal sophistication and scale know enough to limit their corporate face to a few select people" (p. 277). This limitation of information to a few authorized

knowers further entrenches the organizational propensities towards official sources. Spokespeople, through their willingness to interact with the media and their position within important hierarchies, act as important and repeated sources for television news.

The history of sourcing has also influenced organizational routines. The technological processes involved in the development of news agencies and wire services have necessarily limited the character of the knowledge produced. The most obvious example here is that of the inverted pyramid structure common to news reporting. This structure developed early in the life of the news agencies, as unreliable telegraph lines demanded that the most crucial data be transmitted first (Allan, 2004). This structure, developed out of technological necessity, has persisted even though the technology has long since advanced beyond it. Telegraph lines represented the first separation of transportation and communication. Speed became the new distinguishing factor among news outlets – editors and publishers gained readers by distributing news the fastest. As such, telegraphy "gave the nineteenth-century editor the opportunity to bring news into the community ahead of transportation systems, even though the volume of news had to be sacrificed to gain telegraphy's speed and distance" (Schwarzlose, 1992, p. 146). The telegraph increased the stakes of the news game. The transition from telegraph wires to satellite up-links provided another tool for journalists to provide the first account.

As Canada's television market has been deregulated, stations have become responsible for producing an increasing amount of news coverage. Canada's three major English-language TV networks and two 24-hour news channels put out more news than ever before. This, combined with reduced staffing (discussed

below) has increased organizational imperatives. "The arrival of all-news television and radio has also changed the practice of journalism, putting increased pressure on journalists in all media to get the news out ever more quickly and often reducing the time available for research or background checking" (SSCTC, 2004, p. 3). The time or staff available create organizational routines, but these routines are also often structured by their cost and profit potential. These diversifications into cable and specialty channels only serve to reinforce the dominance of the economic model in present-day Canadian television journalism.

Creating a Commodity: Sourcing as Business

To say that news is a commodity is not to bring some grand revelation to the discussion of journalism. Roger Bird (1997) puts it most plainly: "to be in the news business is to be in the business of buying and selling information" (p. 19). This has always been, and will always be, the case: journalism is a business of information. However, the relationship of that information to the process of its production, to the role played by the labourers producing it, and to the owners making profits from it, must always be investigated. Only with such investigations can positive trends be encouraged, and negative ones combated. The role of sources generally, and wire services more specifically, in the overall process of the commodification of Canadian television news must be interrogated.

At the turn of the 20th Century, AP's service to Canada of international news was something that would otherwise have been "virtually impossible and prohibitively expensive" (Allen, 2006, p. 207). When news was a local process,

when daily newspapers were the main authors of history, there was a financial logic governing their work. Newspapers were businesses, and until the telegraph, obtaining foreign news of any timeliness was essentially impossible. An editor at a small American paper puts it succinctly: "we cannot afford our own foreign correspondents or a full-time staffer in the nation's capital, but through these services we can afford to provide our readers with the best of American journalism" (Kingsley, 1992, p.177). In Canada, a small population and a huge geographic dispersion further compound the financial difficulty. Here, the existence of a public broadcaster helps to overcome these hurdles. As Michael Cartier, President & CEO of Cogeco Diffusion remarks: "It is impossible for private broadcasters to provide international news coverage. TQS [Television Quatre Saisons, a Cogeco network] cannot afford to provide that kind of coverage, but SRC, the French CBC, can and does" (SSCRC, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 37). So at the end of the day, wire services provide affordable access to the world's news. Walter Mears (1992), a former AP staffer, understands that "the cost of AP service represents only a tiny fraction of the editorial budgets of most newspapers. We are a bargain" (p. 170). Wire services provide stories to print and broadcast media, but are complemented by television services.

Within television news, there is a discrete flow of information, from large TV agencies that capture footage of breaking stories, to the local stations that air these stories far from their point of origin. The global television news agencies operate on a three tiered system: the agency bureaus and staffers gather the product, the news agencies process and wholesale it, and the networks and stations retail it for audience consumption (Paterson, 1998). 24-hour news networks and ownership consolidation have produced massive global television

powerhouses which to some extent, act as distributors within this model (Boyd-Barrett, 1998). This has blurred the lines between television station and television news agency. Similarly here in Canada, networks sign distribution deals with other networks to gain access to international footage and reporters (Clarke, 1990). Clarke's research showed that CTV bought 70% of the stories they aired (p. 78). The consolidation of large media corporations has furthered this dependence, as resources are concentrated on a national or international level, and allocated based on scale and efficiency. Networks and stations need to choose where to get international footage for their stories, since most don't have the resources to cover the globe. Most choose wire services. Cal, news director at a CHUM station, confirmed this use of sources. His station combines text from CP with video from other networks or news agencies to provide his viewers with international stories (personal communication, February 16, 2007). George, from the CBC, listed his station's agreements with CNN, NBC, CBS, and APTN (the television division of the Associated Press). These different sources were used for international stories outside the scope of the CBC's foreign staff (personal communication, February 2, 2007). Clarke's (1990) study showed the CBC obtained 60% of its footage from American networks or from television news agencies (p. 78)[12].

Different ownership groups and networks deal with the financial constraints of news production in different ways. George, a managing editor at the CBC that I spoke to emphasized the CBC's attempt to invest: "We have more foreign bureaus now that we had 10 years ago, because we've invested in news, invested in covering the world. We've invested differently" (personal communication, February 2, 2007). This is indeed different from other Canadian broadcasters. Data collected in the recent Senate review of the news media shows

that the CBC has more foreign bureaus than any other Canadian news broadcaster. It also shows that CanWest, upon purchasing the Southam chain of newspapers, *closed* at least nine bureaus (SSCTC, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 10). Sourcing strategies within television news are not homogeneous across the industry. These examples clearly reflect different strategies in sourcing television news. The CBC attempts, as much as possible to gather, shoot, edit, and produce its own material.

In addition to operating bureaus, developing stories itself carries a high cost. News departments exist as subsets of a particular station, and beyond that as a division of a media company. As such, they must function within the parameters of the market. McManus (1994) calls this "market-driven journalism," and sees it as a fundamental trend in news production: "news departments, for their part, seek information that will interest and/or inform consumers at the least cost" (p. 30). This is not to say that the cheapest content will always win out. McManus describes journalism as a four-way production process. It is a transaction between markets for audiences, the advertising markets subsidizing the process, the market for sources providing information, and (in the case of public companies) the stock market on which shares of the corporation are sold. These various exchanges will thus determine the mix of cost and content that will structure the newscast. In terms of sourcing, changes in this exchange can produce changes in practice. Jim McLean describes a time at the CBC in Saskatchewan, "where because of cutbacks all of a sudden we had been producing a consumer affairs column, which is expensive and time consuming to do ... all of a sudden there wasn't money to do that, and then the next week, a syndicated service called Consumer Reports showed up" (personal communication, February 5, 2007). The use of this material becomes important because it lacks the

accountability of legitimate journalism. None of the external material could be verified in the same way as news content.

McManus (1994) sees this as coherent with the theory of market journalism. As resources are diminished, national news networks "are relying more on local stations and other outside sources to cover stories or supply video for network news" (p. 8). This transaction also works in the opposite direction, with affiliate stations becoming dependent on the network to make up for a lack of resources. Michael understood the limits of his station: "We generate as much local content as we can within that one hour window nightly, and fall back on what CBC might provide for national stories" (personal communication, February 16, 2007). External sources include other stations within a broadcasting group, other networks with whom the station may have agreements, as well as public relations groups. Joe, who works at a news release distribution firm understands the role these external sources play. He describes this subsidy as a service to the station, especially in smaller markets: "because they don't have the resources to do it themselves, they will jump at the chance to be able to get video on a timely topic, and then it can make their news show that much better" (personal communication, February 9, 2007).

The companies and organizations represented by these PR firms understand the value of this method of distribution. Not only is it productive, but it is a cost effective model for distributing their message. Joe explains the appeal:

> February being heart month, pharmaceutical companies for instance, or the Heart and Stroke Foundation, rather than trying to stage a number of events across the country to get local television to, they will prepare in advance a b-roll that will have interviews, lots of environmental footage, guys on treadmills, that sort of thing, and then in order to entice coverage, they will undertake all the costs of producing and transmitting that release out to the television stations ... Organizations understand, that are paying for

it, they understand the value of that. (personal communication, February 9, 2007).

Organizational sources thus can save money, as well as mobilize the resource dependence of the television stations, in achieving maximum coverage of their product, event, or campaign. These types of promotional videos will be addressed more completely in Chapter four. Whatever their source, the underlying motivation for the use of external video is the financial cost of producing news. Whether corporate video, b-roll distributed by a PR firm, or a story from an American network, it replaces in-house footage that would cost money, in equipment and labour, to produce. Adrian, the news director at a small market station, worked at the CBC earlier in his career. He confirms this point: "Yeah – it is lack of resources. At CBC we would never use that stuff. We would just call up another CBC location for footage, or call up the stock shot library in Toronto, and ask for specific footage" (personal communication, February 15, 2007). This example illustrates two specific economic constraints: firstly, the lack of a larger network to subsidize a local production, and secondly, the specific lack of staff at the local level. The next section discusses how the budgets of local stations have changed, as wires replace workers.

A Dying Breed: Local Journalists

The heavy use of sources, including wire services, can be understood as an outsourcing of labour. Wire copy, licensing agreements, and convenient source material all provide to the media owner the opportunity to gather news with less of a need for journalists. As of the mid-1960s, journalism employed journalists

and technicians across print, broadcast, and wire outlets. It was a labour-intensive product, from the stringers out in the field collecting the news, to the telegraphers transmitting it, to the printers and typists setting it on the page. Technological advances have been marked by "the steady push to compress and eliminate steps in the production process, and to eliminate the need for the workers who once made their living carrying out these tasks" (McKercher, 2002, p. 51). The advent of computers has transformed 'the wire' from a means of delivery into a mere metaphor, and changed the labour of journalism along with it. As teletype disappeared, the tradespeople operating the machinery of journalism were displaced, "and reporters woke up to the realization that their keystrokes on their terminals had replaced the high-priced, often unionized, keyboarding of typesetters and telegraphers" (Schwarzlose, 1992, p.150). The Wire Service Guild striking UPI in 1974 did more to ensure the sale of UPI than it did to resurrect any of these lost jobs. Shifting technology, however, was not the only nemesis facing newsworkers.

As Canadian Press struggled for survival during the 1980s and 1990s, layoffs occurred for the first and second times in the organization's history (Palmer, 1993). CP was forced to increase its reliance on re-treaded member articles, rather than writing its own, more costly reports. The large newspaper chains were able to establish their own news-sharing services at the expense of CP's staffers. The co-operative structure of the CP worked against them, prompting some corporations to leave the organization. In 1996, the Southam group threatened to leave the CP behind. A Southam representative said, "we simply don't want to be a member of a co-operative. We want to be able in the future to control and market our information as we see fit. And we can't do that

in a co-operative" (Brehl, 1996). Media groups sought to market their own information by creating individual networks to share stories amongst their various media holdings. Southam newspapers started a satellite network in 1990, and Thomson established one three years later (Palmer, 1993). This was a double savings, eliminating the cost of the CP subscription, as well as facilitating the re-use of stories already written and paid for. Similarly, in 2003, CanWest attempted to cut expenses at *The National Post* by eliminating its subscription to CP material (Smith, 2003). CanWest operates an ever-expanding news service, which syndicates material produced by CanWest journalists across its television stations, newspapers, and websites (CanWest, 2007). These developments have changed the focus of news agencies, from providing affordable international news coverage, to furthering corporate profits through scale and economy. It is important to note here that these moves are made to increase already healthy profits – news divisions operate safely in the black. There is however, a constant drive to increase profit margins. Often, these profits are used to subsidize debts acquired in large corporate mergers. The Senate review of Canadian news media noted that these debts could affect management decisions:

> One large legacy remains, however, from each transaction: the debt incurred to make the purchase. In recent times, executives at the new media conglomerates have spent considerable effort trying to create or salvage value from the collection of media assets they now possess. The most popular way to salvage value is to cut costs, often by reducing staff, including newsroom staff. (SSCTC, 2006, Vol. 2, p. 48)

Similarly, in television, the waves of consolidation in the media industries had a harsh effect on labourers. Many of these changes have been characterized as re-skilling. Usually this took the form of combining jobs to reduce staffing. Jim McLean's (2005) article detailing the purchase of CKCK, a local station in Regina,

Saskatchewan, by the CTV network highlights the effect of consolidation on workers: "The videotape editors and news photographers are gone, casualties of cutbacks and reorganization. Reporters quietly edit their own stories behind closed doors" (p. 326). This is also the case in Johnsen's (2004) article detailing the consolidation of journalists' jobs at a Belgian TV station when faced with declining profits and a new owner. The management decision consolidated three jobs into one, adding camera work and editing to the responsibilities of the journalist. This is an example of changing organizational structures to improve the functioning of the newsroom as a business. The CEO of the news division Johnsen studied exerted a heavy pressure to meet the bottom line. The author used news quality as one measure of the impact of this organizational change. Johnson (2004) quotes a newscutter: "If I watch the news and compare the Video Journalist [items] to the regular ones I do think that the regular ones have better quality: better camera, better lighting, this sort of thing" (p. 246). News values of quality and professionalism are subsumed beneath the drive for a more profitable, more flexible, more efficient news desk.

McLean (2005) also noted the negative impact on news quality. The rising pressures on a journalist performing three jobs led to more planned event coverage and less investigative journalism, playing into the overall trend of "greater superficiality" (McLean, 2005, p. 339), no doubt encouraged by the emphasis of the new management on efficiency and flexibility. Johnsen (2004) and McLean (2005) both make mention of the possibility of market rationality providing more independence for journalists, although neither cites much evidence that would lend credibility to that theory. While ostensibly giving reporters more freedom, organizational change and an emphasis on the bottom

line can be in actuality a subtle method of coercion and direction because, "that independence is strictly limited by the requirement to produce news reports for a system that favours the easy fix over endeavours that require patience, perseverance, and, above all, time" (McLean, 2005, p. 340). Neither author feels that any perceived gain in independence outweighs the drop in news quality and job satisfaction that comes from working with a team of professionals.
George, working at the CBC, thinks that the division between journalists and camera people is a false one: "I think that a cameraman is a journalist, and the cameraman is an important part of television journalism... I think it's very difficult [to do multiple jobs] if you're covering an election or a war, or a same day event, but is it possible? Yes" (personal communication, February 2, 2007).

Similarly, within organizations that possess interests in different media, the newsworker can be re-used in different forms. Adrian's employees face this challenge: "the reporters also have to file for radio as well as do their TV reports, so it's quite a burden on them" (personal communication, February 15, 2007). The news services, mentioned above, make use of the economies of scale that can be gained by multi-platform authorship. The same amount of cost paid to workers is now distributed out and leveraged over many outlets – an extremely attractive option to managers. This expansion, according to McKercher (2002), "has transformed the daily newspaper from a publication rooted in its own community into a product of conglomerates with stakes in a variety of media forms" (p. 18). The management of these conglomerates is thus beholden not to the communities served by their products, but instead to the shareholders controlling the business. Communities are doubly stung, as they lose accountability, as well as work. In McLean's (2005) example, CKCK, as a sizeable employer in Regina,

lost nearly two thirds of its workforce in the process of ownership change. It is impossible to divorce this change from its impact on small community like Regina. The importance of a news outlet to a community, especially a smaller community, was underscored by Cal:

> One thing I've found, and this is definitely an adjustment from Toronto is that there's a greater sense of ownership of the TV station. You're closer to your viewers, they feel more connected to you, and some of that is due to the fact that we've been around for 50 years. So I get lots of calls and emails and letters from viewers who like something, or conversely don't like something. There's almost a sense that they expect an answer. I think in Toronto there's more anonymity, and perhaps more, well, they're never going to listen to me. That's not to say that people don't call, or write, but there's definitely more connectivity to the community. And that translates to institutions as well. (personal communication, February 16, 2007).

From a labour standpoint, we can understand the interaction of work and sourcing in two ways. Firstly, as technology advances, jobs are eliminated and consolidated, both at the stations as well as at the wire services themselves. Secondly, as firms consolidate their ownership of news outlets, jobs are eliminated in a double movement: outsourced to the news agencies, and in-sourced to other locations within the organization[13]. Both rely on an overwhelming bottom-line perspective of media owners, where depth of coverage and relationship to the community are subsumed beneath a financial logic which demands flexibility, and above all, efficiency[14]. The underlying movement, however, is a transfer of resources: "It is evident that both sources and journalists have been transformed in their relations by what, in effect, amounts to a massive transfer of news-gathering resources, away from 'independent' journalists and towards partisan sources" (Davis, 2000, p. 44).

Chapter four will address how source organizations are mobilizing PR techniques, and changing the terrain of news production in Canada. The shift in authorship from journalists to outside sources is best exemplified through Video News Releases (VNRs). These completely pre-packaged news stories serve as an extension of the organizational practices that dominate news production. They take full advantage of the structural and economic limitations of news departments to position external PR material as legitimate news content. Cheaper than traditional advertising, these materials use the authority of journalism to sell brands and products. Sourcing concepts of authorized voices and information subsidy will be mobilized to understand the proliferation of VNRs. The issue will be examined as a case study of Canadian television news sourcing practices.

Chapter 4
VNRs: A Case Study in PR News

As news production adapts to changing technological, economic, and societal climates, the sources of news adapt to keep pace. Organizations competing for attention and publicity via the news media must reformat their message into 'news' language, rather than the language of marketing or advertising. In the newsroom, PR sources begin to occupy a larger proportion of stories, and news workers learn to filter and organize different sources of information. Most of all, PR firms and news agencies develop new ways to bring together the two sides of their work: the organizations seeking publicity, and the news media seeking content for their products. These trends follow the patterns discussed in the previous two chapters, unfolding along lines of economic and organizational imperatives, and impacting the workers, processes and routines of news production.

One example of these trends is the Video News Release (VNR). Medialink, an American PR firm, describes a VNR as a "a television news story that communicates an entity's public relations or corporate message. It is paid for by the corporation or organization seeking to announce news and is delivered without charge to the media" (Sourcewatch, 2005). VNRs represent the ultimate convergence of economic imperatives, organizational constraints, and PR techniques. While an extreme example, VNRs can serve as a model of these different factors in television news production. This chapter will use sample VNRs as a case study, examining their discursive, technical, and corporate qualities. The analysis presented here is intended to be illustrative of the more general and commonplace shifts in news sourcing, authorship, and attribution. Additionally,

despite an emerging scholarship on VNRs in the U.S. (Harmon & White, 2001; Potter, 2004; Rothenberg, 1991), there is little discussion here in Canada. The case study will be foregrounded by an examination of the debate in the United States, as well as an outline of the main players in the VNR industry here in Canada.

In the United States, VNRs have become a subject of popular and academic discussion. Work by news watchdog groups, notably the Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) and the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ), has served to publicize the widespread use of VNRs. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which regulates broadcasting in the United States, is directed to follow the *Communications Act* as the basis for its regulation. Section 317 of the *Communications Act* "requires broadcasters to disclose to their listeners or viewers if matter has been aired in exchange for money, services or other valuable consideration. The announcement must be aired when the subject matter is broadcast" (FCC, 2005). Using this regulatory requirement as the basis for its activism, the CMD has engaged in two studies tracking the use of VNRs. Their first study, conducted from June 2005 to March 2006, tracked 36 VNRs, and found that 77 different television stations broadcast them in 98 separate instances (Farsetta & Price, 2006). The results of the study link the use of VNRs to shrinking editorial budgets in newsrooms. Referring to the Project for Excellence in Journalism's (PEJ) annual report on journalism:

> One of the major issues in local TV news in recent years has been the trend toward stations' producing more news without increasing their staff to do it. That amounted to a kind of stretching of resources that translated into a thinning of the product. Stations did fewer reporter packages and less original reporting and enterprise, relying more on second-hand material (2006, p. 29).

Reporters are charged with assembling more content in less time, in a highly competitive atmosphere where advertising dollars are becoming scarce.

With this shift in the economics of newsgathering, VNRs as free content become more valuable to news departments. The use of these pieces depends, however, on their anonymity. The credibility gained by advertising on the news is lost should the piece be identified as promotional. CMD's study shows this to be true: "out of 98 documented instances of VNR and SMT [Satellite Media Tour] usage, CMD observed only two stations attempting to divulge the sponsored nature of the content to viewers" Farsetta & Price, 2006, pp.28-9). Neither station named the corporations paying for the publicity – they simply noted that the video had been produced externally. A lack of clear labeling allows VNRs to be more fully integrated with the station's other news material. The most common ways to do so is to re-record the narration for the VNR. For ease of use, most VNRs come complete with audio, recorded by a publicist at the PR firm. Stations will use one of their own reporters to re-record this narration, as well as to introduce the story in person from the studio. Stations were also shown to use their own 'supers' (graphic overlays that display pictures, as well as identify reporters and interview subjects) to further match the VNR footage to the rest of the newscast. Since the publication of the CMD reports, the FCC has sent letters of inquiry to the identified stations, asking them to clarify their attribution policies and send copies of the alleged offences (Farsetta & Price, 2006a).

VNRs play into a larger wave of consolidation and streamlining in American news production. Eric Klinenberg's (2007) work uses the Sinclair Broadcast Group as an example of these trends. Sinclair owns 58 television stations in the U.S., but uses one central studio to broadcast much of its news content. This strategy brings "local operating costs down to depths that autonomous stations could never reach" (Klinenberg, 2007, p. 88). Sinclair is using

a unique strategy to do what almost all broadcast outlets in the United States have been doing for the past two decades: reducing staff while simultaneously increasing output. VNRs represent another strategy within this same overall cost-cutting plan. Small affiliate stations struggling to afford high-cost syndicated programming can use VNRS "to reach the high profit margins their corporate owners and investors demand by filling the air with news from nowhere rather than with expensive journalists and production crews" (ibid., p. 108). News, already a high-margin production due to local advertising, thus becomes a cash cow subsidizing expensive purchases like sports and entertainment programming.

The situations in Canada and the U.S. are quite different, despite numerous similarities. American stations are often independently owned and operated, so while they sign affiliate agreements with the major networks, they are often not a part of a large corporation. This significantly changes the economics of news production. In Canada there are very few independently owned stations[15]. Additionally, the journalistic landscape here in Canada is shaped considerably by the presence of a national public broadcaster. Training and employing journalists, the journalistic culture of the CBC becomes a part of all news in Canada. What the debate in the United States does show us, however, is that sourcing practices are changing in response to various pressures, and that PR practitioners are taking advantage of these changing practices to their own advantage. Additionally, it shows us that VNRs function by blurring the lines between advertising and news. Through form, style, and content, VNRs mimic news so as to be indistinguishable to those people who matter to advertisers – the audience. These specific characteristics of VNRs will be discussed in the case study that

follows. Also of note here is the shift towards public relations products of those companies providing news and information services.

Issue Management: The *New* Newswire

As the turn of the 20th Century produced innovations in global print journalism, the 1960s and 1970s would see these developments re-produced in television. The large print agencies recognized possibilities in this opening market, and diversified into broadcasting (Paterson, 1998). Similarly, in the past two decades, providing content to television stations has become more profitable as the corporations owning the stations sought to cut costs and increase profit margins. This reached a peak in the 1990s, when "broadcasters came to rely on the international TV news agencies more than ever before to be their eyes and ears – and prime provider of international coverage – in all corners of the world" (Baker, 2004, p. 64). This process was furthered by intense competition in television news as well as the deregulation of satellite provision. However, Baker calls this a "quiet revolution" because few audiences were aware of the shift of content from stations and networks themselves to these international agencies (ibid.).

While the world market for TV news agencies is estimated at US $250 million, it is dominated by two main competitors: APTN (owned by the AP) and Reuters (Baker, 2004). Within Canada, while there are four companies offering diversified "news" services, there is really only one strong television news agency[16]. This agency, Broadcast News (owned by the Canadian Press), has repeatedly emerged as the only major television news service in Canada (Broadcast News takes over service, 1994). The other companies do not engage in

journalism as traditionally understood, instead dealing mostly with PR services, distributing press releases in a promotional capacity, as well as in compliance with corporate regulations[17]. Concepts of information subsidy and agenda building, mobilized academically to describe newswork processes, are mirrored in this industry's description of its work. Now central to the operation of the four companies offering news services in Canada is what can be described as "issue management." Canada News Wire (CNW) was established in 1960, and describes itself as a "leading and legitimate part of Canada's journalistic and financial reporting processes" (CNW, 2005a). Originally operating as a press release distribution agency, CNW has used its connection to newsrooms to expand its work. It now provides a comprehensive media relations portfolio, which it describes as "customized media and market-reaching communication services that extend beyond newswire distribution" (CNW, 2005b). The wire, instead of being the central facet of these businesses, is now simply a transportation infrastructure, a means by which PR content is transmitted from place to place[18]. CNW gives clients a "dominant reach" into the media community, delivering information simultaneously all over the country. According to its website, CNW distributed 113,808 news releases in 2005 (CNW, 2005c).

News Canada, another player in the industry, sees itself serving the media: "News Canada fills the media's need for feature news articles and segments that are informative and of interest to their audiences" (News Canada, *About Us*). At the same time, their business serves their clients – not the news media. Thus their content is based around their clients' products, but they also aim to provide a public service, satisfying the immense public need for "decision-making information prior to purchasing products and services" (ibid.). This balance,

between the clients, the media, and the public (as consumer), is evident in all four companies. While providing press release distribution, News Canada focuses its services on crafting client messages as information subsidy. Their print service "allows you to educate and influence consumers through the print and web media with positive news articles on your product and services" (*Print Service*). The articles appeal to editors because they are "media-ready," "easily accessible," and most importantly of all, "free of charge" (ibid.). These characteristics are what create this work as information subsidy – it appeals to the organizational and financial demands of newsgathering. To the client, News Canada offers invaluable publicity, guarantees results, and provides media monitoring services to assess impact. In print alone, News Canada creates 30,000 appearances of their articles, and over 2 billion audience impressions per year (ibid.).

CCNMatthews[19] describe themselves as "news distribution experts" (2005a). As the product of a merger between a corporate directories service (Matthews Directories), and an "alternative" newswire service (Canadian Corporate News), CCNMatthews also performs the public and investor relations' functions of the other firms. Their focus is on meeting clients' "complete communications agenda" (CCNMatthews, 2005b). While News Canada focuses on creating the spin on client's information, CCN's emphasis is the delivery of that information. They give their clients the "means to reach the wire, media locations and your stakeholder groups, delivering important messages quickly and reliably" (2005a). In a bid to dominate the information delivery infrastructure in Canada, CCN has allied with the Canadian Press, giving its clients access to CP's wire service. Thus the same system which delivers CP's news copy also delivers CCN's press releases. This moves client messages directly into the "newsroom editorial systems of

nearly 700 newspapers, radio and TV stations and websites across Canada" (CCN, 2005d). This represents the culmination of a move by CP towards more PR-related content on the news wire. The slogan of the alliance, "where news is going," (ibid.) emphasizes the journalistic qualities of the organizations, as well as underlines the merging of traditional wire services with the modern public relations industry.

D.I.Y. Journalism: The "multimedia" news release

The showpiece of this alliance between news and PR is the Video News Release. The embrace of new media and diverse platforms for their news and messages is common to all of these disparate communications corporations. No longer confined to a few lines of text describing a new product, an event, or a corporate makeover, the press release is now a singing, dancing PR tool. In June 2004, the CNW Group introduced its "multimedia news release" format. Print releases now direct users to "an online treasure trove of print, photo, graphic, video, and audio information" (CNW, 2004). This "natural extension" of the press release offers a better "opportunity for corporate branding" (ibid.). Thus information subsidy is taken to a whole new level, as companies can not only inform the media of their new product, event, or campaign – they can actually create the news stories themselves. At the same time, CCNMatthews, who distributes on the same satellite links as Broadcast News, offers a full range of broadcast-quality marketing tools: multimedia news releases, video news releases (VNR), and 60-second vignettes. Multimedia content is the answer, because it increases the use of a news release, as "59% of journalists say the availability of

multimedia content" affects their newsgathering decisions (CCN, 2005c). This echoes academic studies of newswork finding that the presence of images is an overpowering element in determining whether a story makes it to air (Paterson, 1998). With CCN's services, "you make the media's job easier, by offering the full story, providing them with all the elements they need in one place to *tell your story and deliver your message*" (CCN, 2005c, emphasis in original). Information subsidy is the explicit corporate strategy at work in these firms.

CCN's 60-second vignettes and VNRs elaborate on this strategy, creating fully produced news stories out of clients' advertising messages. These press releases save the television station the "expense and inconvenience" of doing the reporting themselves (CCN, 2005e). This description of these services, packaged for corporate clients also echoes the experiences of broadcast journalists. Changes in cost dynamics and profits have severely limited the resources available to pursue in-depth investigative stories. Since each story carries a cost to be reported, sources able to reduce the cost of gathering news increase their influence. Work on information subsidy has shown that the most popular type of stories picked up by stations are those that deal with consumer information (Berkowitz and Adams, 1990). Thus services like CCN's are exceedingly valuable as cheap, influential marketing tools – less expensive than traditional advertising, with more legitimacy due to association with news programming. News Canada recognizes this, saying that "information delivered during news broadcasts can significantly influence your potential clients" (News Canada, *Broadcast Service*). The relationship to news, as traditionally understood, is critical to the value that these companies offer.

Marketers are constantly seeking new and more influential ways to sell products as audiences become deluged with advertisements. Product placement, data mining, and other new techniques developed to broaden advertising's reach. Advertorials have emerged as one new way to market to audiences within magazines or newspapers (Di Liberto, 2005). Some see the VNR as an advertorial for television, with one key difference: the identifying marks, which in print are different typeface and labeling of the advertorial's sponsor, are nonexistent for VNRs. With the lines blurring between news and PR, it is important to investigate how wires, news agencies, and other sources mobilize discursive, structural, and technological strategies to camouflage their product placement as news.

A Case Study in Sourcing

The remaining sections of this chapter will use three Video News Releases as illustrative examples of their common properties. Because of the preponderance of work on American VNRs, this analysis will feature releases produced by the Canadian firms discussed above. The first VNR, *Canadians File Taxes On-line in Record Numbers*, was produced by Canada News Wire in 2005 (CNW, 2005d). The second, *Almonds: No Limit to the Health Benefits*, was produced by News Canada (2007). The third is a 60-second news brief prepared by CCN Matthews, entitled *Is Chocolate Milk Healthy for You?* (2006). These sample VNRs will constitute the main basis of the case study, used to display the characteristics of information subsidy, bureaucratic propaganda, and PR influence on newsgathering routines. This section will also make reference to how the

theoretical constraints and structures of news production are enacted through the Video News Release.

The use of PR tactics in news production is characterized by the hybridization of discourse. The negotiation between reporters and sources encourages source organizations to re-format their material in terms of news discourse. This means bringing their information into line with what journalists understand to be legitimate journalism. Curtin's (1999) work showed that PR subsidies written in a news style were given more credibility than those not written in the same style (p. 63). Studying newsrooms, Erjavec (2005) showed that PR sources are a main source of information for reporters. The use of these sources in creating a final news product invoked a hybrid discourse. Erjavec labels this "public relations news," and defines it as "published news that contains basically unchanged PR information, that appears without citing the source and attempts to promote or protect certain people or organizations" (2005, p. 156). Journalism can be understood as creating a product for viewers. Within this frame, viewers as consumers need information to guide their choices in purchasing other products. This understanding legitimates news content articulated around commodities (Erjavec, 2005). However news texts and PR texts use different discursive formats to market their respective products.

Norman Fairclough labels these different formats as genres. Genres are articulated with different agents and discourses to construct the form and meaning of the text. There are, of course, different levels of genre. Fairclough (2003) labels those very abstract genres like narrative or argument, "pre-genres" (p. 67), as they exist above more concrete genres. The genre, however, is a fluid entity; it can interact with other genres and with other elements of discourse,

constantly shifting depending on the context. News can also be understood as a pre-genre, having become such a common discursive format in our society. Important genres within news are the interview, the crime story, the entertainment report, and the health report. These genres are not individual and distinct. They are linked together in what Fairclough calls "genre chains," which combine elements of different genres and transform them.

> Media genres involve a complex admixture of genres from other domains – such as genres of political debate and political speaking from the political system – which are recontextualized (and in the process may be significantly transformed) within the media. The genres of broadcasting often have a complex hybrid or heterogeneous character. (Fairclough, 1988, 150)

This concept is clearly demonstrated through reference to the Video News Release (VNR). In this case, the language of the corporation is transformed into a public relations discourse, and then in turn transformed into news discourse[20]. VNRs are not accepted by news workers if they explicitly use marketing language. A news director I spoke with saw a distance between his job and the purpose of the VNRs coming into his newsroom: "It's not our job – we're not in the business of promoting things... it's just common sense, people have to be able to assess the information they're given" (Adrian, personal communication, February 15, 2007).

The CNW VNR advertising on-line tax filing embeds the genre of the interview within several others (CNW, 2005d). Former Finance Minister John McCallum discusses the merits of on-line tax reporting with an off-camera reporter. The VNR proceeds to follow the structure of news' sub-genres by establishing the authority of the story through b-roll images. These images, of the hypothetical user, of McCallum, and of the Canada Revenue Agency building,

background and legitimate the information being delivered in the interview. This particular piece exemplifies the concept of the genre chain. It is a government advertisement which, when routed through the genres of public relations and interviewing, is transformed into a news report genre, thereby delivering legitimation and an air of objectivity.

The hybridity of the genre chain is also present at an explicitly textual level. The promotive character of the press release is abnormal for the news genre, so the PR language that displays this character must be modified. Erjavec's (2005) study showed that overly positive words in the PR material were toned down by reporters to fit news standards. This specific manipulation of texts is representative of the differences between news and PR: "the journalist altered the explicit characteristics of the press release in order for the text to be appropriate for publication in a newspaper" (ibid., pp. 166-7). While these press releases overwhelmingly deal with a product or a brand, it is not the overall content that is seen as un-newsworthy; it is only the positive language used that contravenes news values. The significance of VNRs to this process of discursive hybridization is that in this case, the transformation is done *by the PR practitioner*. Ericson et al. (1989) contend that organizational source materials, like press releases, are translated by reporters into news language. This translation removes the sources meanings from the text. "In the process sources learn to bring their accounts into conformity with the form and content established by journalists" (ibid., p. 15). VNRs change this process because they are explicitly and already formulated within news language – this is their usefulness.

A VNR producer I spoke to emphasized this: "It's got to be newsy. The television reporters want to report news - we stress this to the client. The

segments need a very good news hook on them. They're obviously not going to pick up something that's too promotional" (Cathy, personal communication, March 7, 2006). To this end, companies like News Canada or Canada News Wire (CNW) employ former journalists writing the copy for the VNRs. They know the language and the structure of news reports. Joe, who works at another news agency that produces VNRs, also has experience as a journalist: "it's important for the company to have people that have that sort of background, because we can talk the talk, and we have first-hand experience in a newsroom" (personal communication, February 9, 2007). VNRs bridge the gap between public relations and journalism by using the discursive characteristics of journalism in their content[21]. Besides diverting attention from their promotional character, this also makes VNRs more useful, as news outlets can air them without alteration. As these discursive shifts create new outlets for PR work, institutional news sources like wire services have adapted to take advantage of these new markets.

As discussed in Chapter two, the bureaucratic knowledge so often present in news uses the forms of science and reason to legitimate itself. This is a common feature of VNRs. CCN's release on the value of chocolate milk uses numbers from an Ipsos-Reid survey to indicate that pediatricians support it as a source of calcium (CCN, 2006). Another VNR, addressing the health benefits of cranberries, also taps into the tendency of the news to report surveys, studies, and other specialized and quantified data. "According to a new Ipsos Reid survey..." (News Canada, 2006) is an opening that signifies the mobilization of this objective and quantifiable knowledge. It continues, "over 50 percent of Canadian women have suffered from a urinary tract infection or UTI" (ibid.), entrenching this VNR within the genre of medical report. The VNR on the health benefits of almonds

uses complicated scientific language to validate its claims. Citing a study in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry,* the VNR describes health benefits in terms of "anti-oxidants," and "free radicals" (NewsCanada, 2007). The hybridity of discourse explained above is used here, as the expert transforms this complex scientific language into layperson's words: "Because of their fat content, they're very satiating, and satiating means that you will feel fuller longer" (ibid.). This is echoed in a News Canada VNR on cranberries. Lois Ferguson, a registered dietitian, is used to recount the scientifically objective truths about the positive effects of cranberries on human health. She also operates to transform expert language, such as "proanthocyanidins," and "antioxidants," into layperson's language: "when bacteria can't stick, bacteria cannot cause infection" (News Canada, 2006a). This scientific discourse not only legitimates the message of the VNR as being objective and rational, it also reinforces the on-camera expert as crucial to the viewers' ability to understand the information.

These experts also serve to merge the VNR with the other news content. As mentioned earlier, authorized voices and speakers are common to the news genre – they maintain the reporter's objectivity, as well as provide specialized knowledge. The VNRs surveyed for this research all use experts to convey their message. Since health is an overwhelmingly popular subject, these experts are often doctors. The tax VNR used former Minister of National Revenue John McCallum, while other diet related VNRs mobilized registered dietitians. Given the fact that VNRs are commodities produced by interested parties, there could be reason to doubt the legitimacy of the experts used. Nonetheless, these sources have been mobilized precisely to gain impartiality. One news director I spoke with saw them in exactly this way:

> If we use the interview it's because it is an expert with compelling information, and the credibility factor – the fact that this man, who's not connected to a commercial operation, obviously they put him in for credibility, to make it look less like an advertisement. (Adrian, personal communication, February 15, 2007)

At least to this newsworker, the use of these experts *does* lend legitimacy to the VNR. Some research into the experts used, however, shows that they often are nothing more than paid presenters. Dr. Mark Greenwald, who advocates chocolate milk as a source of calcium in the CCNMatthews VNR, also is a spokesperson for the Asthma Society of Canada, and reviews scientific data for publications (CCN, 2006; Asthma Society of Canada, 2007; Cerny, 2005). *Almonds: No Limits to the Health Benefits*, uses Helene Charlebois, a dietitian, to speak about the health benefits of including almonds in one's diet (NewsCanada, 2007). Charlebois also provides information on a trade group's website about how to incorporate chicken into a healthy diet (Chicken Farmers of Canada, 2005). Additionally, she conducts speaking engagements for dietitians. One registration form for a conference indicates that Charlebois' focus is how "to be a nutrition consultant to business and industry" (Charlebois, 2007). The biography on the form notes that Charlebois' "nutrition expertise is sought by various pharmaceutical and food companies" (ibid.).

A previous News Canada (2006) VNR used Lois Ferguson to discuss the usefulness of cranberries in preventing certain ailments. While described in the VNR as a "registered dietitian," Ferguson's personal website is more descriptive, saying that she "is a Registered Dietitian representing food manufacturers, marketing boards, and the government" (Malibu Consulting, 2003). Charlebois and Ferguson's professional status as dietitians are mobilized to defend the claims that certain foods are beneficial and healthy. At the same time, the reports do not

call attention to their links to trade groups and vested interests in food marketing, nor does it reveal compensation given for their contributions. Only one VNR I examined disclosed links between its expert and their employer, describing an industry marketing group as a "program that promotes fruits and vegetables from the Southern U.S." (NewsCanada, 2007a). This is not to say that sources used are always financially motivated; the larger issue is that these individuals have specific perspectives which are not being discussed, while at the same time, their status is being used to lend legitimacy as well as to fit into news structures. This is a central feature of VNRs – they are specifically constructed to blend in with news, not only discursively, as discussed above, but also formally and structurally.

News carries with it a specific way of organizing and delivering content that makes it easily identifiable *as news*. VNRs tap into this aesthetic, constructing stories that blend seamlessly into a traditional newscast. This function is achieved in part by understanding the generic structure of news. The space which the VNR occupies serves to legitimate its status. If a newscast were to open with a story about cranberries or almonds, its authoritative voice would be suspect. To cite Tuchman (1978): "Once upon a time announces that what follows is myth and pretense, a flight of cultural fancy. The news lead proclaims that what follows is factual and hard-nosed, a veridical account of events in the world" (p. 5). With the proliferation of television news through the 1970s and 1980s, a distinctive style was developed. Television news owes this style in large part to radio news, documentary films, and the newsreel (Barkin, 2003). Cable television and the advent of the 24-hour news network have refined and continued this stylistic similarity. There is a clearly demarcated order within the traditional 30-minute newscast that 'hard' news leads, while sports, entertainment, and other 'soft' news

occupy the second half of the newscast. Tuchman (1978), references the use of kickers, upbeat stories that consistently mark the end of television newscast. These stories serve to provide visual variety, as well as a change from the negativity of hard news. VNRs also fit into the 'soft' section of a newscast, providing a story that hardly has strong newsworthiness, but offers a human interest angle.

Technologically, VNRs are delivered to the newsroom over the news wire. The news wire, however, is no longer a primitive tool – through its history it has gained importance in the organizational routines of news workers. It is now a fundamental device for the movement of information across different media, different geographic locations, and different corporations (Vanderlinden, 2006). Renting time on communications satellites (and increasingly, using high-bandwidth IP networks) gives these companies the flexibility to offer high-quality footage, obtained directly by the news station, free of charge. Satellite delivery is common to the industry, but may be in decline as optical fiber provides cheaper delivery of data. CNW states on their website that satellite transmission, "ensures all newsrooms receive audio and video material directly into their editorial system. Satellite distribution is the preferred delivery method for broadcast outlets and ensures all stations receive the feed at the same time" (CNW, 2005b). This distribution system is reinforced with phone calls and wire notifications to the newsrooms. A VNR producer who I spoke with emphasized the connection to the newsroom: "We have staff that nothing but their job is to talk to the newsrooms, and try and get a handle on what is that people need, and what can be helpful, and what will enhance an opportunity for a story to be put forward" (personal communication, February 9, 2007). At the same time, the incoming

material can now be computer sorted to separate legitimate Canadian Press stories from press releases (Cal, personal communication, February 16, 2007). Video News Releases also use aspects of their form, style, and content to achieve full consonance with news programming. Visually and structurally, they are specifically designed to blend in.

The VNRs in this case study use the same stylistic conventions as news more generally, mixing interview footage with background shots (b-roll)[22]. These shots "of a model Canadian at home filing her taxes on-line," or even "various shots of people eating almonds," echo the understanding of news as visual knowledge (CNW, 2005d; NewsCanada, 2007). These visual structures match so closely to the existing structures in journalism that the VNR can go unnoticed. The use of station-branded text and a local reporter serves to localize reports that are sent out nationwide over the wire. They also provide the final link, joining the stylistic similarities of the VNR with the rest of the newscast. To do so, stations will add "station-branded graphics and overlays that make VNRs indistinguishable from reports that genuinely originated from their station". Stations will also have a familiar reporter re-record the voice-over for the VNR, or have a local anchor introduce the story (Farsetta and Price, 2006). These techniques are reflected in the material structures of VNRs. They are provided to stations in two parts: the video, cut up into interview segments and b-roll, and the accompanying script which highlights important comments made by the interview subjects, as well as a narration to be read by a reporter. News Canada's VNRs explicitly include a "suggested newscaster introduction" above their scripts (NewsCanada, 2007). The VNRs come pre-narrated by newswire workers, but the provision of the video allows for the footage to be re-narrated by a station's

newsworker. This serves to both conceal the original source of the report, as well as to facilitate transitions between stories.

The homogenization of radio and television broadcasting styles have aided in the distribution of labour to external companies. As an example of this, Broadcast News (BN), the broadcast wing of the Canadian Press, provides short sound bites and items for play on the radio. These items are constructed generically so as to be recognizable on most radio stations, and even on television stations. Hourly news updates, international news, financial news, or entertainment and cultural reports, are produced by BN but read by on-air personalities recognizable to the local listener or viewer. These pieces are formatted such that they match the discursive conventions of radio or television. As BN themselves proclaim, all their items, "are written to be read "on-air", making news production easy" (BN, 2006b). There is evidence that the majority of BN's clients "rip and read" – meaning they use the pre-packaged pieces for their radio segments (Cumming et al., 1981, p. 34). For VNRs, the script is written in the same generic format so as to ease production requirements. The culmination of all these sources willing to subsidize news production is the loss of reporters. Anecdotal evidence from the recent Senate review shows that the number of full-time editorial staff is diminishing in Canada (SSCTC, 2006). As reporting original stories becomes more expensive and less conducive to a profitable media business, it is traditional authorship that loses out. We know less now about who writes our news, and where it comes from.

The Death of the Author: Attribution in Commodity News

Just as wire services have aided in de-localizing news, they have also de-authored it. News agencies send reporters and stringers out into the field, and the stories they submit are transmitted to hundreds, sometimes thousands of newspapers, television stations, and web sites. Their appeal is based on their ability to be used in many contexts. Yet there is no author listed on the story, just the particular agency, and sometimes nothing listed at all. Filing a report to the Kent Commission, Cumming et al. (1981) note that Canadian Press' print and broadcast services "are almost totally anonymous, and their anonymity is all the more striking in an industry where all other components do everything possible to attract attention" (p. 2). Television stations go to great lengths to individualize their news, insistent on ensuring market share in an increasingly distracted world. Wire copy, on the other hand, is generic, shared, and common to all news outlets. Mears (1992), a longtime AP writer, says that the importance of the AP would be "more evident except for the fact that much of what we do reaches the reader or the viewer without our label on it" (p. 167). These invisible foundations of newsgathering remain concealed as news outlets battle one another for superiority.

As news becomes a constantly available commodity through news networks and websites, the work in newsgathering is further concealed. Even something as simple as establishing where a story came from and who wrote it can be difficult. As discussed in Chapter two, Doug Saunders (1997) uses a plane crash as an example of muddled sourcing practices. Information shared between wire services, culled from broadcast news, and publicized on the Internet quickly

lost clear authorship. What little information there was came from a relatively small group of "official spokespeople" and "talking heads," leading Saunders to ask if, "as the number of information outlets increases, is the amount of original information decreasing"? This lack of sources and lack of accountability becomes glaringly obvious in the case of a well-publicized mistake. In 2006, immediately following a mining disaster in West Virginia, hundreds of newspapers carried a wire story that the trapped miners were alive. "At usatoday.com, editors mostly relied on reports from the Associated Press as the story developed" (Memmott, 2006). *The Washington Post,* like other large newspapers[23], operates its own news service, and distributed this incorrect story to its subscribers. Within this food chain structure, mistakes get carried just as far as accuracies. This incident points back to the micro level of news flow discussed by Saunders (1997). News does not only flow from country to country, but also within a country between newspapers, television stations, and networks.

Similarly, in 2000, a fake news release circulated by Internet Wire (now owned by CCNMatthews), stripped $2 billion in value from the stock of Emulex, an electronics company. Just as in the previous example, the story from Internet Wire was picked up by other news services, including Bloomberg and CBS Market Watch (Stewart, 2000). Peter Hunt, at that time the president of Canadian Corporate News (CCN), blamed the success of the hoax on the time pressure of the business: "We are, in each newswire, under huge pressure from both the clients and the authorities and the recipients, to get this information out as fast as possible. The probability is that the only way one could build in more certain assurances to anybody is by accepting a delay in the time in which news is sent out" (ibid.). Events like the Virginia mining disaster and the Emulex hoax bring to

light a common practice understood within the news world, yet denied in public. Anthony Massey, a staffer on BBC's foreign desk in London caused a scandal when he called the work that he did "a rewrite service of other people's copy, mostly from news agencies" (Patrick, 2006). Wire copy is unseen newswork, not wholly unattributed, yet without an accountable journalist to turn to for verification.

Normal agreements between news outlets and wires don't require identification, but identification of sources is considered normal practice (Patrick, 2006). With such ill-defined guidelines, and a proliferation of media sources and outlets, the lines of attribution are becoming fuzzier. The time constraints of news production produce an organizational routine with heavy emphasis on official and sanctioned sources (Palmer, 2000). Anyone wishing to attain the attention of the media, and thereby participate as a source, "must conform to journalistic judgments of what constitutes a newsworthy event" (Palmer, p. 11). These general ideas of news values and newswork decisions have been discussed in great length elsewhere (Fishman, 1980; Galtung and Ruge, 1973; Sigal, 1986; Tuchman, 1978). What is of note here is a movement of subversion; these news values are subsumed within a financial, organizational logic. Attribution, however, is understood to be the province of journalists. It is for ownership and accountability that journalists sign their names to what they write. When journalists are not the ones producing the content, issues of attribution become even more critical.

Conclusion

Julia Hobsbawm has worked in PR for more than a decade. Her work, both as a PR practitioner and as a professor, is focused on understanding and clarifying the links between public relations and news. She claims to practice "integrity PR" and make more clear the truth behind PR and journalism. She sees attribution as essential to an honest discussion of the issue. Using the example of food nutrition labeling, she says: "I don't see why we can't have that sort of transparency when it comes to information... this story used five on the record sources, three unattributable, it relied on two pieces of information that have been contested for their veracity" (Basen, 2007). Hobsbawm's goal displays the underlying importance of the relationship between public relations and journalism. Information has become a valuable commodity, and journalism is the best-known infrastructure for delivering this information. Not only does it have impact with an immense audience, it also carries with it an authority unavailable to traditional means of publicity.

At the same time, fully clarifying the relationship that PR plays in news is beneficial neither to PR practitioners, nor to journalists. PR practitioners benefit from the lack of attribution because the full integration of their material with journalism increases its value exponentially. Journalists, while to a certain extent coerced into the use of this material by shrinking budgets and increased organizational pressures, still rely on the trust of their readers to do their jobs. An unclear discussion of information subsidy could unfairly damage journalism's credibility. Adding a time delay to verify material or completely naming all use

of third-party material, as Hobsbawm advocates, also seems out of line with the structural demands of the business.

VNRs are used here as a case study to illustrate the sourcing trends discussed in Chapter three. This research does not assert that VNRs are replacing traditional news content. While their use is confirmed by the continued existence of those firms that produce them, their impact is more heavily felt in small ways. VNRs are representative of practices which are being shifted by economics, organizational pressures, and the influence of PR techniques. These changes impact the basic process of story selection: "I can guarantee you that in most television newsrooms that when they're looking over the assignments for the day, making the choices of what to cover that day, I can tell you that the CNW calendar will be part of the stuff they're looking at" (Joe, personal communication, February 9, 2007). To repeat, this is not to impugn the work of producing news, or the workers who produce it, but simply to draw connections and links between public relations and journalism. The most egregiously commercial information subsidies are obviously filtered out through editorial diligence, but the more subtle influences survive.

No matter the importance or seriousness of journalism, viewers still want a kicker. To quote the CBC's Peter Mansbridge: "In Paris today, hundreds of lovers locked lips on command, and in the United States a man stuffed live rattle snakes into his mouth – it's not every day that you hear headlines like that on *The National,* but this is no ordinary day" (Basen, 2007). This example, used in the *Spin Cycles* program, was earned media for the launch of the new edition of the Guinness Book of World Records. The organized event, "a nice light story with good visuals and lots of local content," is a sample of the power of PR-provided

content (ibid.). This story was covered by countless stations within Canada. While not explicitly a VNR, these stories represent the maximized use of journalists' own limitations by PR practitioners. More than being a two-minute commercial for the Guinness book, these stories were two minutes of positive, comedic, and localized content to fill a hole at the end of the newscast. There is no question as to whether a relationship exists between news and PR. What is left for researchers is to map the contours and limits of this relationship, while advocating for more clear definitions by the parties involved. Television journalism is structured around accountability and visibility. Sources and reporters are for the most part shown and named. This naming is part of an understanding between viewers and news outlets. News programs keep viewers through the extent to which they are perceived as accurate and trustworthy, but VNRs use this relationship precisely to *reduce* accountability. Experts are named and labeled while the main source of the story, the video, and the frame for analysis are kept hidden from audiences. The use of third-party material – whether a news brief from Canadian Press or a video selling chocolate milk – should be labeled and identified.

Chapter 5: Conclusion
Seeking Criticism

News *is* a commodity. This thesis creates no revelations in that regard. News is the trade in information, in knowledge. In an age where knowledge is seen as the key to success and progress, this quality increases the importance of research on journalism. However, we persist in analyzing news through a democratic frame. It is universally acknowledged that news plays a role in how democracy functions, but beyond creating political and partisan schisms within and without the research community, this frame does little to advance our understanding of this powerful institution. Sifting through the competing views and perspectives of different social actors will be made no easier by understanding the connection of news to democracy. On the other hand, looking at the flows of information through news media, and the balance of knowledge this creates, can give researchers and citizens alike the opportunity to examine the movement of information and power in society. What this research does show is that the informational balance is firmly within the purview of public relations and issue management consultants, *not* within the grasp of the journalists. This is not a criticism of journalists themselves – within shrinking staffs, dwindling budgets, and diminishing resources, their job is only becoming more difficult.

With the balance of information so clearly on the side of public relations practitioners, working for large corporate, institutional, and government employers, what is to be done? Campaigns focused around the contribution of journalism to democracy (vitally important, no matter what your theoretical standpoint) have diversified into citizen journalism. Jay Rosen, who teaches journalism at NYU, is exploring open-source journalism through his project New

Assignment (www.newassignment.net). The idea is to combine the work of professional journalists with the work of citizen journalists, while maintaining financial and editorial independence from other large organizations. This is an extension of Rosen's project of public journalism, which attempts to end the dichotomy between the public and authorized experts (Compton, 2000). Public journalism explicitly links the work of journalists to the proper functioning of democratic deliberation. Citizen journalism, on the other hand, is a broadening out of journalism to include work by all individuals, not only professional journalists. These ideals, however, are easily taken up by the mainstream media. CNN and other web news sites use user-generated content to supplant their own work. This reached a pinnacle after the April shooting at Virginia Tech. CNN's I-Reports, as they are called, carried a video of the shooting:

> In the skewed logic with which news organizations view horrific events, CNN Tuesday was heralding its Web coverage of the shooting as a success, particularly its use of cellphone and webcam footage shot by eyewitnesses. These became the backbone of CNN's broadcast coverage. But they were also a major draw to CNN's site, which wound up becoming a small repository for amateur visuals from the shooting. (Dixon, 2007).

While nominally an example of 'citizen journalism,' what this example really displays is the use of technology and the allure of Web 2.0 to outsource labour and monetize footage of carnage and fear. News divisions remain a profitable enterprise for media owners, and moves to 'democratize' the news media may simply be searches for new revenue streams. Nonetheless, scholars must ask how these shifting practices of visibility and sourcing affect the independence of our news outlets. This same process of the commodification of community work was seen in the 1998 CRTC ruling that ended mandated funding of community-access stations. The cable companies were quick to recognize and

commodify the value of community: "community television was no longer defined as a product of citizens but a consumer product serving the brand and the editorial values of cable companies" (Sénécal & Dubois, 2005). There are, nonetheless, examples of citizen attempts to build alternatives to the mainstream news media (ibid.). James Compton (2000) makes an important contribution to this debate in taking public journalism back to its theoretical underpinnings in the work of Jürgen Habermas and John Dewey. Compton argues that public journalism fails to successfully deal with the contextual realities of news production, chief among them the logic of the market: "public journalism fails to understand that commercial media take a position toward the public that is fundamentally at odds with democratic public life" (ibid., p. 463). Regardless of its internal conflict, debates about re-shaping journalism are valuable for their base acknowledgement that *journalism needs re-shaping*. More scholarship on this topic can only help to clarify important arguments and points of debate.

A question posed by this thesis is how ideals of advertising and public relations can be integrated into a journalistic framework without fundamentally changing what is understood by news. Johnsen (2004) and McLean (2005) seek to use quality and worker satisfaction as a means to assess consolidation of media industries and the influence of the business model. Neither of these criteria sees positive change in developments to news practices. Through the audience we can understand the impact of the use of news agency material, and the wider shift of news towards commodity status. The news agencies studied in this thesis value television journalism for the audience markets it creates. Within this frame, news values can be brought into line with larger public relations campaigns. As a consumer, *news* is information that aids me in my consumption. However, the

role of corporations in public life mitigates against the authenticity of the information they provide. Martin (1997) and Maze (2005) present examples of pharmaceutical publicity re-constructed as medical news. In these cases, the corporate sponsors disguise their relationship to the information – to do otherwise would be illegal under pharmaceutical advertising regulations. The denial of authorship in medical news specifically, and in other wire content more generally, also raises doubts about the legitimacy of the material.

Moreover, it is up to those who study journalism to at least attempt to make conclusions about the influence of these practices on news. It is clear from its constant investigation through Royal Commissions and Committees that journalism is a unique form of media. Broadcasting is defined as a "public service" within the *Broadcasting Act.* At the same time, it has made fortunes for media owners throughout history. What is to be the balance between these competing visions of news – commodity and public servant? The contours of this debate will be mapped within journalism scholarship and education at the University level. David Skinner, Mike Gasher and James Compton (2001) see reformed journalism education as an integral part of this issue. They identify a large gap between "doing journalism" and "talking about journalism" rooted in the style of education present in Canadian journalism departments. This false separation between the craft of the profession and the communication theory which underlies its practice creates a myopic, self-perpetuating lack of critical journalism. Students of journalism miss the critical ways that the production process, values and economic imperatives all act to structure the content and form of news texts (ibid.). In addition to sites of journalism education, regulatory bodies exist to monitor and shape broadcasting outlets in Canada.

Regulatory systems in Canada exist precisely to create a balance between the public and private good, and to ensure quality will not be sacrificed at the altar of profit. Broadcasting guidelines can be mobilized to ensure that stations using wire material or pre-produced stories label them as such. These guidelines can, and must, recognize local audiences as more than simply consumers seeking information to guide their purchasing. They must be strengthened to ensure that our television stations recognize this as well. This strengthening, unfortunately, must involve Canada's broadcast regulator, at a time when it is rabidly seeking the deregulation of its industries (Tuck, 2007). Voluntary, self-imposed guidelines created by industry or industry groups do not seem to improve the quality of journalism that emerges from Canadian newsrooms. The CRTC hearings scheduled to occur in the fall of 2007 will provide a moment of action for Canadian journalism. The "Diversity of Voices" proceeding is asking for comment on the state of broadcasting following the most recent round of mega-mergers in Canadian media. According to the CRTC, the hearings will deal with the transition to digital delivery from over-the-air transmission, competition from new media platforms, as well as the impact of the consolidation of media ownership on the diversity of editorial and creative voices (CRTC, 2007). While hearings *after* a major wave of consolidation seem placatory, these regulatory processes will serve to construct the policy that will govern television as it moves away from over-the-air transmission.

At the same time the CRTC is reviewing a proposed Journalistic Independence Code (CRTC, 2007a). This code was mandated following previous ownership consolidation, a condition of which was a separation of editorial and management structures in the newsroom. The Canadian Broadcast Standards

Council (CBSC), an industry group, has proposed certain standards to maintain journalistic integrity and editorial independence. Hearings on the new code of ethics will take place concurrent with the Diversity of Voices proceedings. These two policy initiatives offer media scholars the opportunity to comment upon the increased divergence of news outlets from public life. While we can no more reverse consolidation than reverse history, concerted action can force the inclusion of principles mandating the identification of all video, audio and text information in news stories.

Julia Hobsbawm, while working from a PR perspective, has a similar project: to clarify the relationship between journalism and public relations. Public relations is an established industry which has only solidified its importance in the century since its beginnings. PR's impact on journalism is larger than is often assumed: "In other words journalism needs to accept that the content of its pieces is a marriage between content which is created for them - for expediency as much as anything else - and that which journalists glean, deduce, deduct for themselves" (Weever, 2003). To reiterate, this is not a bad thing, but the consequences of this tilt towards organizational sources for the base material of journalism must be investigated. What are the impacts on journalists if the sites of their work are being moved out of the newsroom and onto the public information officer's desk? At the same time, Tom Rosenstiel, who works on the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ), says of Hobsbawm's project that "there are good reasons to beware of people outside journalism trying to fix journalism, for these people have their own agendas" (ibid.).

This is not to make a clear and unmuddled distinction between public relations practitioners and journalists. Far from being clear, there is a steady flow

between newsrooms and PR shops for people skilled in news work. All of my interview subjects brought up the flow of workers between these job sites. A former journalist who now works for a news wire firm said that his firm employs many journalists. While one view can see these journalists as "going to the dark side," or looked upon as shills, the reality is that these positions exist, while jobs in newsrooms are dwindling (Joe, personal communication, February 9, 2007). The movement of labour points us to the understanding that PR and journalism are vitally connected. People, processes, work, and locations draw these two groups into constant communication. One group, however, claims to have responsibilities to the larger public, while the other responds to the needs of its clients.

The Project for Excellence in Journalism's yearly studies of news, unfortunately confined to the United States, are available online (PEJ, 2007). They provide concrete data showing two important things. Firstly, local television news is the main source for citizens to obtain information about their communities and important occurrences within them. Secondly, this same local television news is carrying *less* local content, and is *more* focused on crime, car accidents and fires, than ever before. These two trends, running in completely opposite directions, are doing permanent damage to the state of journalism, and while the data is for the U.S., the conclusions are valid here in Canada as well. Consequently, research must be focused on understanding and changing these trends. If the main source of news content truly is PR material, as trends indicate, then the lack of local content can be understood by analyzing the production process that emphasizes these sources.

Public relations is a valuable tool. It helps small businesses and non-profit groups achieve a level of recognition that would have previously been impossible.

However, when used as a tool through the news media, at the behest of the largest bureaucracies and corporations in society, the effects on the balance of information must be interrogated. While the sources of information have undoubtedly expanded, a vast segment of the population still uses the traditional news media as the means by which they learn about the world. The research collected here shows an undeniable connection between the work of PR practitioners and the continued de-skilling of journalists, facilitated by the *business* of news. These longstanding trends towards efficiency and profitability in journalism production have moved the labour and production of journalism out of the newsrooms. Divisions between the public service and business responsibilities of journalism and the agglomeration of news divisions within large corporate bureaucracies have exaggerated these trends.

None of the subjects of this research enthusiastically supported these changes in news production. All were concerned with doing what they could with what they had. The overriding economic logic of the business dominates the newsroom's understanding of its function. When I asked Michael, the news director for 6 radio stations and 2 television stations in the prairies, if he thought his newsroom was well staffed, he scoffed. I asked him to describe his staffing: "Tiny. Bare minimum...I would say that in total, between the on-air and our production side, we have fifteen people" (personal communication, February 16, 2007). Fifteen people responsible for nearly ten hours of news program weekly, serving multiple communities.

Public relations brings with it the capacities, knowledges, and wealth of the private sector. These resources can surely help news outlets and reduce the costs of gathering information. The important question becomes, for citizens and

scholars alike, at what point does that help become control, and at what point are we no longer being served by our news media? While the VNR on chocolate milk is surely an extreme example, it is also representative. Audiences are being sold a false bill of goods, dependent on reporters and news outlets without the time or money to report the news that is in their community's best interest. This should change.

Endnotes

[1] An exception here is Jim McLean, a former journalist now completing his PhD at Concordia University. Jim waived his right to confidentiality.

[2] While these sections do serve to trace the different paths of journalism scholarship, they are *not* meant as a grand narrative of this field. Different countries, scholars, methodologies, and eras have produced different analyses of journalism's practices. This progression has been neither unified nor without conflict.

[3] French-language media exhibit the same traits being described here. The last two-and-a-half decades have been characterized by consolidation and takeover, leaving Quebecor Media Inc. and Diffusion Cogeco the main powerhouses in French Canada. The CBC's French counterpart, Radio Canada, CTVglobemedia, and a small number of ancillary companies also participate in French-language media.

[4] To fully discuss the impact of technology on news production would be well outside of my scope here. See Livingston & Bennett (2003), for a discussion of technology as it relates to live coverage; Johnson (2004), discusses the impact of technology on jobs in TV news; Garrison (2001) discusses the use of the internet as a source in newsrooms; Vanderlinden (2006) adds technology as a content filter in news production; McKercher (2002) addresses the role of technology in the evolution of newspaper labour unions in North America. Without being determinist, technology's role, especially in television news, must be understood as influential, and interrogated.

[5] This distinction, while minute, is important. An understanding of news as knowledge production is incomplete without a discussion of the role sources, and the relationships between sources and newsworkers, play in this process of knowledge creation.

[6] The recent Senate Committee report on Canadian news media showed that "about one-third to one-half of news and editorial content found in Canadian newspapers comes from news agencies, wire services or press associations" (2006, Vol. 1, p. 53). My interviews with journalists are proving this to be true in television journalism as well, as many stories develop from items arriving over the wire, whether directly, or through the newspaper.

[7] These balanced sources will almost always be official, legitimated sources, and the two extremes of the debate will be points situated well within the mainstream (see Tuchman, 1978a).

[8] A caveat here about the terms newswire, wire service, and news agency. They are used in this thesis interchangeably – as they are by the companies themselves. Originally, a sharp distinction existed between wire services, which operated to distribute legitimate news stories written by journalists, and news agencies, which often distributed only press releases written for corporate clients. Press releases, while a longstanding part of news gathering, have never constituted legitimate journalism. Now, through conglomeration, diversification, and alliances, these two different types of news providers are becoming indistinguishable. This blurring between news and PR will be discussed more fully in Chapter four.

[9] Reuters has recently been bought by the Thomson Corporation. Thomson started out as one of North America's largest newspaper dynasties, but divested

itself of its publishing business starting in the late 1990s. Since then it has moved into the delivery of digital information services. Joined with Reuters, it will be the largest financial information services company in the world. See Sorensen (2007).

[10] There exist several good histories of the development of wire services. Nichols (1948) was a participant in the early days of the CP, and wrote a passionate, if somewhat unbalanced book on that institution. Donald Read's (1992) book is a complete history of Reuters. Boyd-Barrett (1980) is probably the academic authority on news services, but for a shorter, more Canadian version, see Allen (2006).

[11] While the term propaganda can be problematic through its association with duplicitous state communications, the work of Altheide and Johnson brings valuable insight to the interactions of sources and news organizations *as bureaucracies*, a fact which greatly shapes the news product. While organizational pressures are often highlighted in the newsrooms, they are rarely discussed in terms of the source organization.

[12] This number may well be out of date, as much of the CBC's investment in foreign bureaus has come since this study was published.

[13] This extends to the evisceration of "soft" news departments such as arts, culture, and entertainment. See Moore (2006), for a personal account of the outsourcing of film criticism to wire reports.

[14] This is hardly a complete discussion of labour and journalism. To fully discuss this issue would be outside of my scope here. For a particularly interesting account of newswork (particularly its relationship to corporate concentration), see McKercher (2002).

[15] This is a limited discussion of the differences between the U.S. and Canadian broadcast television markets. This difference in ownership structures, however, has emerged as one of the most critical in understanding the use of third party material.

[16] Canadian Press (and its broadcast arm, Broadcast News) represent the only legitimate newsgathering service within this larger group of companies offering 'news' services. CP operates as a cooperative, employing its own journalists across the country, as well as circulating stories from its member papers and stations.

[17] Any publicly traded company is bound by law to publicly release information that is relevant to investors and to the price of their stocks. This is known as investor relations, and occupies a significant percentage of the work done by press release distribution firms.

[18] Indeed, given technological developments, the wire is merely a metaphor. All data travels over computer and satellite networks.

[19] CCNMatthews recently re-branded themselves as Marketwire. Marketwire, until June 4, 2007, was a U.S. subsidiary of CCNMatthews.

[20] It is in fact common for the specific genre of VNRs to be the medical report. For various reasons, including legislation around pharmaceutical advertising and the expertise required to understand medical claims, these are the most frequently used VNRs.

[21] Fairclough's work is much more focused on this explicit textuality of discourse. While my treatment here is incomplete, the textual properties of news and their interactions with VNRs (as well as PR sources more widely) represents a large opportunity for Canadian journalism analysis.

[22] "B-Roll is video footage, often without a narration sound track, used by broadcasters to supplement the main elements of a news story" (SourceWatch, 2005a).

[23] These agencies, often referred to as 'supplementals,' are common to national newspapers like *The New York Times*. In Canada, large media companies like CanWest (and before them Southam and Thompson) operate similar services See Willenson (1992) for a discussion of supplementals in the U.S., or Cummings et. al. (1981) for the Canadian context.

List of Abbreviations

AFP: Agence France-Presse

AP/APTN: Associated Press and Associated Press Television Network

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

BN: Broadcast News (Broadcast division of Canadian Press)

CBC: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

CCN: CCNMatthews, a Canadian wire service

CMD: Center for Media and Democracy

CNN: Cable News Network

CNW: Canada News Wire

CP: Canadian Press

CRTC: Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission

CTV: Canadian Television Network

PEJ: Project for Excellence in Journalism

PR: Public Relations

SSCTC: Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications

UPI: United Press International

VNR: Video News Release

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4. Brief Description of Research:

This research explores the current state of broadcast journalism in Canada by interviewing journalists. The goal is to understand how they make the news, what their job entails, and how this has changed over the past 10-20 years. The research will compare these findings to research into the political economy of journalism in Canada.

Part Two: Research Participants

1. Sample of Persons to be Studied:

The interview group consists of broadcast journalists and professionals working at news agencies active in the Canadian market. Subjects will include Herb Luft and Anne Lewis (from CTV Montreal), Anne Leclair and Amanda Jelowicki (from Global Quebec), as well as representatives of the broadcast divisions of the three powerful news agencies in Canada.

2. Method of Recruitment of Participants:

I will be snowballing through personal contacts to arrange interviews with reporters. The professionals will be reached by contacting major news agencies in Canada.

3. Treatment of Participants in the Course of the Research:

The procedure will be one-on-one interviews conducted over the phone. The audio of the interviews will be recorded, and a copy of the transcript will be given to the participants.

Part Three: Ethical Concerns

Indicate briefly how research plan deals with the following potential ethical concerns:

1. Informed Consent:

The attached consent form will be given to the participant, or its contents read on tape before the interview for verbal consent.

2. Deception:

N/A

3. Freedom to Discontinue:

The participants are free to discontinue at any time.

4. Assessment of Risks to Subjects' Physical Wellbeing, Psychological Welfare, and/or Reputation:

I can forsee no risk, whether to physical wellbeing, psychological welfare or reputation.

5. Protecting and/or Addressing Participant "At Risk" Situations:

N/A

6. Post-Research Explanation and/or Debriefing:

The participants will be given a transcript of the interview, as well as a copy of any paper published containing their comments, should they desire.

7. Confidentiality of Results:

The interviews will be anonymous, and their identity will be protected by the researcher.

8. Data Handling:

The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Once transcription is complete, the audio tapes of the interviews will be erased. The transcription will remain on my hard drive – no hard copies will be kept on file. The transcripts, in their written form, will be archived at www.archive.org, under a Creative Commons license (see consent form), for their use by other researchers.

9. Other Comments:

N/A

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix II – Contextual Interview Guide - THE BUSINESS OF NEWS IN CANADA

1) How long have you been a journalist?
2) How do you go about your job (describe your routine)?
3) Have there been changes in your job in the last 10-20 years?
    a. If so, were they technological – and how did they impact your routine?
4) How do you find stories?
5) What role do wire services and news agencies play in your job?
    a. Are there other main sources you use for stories, footage, etc?
6) What is your station's relationship to the network?
7) Have you heard of VNRs?
    a. If so, where? When?
    b. Have you ever seen them at your job?
8) Would that kind of material be useful to you? Do you see any problems with them?
9) How do you describe your job?
10) How do you relate yourself to the news, and to journalism?
    a. More precisely, what do you see as your role within news in Canada?
11) What is the service that you provide?
12) How do you go about producing these pieces?